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INDIA TODAY

VOL. 11
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No. 13 — 23
Pt. 2

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Haridwar

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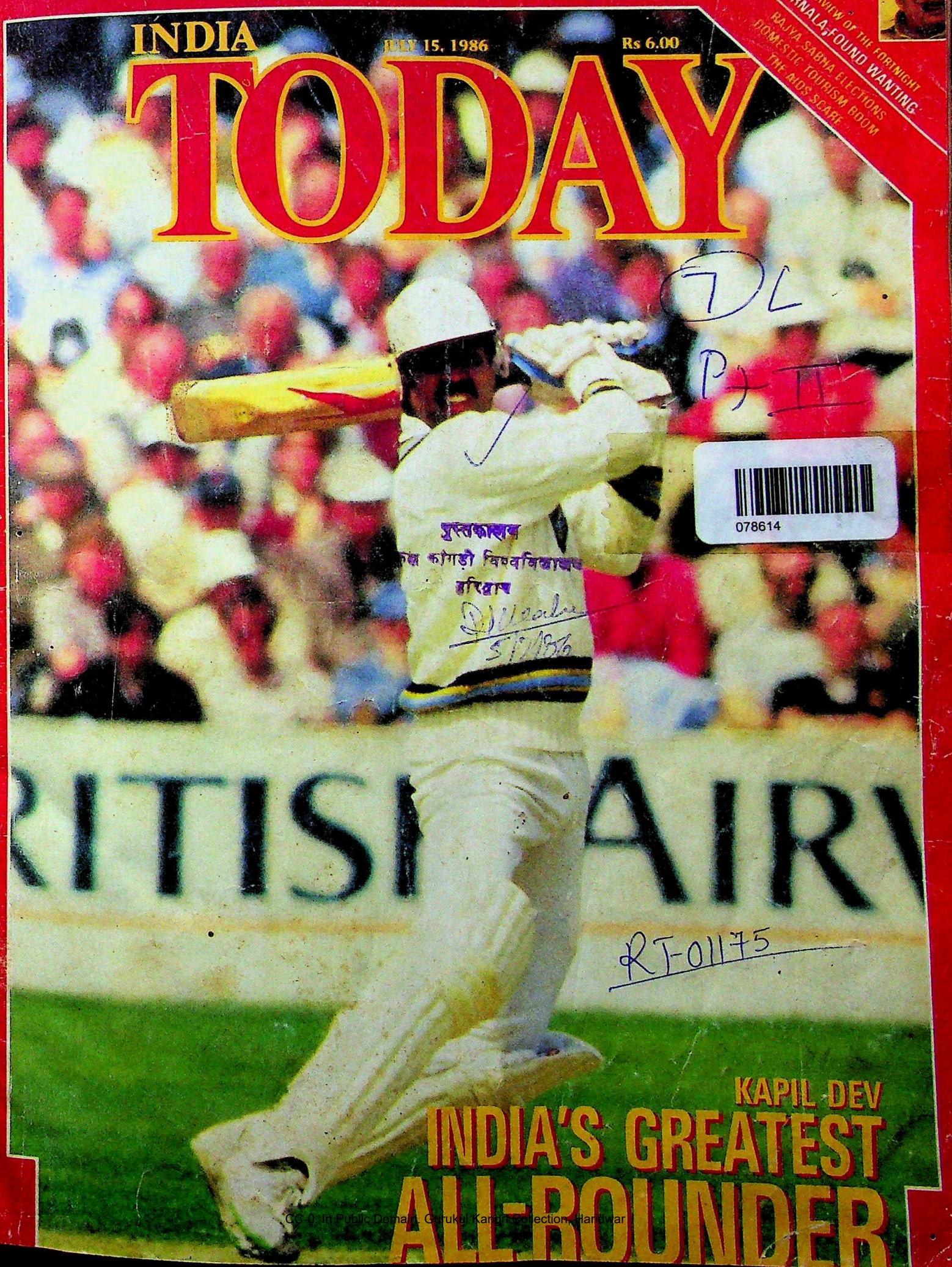
INDIA TODAY
JULY 15, 1986
Rs 6.00

ARJUN SINGH
INTERVIEW OF THE FORTNIGHT
BARNALA: FOUND WANTING
RAJYA SABHA ELECTIONS
DOMESTIC TOURISM BOOM
THE AIDS SCARE



KAPIL DEV
INDIA'S GREATEST ALL-ROUNDER

पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय
हरिद्वार
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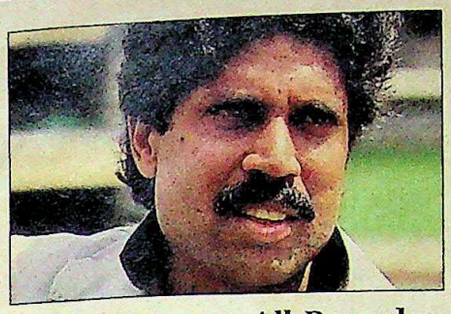
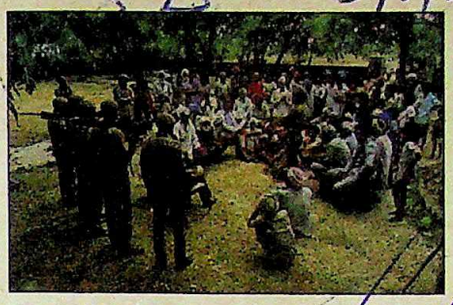
IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT



India's Greatest All-Rounder

Though somewhat overshadowed by the football fiesta in Mexico, the triumph of the Indian cricket team in England was a significant achievement. The man who deserves the most credit is Kapil Dev, who showed that he has finally matured as a captain.

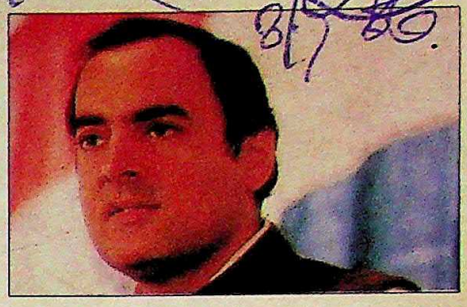
COVER STORY 146



An Escalating Crisis

The complications on the exchange of territories between Punjab and Haryana has put the clock back in Punjab. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Surjit Singh Barnala's increasing weakness and the rise in terrorism has reduced Punjab into a state of desolation.

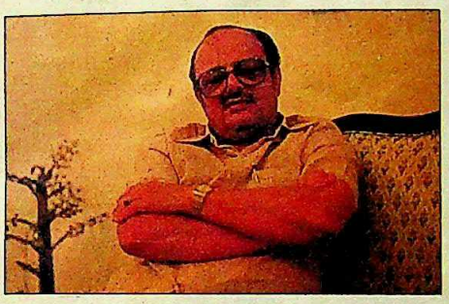
SPECIAL REPORT 26



The Rajiv Sabha

The ruling party, last fortnight, sharpened its strategy of packing the Congress Parliamentary Party with only those candidates who were personally loyal to the prime minister and denying entry to dissident elements. A report on the selection process.

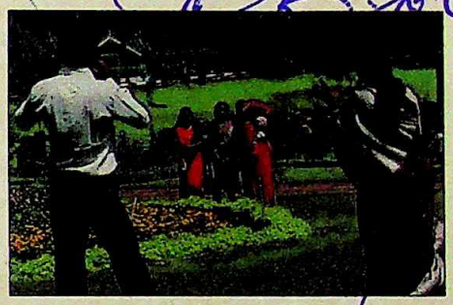
CURRENT EVENTS 32



'Barnala found wanting'

Punjab Chief Minister Surjit Singh Barnala helped terrorists come back to the centre-stage of Punjab politics by being lax in dealing with them, and has failed to meet the country's expectations, says Congress(I) Vice-President Arjun Singh.

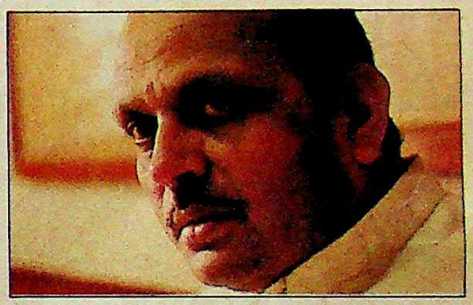
INTERVIEW OF THE FORTNIGHT ... 66



Indians on the Move

As the annual vacation period peaked last fortnight, it was startlingly evident that domestic tourism is experiencing an unprecedented boom. Indians are on the move everywhere and holiday resorts are unable to meet the demand. A special feature.

SPECIAL FEATURE 76



The New Image

V.P. Singh is no more the *bete noire* of industrialists. He has stopped keeping the captains of industry at a distance, encourages regular meetings with them in the 'Open House' sessions and is also ladling out tax concessions. An analysis.

BUSINESS 90

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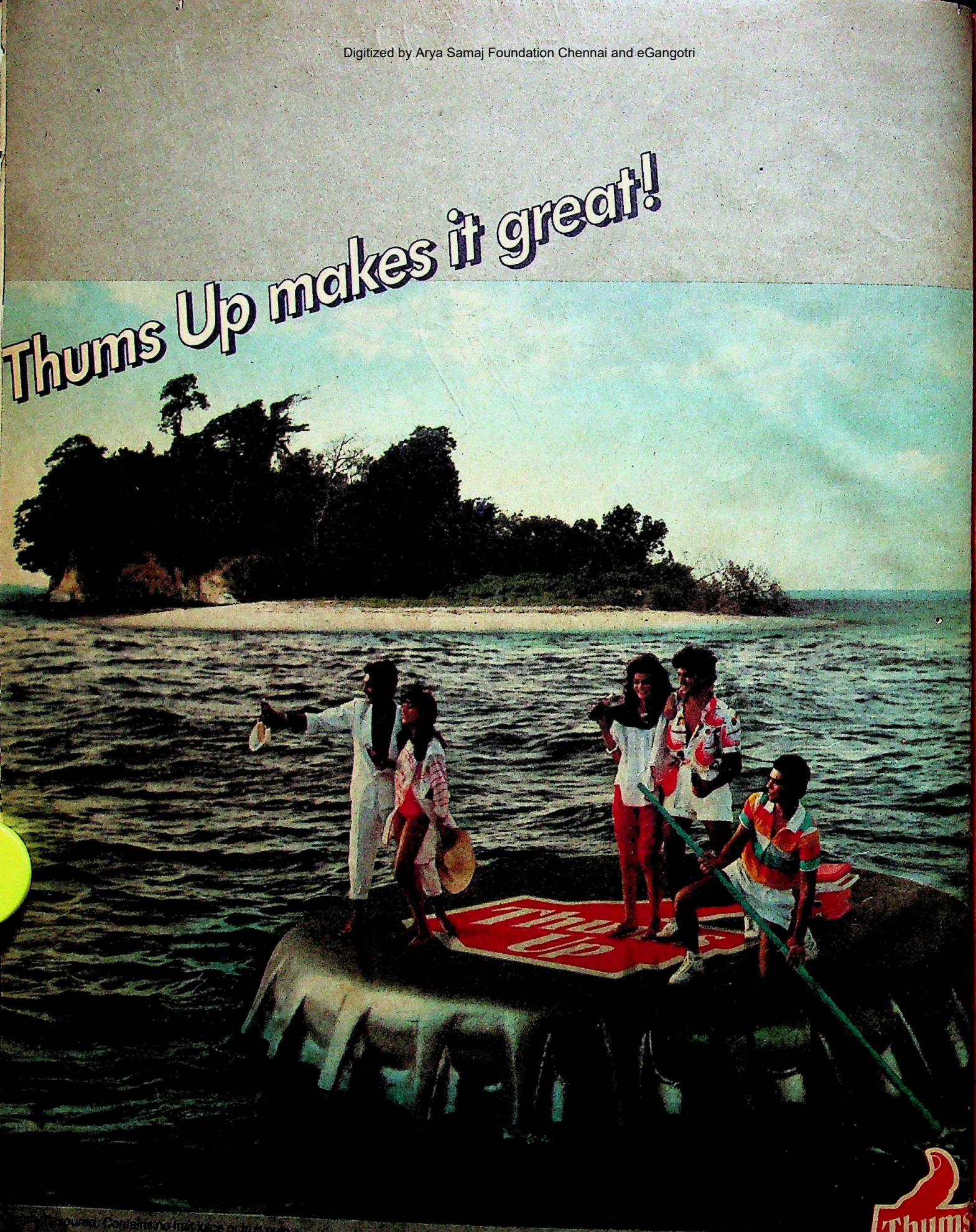

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OPINIONS TODAY

Your chance to speak out

Who is India's No.1 political achiever? You decide.

How's Rajiv Gandhi doing? Is he doing better at the Centre than NTR in Andhra? Than Arun Nehru at Internal Security?

You decide.

In this, the first of six nationwide Opinions Today polls, you will assess the relative contributions of eight political achievers: S.S. Barnala, Jyoti Basu, Rajiv Gandhi, Ramakrishna Hegde, Arun Nehru, P.V. Narasimha Rao, N.T. Rama Rao, V.P. Singh.

And decide on their ranking on a table of 1 to 8. Two persons, naturally, cannot have the same ranking.

Why No. 1?

Now, you have to explain the reasons for your No. 1 ranking. That is, if you think 'X' is India's top political achiever, then in not more than 50 words, you have to tell us why you think so.

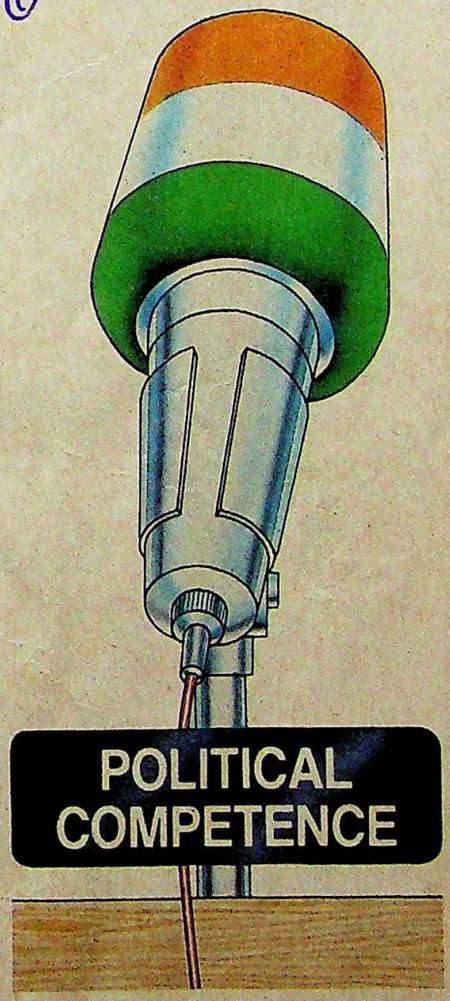
The rankings will be processed by a computer, to determine the national average–the pulse of the nation's mood.

Plus, there is the chance to win awards, for those entries which tie in with this average.

An entry form, alongwith a list of rules and regulations, is at the back of this page.

This poll is about your politics, your political leaders.

And this is your chance to speak out.



The awards.

For this poll.

First	: Weston Colour TV and VCR, courtesy WESTON ELECTRONIKS.
Second	: Encyclopaedia Britannica.
Third	: Weston 2-in-1, courtesy WESTON ELECTRONIKS.
Consolation	: Annual subscriptions to INDIA TODAY.

Across all six polls.

First	: Return First Class air tickets for two to Los Angeles, courtesy PAN AM.
Second	: A specially commissioned painting (30″ × 40″) by M.F. HUSAIN.
Third	: EIKO PC Junior computer with printer, courtesy EIKO.
Consolation	: The World and its People–a 27 volume set.

Turn overleaf to express your opinion.

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OPINIONS TODAY

Your chance to speak out

Rules and regulations.

Since the entry forms will be processed by computer, it is important that you follow these procedures carefully. Incorrect or incomplete entries will be rendered invalid.

1. You can voice your opinion only through a valid entry form, such as the one below.
2. In case you have difficulty in obtaining the entry form, please mail a stamped, self-addressed envelope marked 'Opinions Today' to us at INDIA TODAY, 316 Competent House, F-14 Connaught Place, New Delhi-110 001.
3. An individual can send in only one entry form per poll.
4. The entries will be evaluated by means of a software package, specially designed by Tata Consultancy Services. The package will be run on a Burroughs B 6900 mainframe.
5. Important: while filling in this entry form, please ensure that you leave one square blank between the various units in your name and address.
6. All the eight options in each poll have to be ranked from 1 to 8. No two options can have the same ranking.
7. The name should start with the family name, followed by the first name.
8. Also ensure that you enter your first two or three initials in the space provided.
9. The date of birth should start with the date (two digits), followed by the month (two digits) and the year (again two digits). For example, if your date of birth is February 9, 1956, it should be entered as 090256.
10. Please tick the appropriate square, for other details such as sex, education, occupation.
11. In your address, please also give the pin-code number.
12. Please ensure that you fill in your particulars consistently across all subsequent polls.
13. In every poll you will have to explain the reasons, in not more than 50 words, for your No. 1 ranking. This is the 'tie-breaker'. Be sure to write the tie-breaker. You can miss out on the big awards if you don't. However, if your entry ties in with the national average, you will still be entitled to receive consolation prizes.
14. The entries will be evaluated by a panel of judges.
15. The results will be published in the forthcoming issues of INDIA TODAY. The winners will also be notified separately by post.
16. Employees (and their relatives) of Living Media India Pvt. Ltd., its associate companies, Tata Consultancy Services, and Interface Communications Pvt. Ltd., are not eligible to participate in this opinion poll.
17. The decision of the judges will be final and binding.
18. ALL ENTRIES MUST REACH LIVING MEDIA INDIA PVT. LTD., P.O. BOX NO. 29, N.D.H.O. NEW DELHI-110 001, BY THE LAST DATE INDICATED ON THE ENTRY FORM.

ENTRY FORM: 1

Please fill in BLOCK CAPITALS

NAME: Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____ Surname _____ First Name

INITIALS: _____ DATE OF BIRTH: D D M M Y Y SEX: M [1] F [2]

EDUCATION: Professional [1] Post-graduate [2] Graduate [3] Matriculate [4] Others [5]

OCCUPATION: Service [1] Business [2] Housewife [3] Student [4] Others [5]

ADDRESS: _____

City _____ Pin-code _____

OPTION NO.:	PERSONALITIES	RANKING
1	S.S. BARNALA as C.M., Punjab.	
2	JYOTI BASU as C.M., West Bengal.	5
3	RAJIV GANDHI as Prime Minister.	1
4	RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE as C.M., Karnataka.	3
5	ARUN NEHRU as Minister, Internal Security.	
6	P.V. NARASIMHA RAO as Minister for H.R.D.	4
7	N.T. RAMA RAO as C.M., Andhra Pradesh.	
8	V.P. SINGH as Finance Minister.	2

Please give reasons for your No. 1 ranking _____

Your opinion must reach us by 19.7.1986.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

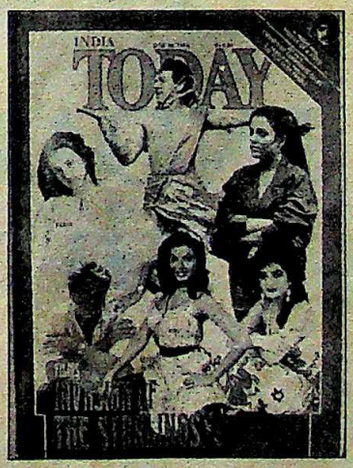
MORE than anything else, INDIA TODAY is concerned with change. All news is change, and a newsmagazine looks constantly for what is new, different. It is an exciting task—capturing change—but not always an easy one, and is almost like capturing the wind. The obvious changes are like strong gusts of wind whose directions are clear. But then there are the cross-currents that make it difficult to pinpoint a trend. And, of course, there are times of complete stillness. But even then, there are underlying transformations taking place, in social attitudes and life-styles, making it necessary to go beyond the 'news'. After all, what often passes for the day's news is less significant than the more basic transitions that are under way.

A stagnant society would have little use for a magazine like INDIA TODAY. But India, fortunately for us, is constantly pulsing with myriad changes: the new personalities shaping the country's politics, emerging conflicts, technological leaps and the advent of new forms of entertainment, successes in the worlds of business and sport where none existed before, the yielding of the old order in an ancient society finding new expression as a young nation.

For all their expertise, even the best journalists need every now and then to check the barometer of public opinion, for the experts can be out of step with the real pulse of change, or unconscious of a new beat. This is why we have introduced with this issue OPINIONS TODAY (page 3): to find out what our readers really think and feel about the people and personalities who, while hitting the headlines, personify and influence the changes taking place in the country.

This is not, strictly speaking, a national opinion poll as a professional pollster would define it. But it tests the opinions of a literate, educated, English-speaking section of the country, and a larger sample than used by professional pollsters. And, as each of the last four general elections showed, on big issues the country tends to respond with a common perception and a collective will. So, however unrepresentative INDIA TODAY's readers might be of the country as a whole, in a strict psephological sense, I believe that your opinions will be pointers to the public perception vis-a-vis the people and issues that figure in the six editions of OPINIONS TODAY. When your choices are in, we will be able to present back to you the mood on a wider range of issues than has been attempted to be captured so far in the country.

LETTERS



OPIUM ON CELLULOID

Religion is no longer the opium of the masses. Films are ("Invasion of the Starlings", June 30). And why not? The starlets' nubile charms, cacophonic singing, epileptic dancing, and improbable victories over evil are much better than what religion seems to come up with. National integrity would be assured if all Indians could (in the patriotic sense) feel for each other the love that Farha and Khushboo so obviously do!

Bangalore **VINOD KUMAR B.**

■ Your article on upcoming film stars was really exclusive and informative. It has been a long time since I read truly reliable and well-written material on modelling and the film world.

Gwalior **DR GYANESH**

■ Legions of new juvenile stars have chimerically expunged the big bad world of the Bombay film industry. They have even adumbrated the established stars of yesteryears and been accepted with open arms by the audience. But it is also true that the craze for young stars is temporal. Only the talented last. So the Bombay film industry beckons young blood. Aspirants had better make it quick and fast before it's too late.

Bangalore **K.CHIDANAND KUMAR**

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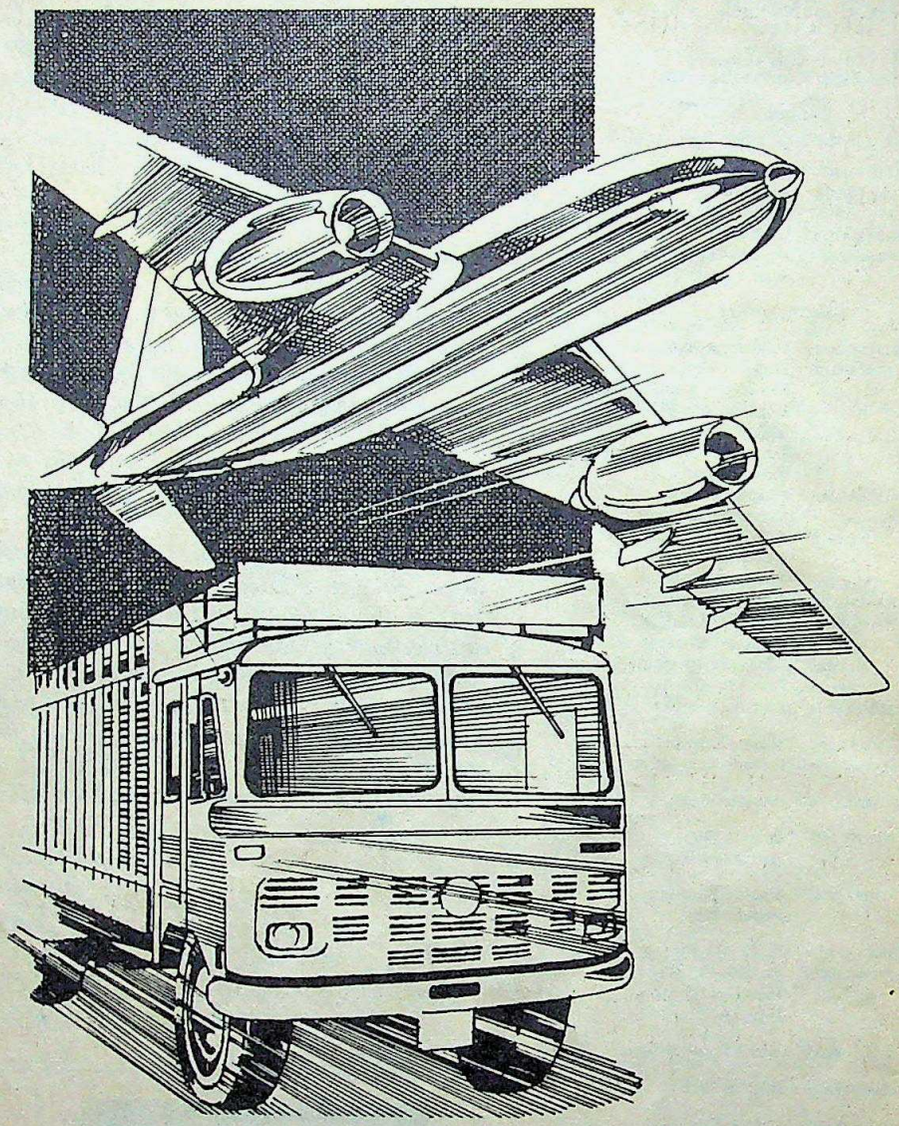

INDAL.
Moving with the times.

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INDAL. Introducing just about every alloy of aluminium in India. Pioneering practically every end-use. Committed to make aluminium a way of life. From foil packed life saving drugs to currency coins, to high rise claddings, to industrial roofings, to fighter aircraft, to transformer winding sheets..... And now, India's entire commercial transport industry is being taken to new heights of efficiency and profitability with INDAL's pioneering efforts. Light weight, high strength, extruded systems will transform the basic performance parameters of the road transport industry in tune with prevailing international standards. In energy savings. In increased payload. In better economy of maintenance. That's just one example of the many new directions INDAL is moving in.

INDAL is the first aluminium company in India to go into chemicals. Special grades of alumina and hydrate have been developed by INDAL for newer and more high-tech uses in conveyor belting, ceramic fibre, refractories and insulators.

Also in the pipeline are new projects in chemicals, extrusions and sheets. In Balasore, Orissa, INDAL has set up Orissa Extrusions Limited in collaboration with IPICOL, to make specialty extruded products. In Haldia, West Bengal, INDAL has planned a new caustic/chlorine project employing the very latest pollution free membrane cell technology.

Thus, aligning today's breakthroughs with tomorrow's priorities, INDAL stands poised to take off into greater heights than ever before.

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INDAL

Indian Aluminium Company, Limited

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■ I cannot understand why a magazine of your repute has given so much importance to Indian cinema, which has gone down the ladder of decency in recent years. In your article and photographs you have exhibited vulgarism and obscenity, much to our dislike.
Madras F. STANLEY

CANDID PORTRAYAL

Your special report ("The Flip-Flop Pandit", June 30) was a very real and candid appraisal of Kamalapati Tripathi. Despite his exploitation of his 'freedom fighter' image and his links with the Gandhi family, he has the audacity to blackmail Rajiv in the garb of party welfare. Surely Rajiv deserves commendation for his magnanimity.
Lucknow SAYYAD NADIR ALI KHAN

■ Your story makes it clear that old politicians of dubious repute are the most reluctant to fade out when the time comes. Their escapades into the realm of wrong-doing would make any hero of the Chambal ravines red with envy. When Mayapati stood for election as a rebel Congress(I) candidate, Kamalapati did not condemn him—there was probably nobody around to draft a letter of admonishment.
Lucknow LT-COLONEL S.K. MUSHRAN

GORKHAS' LAMENT

It was heartening to read your unbiased, factual report on the Gorkhaland movement ("Hounded at Home", June 30) which made no attempt to malign the genuine voice of the Indian Gorkhas.

The Centre and the Left Front Government have branded the movement as secessionist without giving a hearing to the grievances of the Gorkhas, who have lately realised that sacrificing lives as soldiers is itself no guarantee for citizenship. A separate state is the only way to give us an Indian identity.
Delhi NITA SUBBA

FOR THE RECORD

In your report ("Saffron War", May 31) the correspondent has called me a Kannada zealot without caring to know what I stand for. I never told Belgaum corporators to use Kannada as a sole official language. It is not true that I insisted on speaking in Kannada. I did try to speak to them in English, but they did not give up their interruptions.
Bangalore P. PUTTAPPA

CONFIDENCE BUILDING

The exodus ("Migrants of Fear", June 15) can only be stopped by creating conditions which will inspire confidence in the minority community. The internal fighting by Prakash Singh Badal and his colleagues should stop and they should help in checking this exodus, for, if not checked, it will create a backlash.
Patna Saheb MAJOR BALBIR SINGH

■ One would fully agree with Satyapal Dang that there would be more unemployed youth in the event of closure of factories. The terrorists trained in Pakistan get their unenlightened manpower from among the jobless lower-middle class youth.
Nasik ANGELA VINEET

VESTED INTERESTS

The menace of bogus membership has been dominating the Congress since the days of Pandit Nehru ("The Bogus Bandwagon", June 15) because of lack of ideological commitment among the rank and file. It is the creation of vested interests to capture party machinery.
Madras V.R CHANDRAN

CORRECTION

Your feature on Vikram Seth ("Literary Sensation", June 15) states that he is the author of three books: *From Heaven Lake, The Humble Administrator's Garden,* and *The Golden Gate*. This is incorrect. His first book, *Mappings*, was a collection of poems and translations from Urdu, Hindi, Chinese and German, published by Writers Workshop (Calcutta) in 1981.
Calcutta P. LAL

BLACK GOVERNMENT

I am a student of Gandhi Vidyashram at Kodaikanal who had testified before the Supreme Court Commission in the case of bonded labourers in the Kodai Hills ("Inhuman Bondage", June 15). There are over 800 families working under Tan India, South India Viscose and Seshayee Paper Mills, not just 44 families as you have said.

The Collector, M. Nambiar and the Tamil Nadu Government have backed the vested interests to the hilt. Sub-Collector Pirzada's order releasing the labourers was illegally stayed and the relevant file taken away. Where is the much-touted clean government?
Kodaikanal S. BALACHANDRAN

■ It is a sad irony that this tragedy of inhuman bondage has been relegated to the back pages of your magazine and merited just one page of coverage! Magazines like yours must help expose such link-ups if companies like Tan India are to be exposed, or you will only be playing into the hands of the powers that be.
Kodaikanal N.P. MATAI

PITY THE DEAD

Your report ("The Barabanki Bomb", June 15) ignores the fact that the administration does not have a right to shoot anyone in the name of smuggling. Those killed were innocent, poor Muslims, not smugglers. I welcome the decision to transfer the SSP and DM.
Aligarh N.J. ANSARI

FIRST INFORMANT

The article ("Legal Row", June 15) gives the impression that the Consumer Education and Research Centre has jumped into the fray on the complaint filed by a shareholder against W.S. Insulators Ltd regarding "Equity-linked debentures". We have to clarify that CERC was the first informant in the matter of companies adopting restrictive trade practices. As early as January 22, CERC had informed the Director-General of Investigation and Registration (MRTP Commission) N.P. Bhatt, that the practice of linking up equity shares with debentures amounts to adoption of RTP per se for the purposes of MRTP Act, 1969. Subsequently, whenever an incident of linked issue appeared CERC has informed the director-general requesting him to initiate appropriate action.

In the case of the equity-linked debentures, due to extensive research work carried out, CERC took time in filing the complaint before the commission. On April 26, CERC has filed complaints against more than 20 companies.
Ahmedabad MANGALA JOSHI

■ Your story fails to mention a relevant fact stated in a Finance Ministry report (April 24, 1984) which reads: "Regarding the linking of shares with debentures, the policy is that while the simultaneous issue of equity shares and non-convertible debentures could be permitted, investors should be free to subscribe to shares or debentures, or both, at their option. Obviously, the investors should not be forced to buy one security for the sake of another."
Indore A.D. URDHWARESHE

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Save the Accord

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

(The Second Coming: W.B. Yeats)

YEATS' words are an uncanny portrayal of the mess in Punjab: the Rajiv-Longowal accord in a shambles, a lame duck chief minister who is suddenly friendless, clumsiness in both New Delhi and Chandigarh, a new level of terrorist activity and a dangerously spreading communal divide. It is easy in these circumstances to despair, pronounce the accord dead, make flip references to Northern Ireland and call for extreme solutions. Commentators in the press and elsewhere, as well as a growing band of politicians, have called for the dismissal of Barnala and the ushering in of the army. Nothing could be greater folly.

AJIT NINAN

Barnala may have made his mistakes, his party may have split down the middle, and he may not have been as firm in dealing with terrorists as he should have been. But he remains both the country's and Punjab's best bet yet, as does the framework provided by the accord. More than the accord and Barnala are required to ensure that Punjab does not go over the brink, but without them there is even less hope of beginning the long, hard climb back to level ground where both the Sikhs and Hindus in Punjab can live in peace.

Removing Barnala at this juncture would be a clear victory for the terrorists and the Akali dissidents, both of whom have set their face against the accord. Dismissing Punjab's elected Government would also be a repudiation of the process of political reconciliation that started with the accord. Sikhs, in and outside Punjab, will accept measures from Barnala that they will not from an ex-Congress(I) governor. And security forces going about their legitimate job under New Delhi's direct instructions run the risk of being viewed as some kind of occupying army. Finally, there is no reason to believe that terrorism can be dealt with more effectively under President's rule: this did not happen in the past, and may not happen in the future. It is also necessary to think a couple of steps ahead: What happens after President's rule? Another election and perhaps a fresh Akali government? Can a new framework for solving the Punjab problem be reasonably expected if an Akali Government with a reasonable chief minister is dismissed?

As for calling in the army, the paramilitary forces in Punjab have been strengthened, they are being given more men and better equipment, new measures are planned to counter terrorism, and these must be given a chance to bring the situation under control. The army, in any case, is not the best force suited for the job of countering terrorism, nor is it good for the morale of soldiers to be asked to fight their own countrymen. The situation is difficult, and both Hindus as well as Sikhs need to be protected from the terrorists, but to call for the army is to despair of more reasonable solutions.

Rather than consider dismissing Barnala and bringing on the army, the Centre should weigh a whole set of alternative options. The Government must recognise that there is logic in Barnala's criticism of the Venkataramiah Commission's unhelpful report and of the Desai Commission's flawed terms of reference, as there is in his declaring that at no stage did the Punjab accord envisage the transfer of Punjabi-speaking areas to Haryana. It must find a response to Sikh grievances, one of which relates to the manner in which the Ranganath Mishra Commission is going about its business. And instead of waiting for Barnala to take the next step, the Centre must display some initiative in breaking the present deadlock while placing greater trust in Barnala than seems to exist.

Barnala has his own share of soul-searching to do. Central leaders have a point when they argue that he released potential or confirmed terrorists soon after he assumed office, and that he has, after all, failed to bring the law and order situation under control. Today, this must be his primary responsibility, and he must remain conscious of the fact that the future of his Government depends deservedly on this single issue. It does no credit to any state government if its citizens have to flee for fear of their lives. Also, the responsibility for picking up the threads once again for implementing the accord is as much with Barnala as anyone else, and he cannot afford to shirk this. Finally, the defeat of Simranjit Singh Mann in the Rajya Sabha elections gives Barnala the chance to try and bring the Akalis back together and forge a united front that can tackle the state's problems. All the Akali politicians need to realise that it is high time they stopped playing power-politics while the state burns, lest they are finally left with nothing but ashes. Meanwhile, whether the politicians behave themselves or not, leaders from both the communities in Punjab should step forward and form voluntary organisations that try and build mutual confidence, prevent migration, and act as ginger groups that put pressure on the politicians and governments to search for the middle ground.

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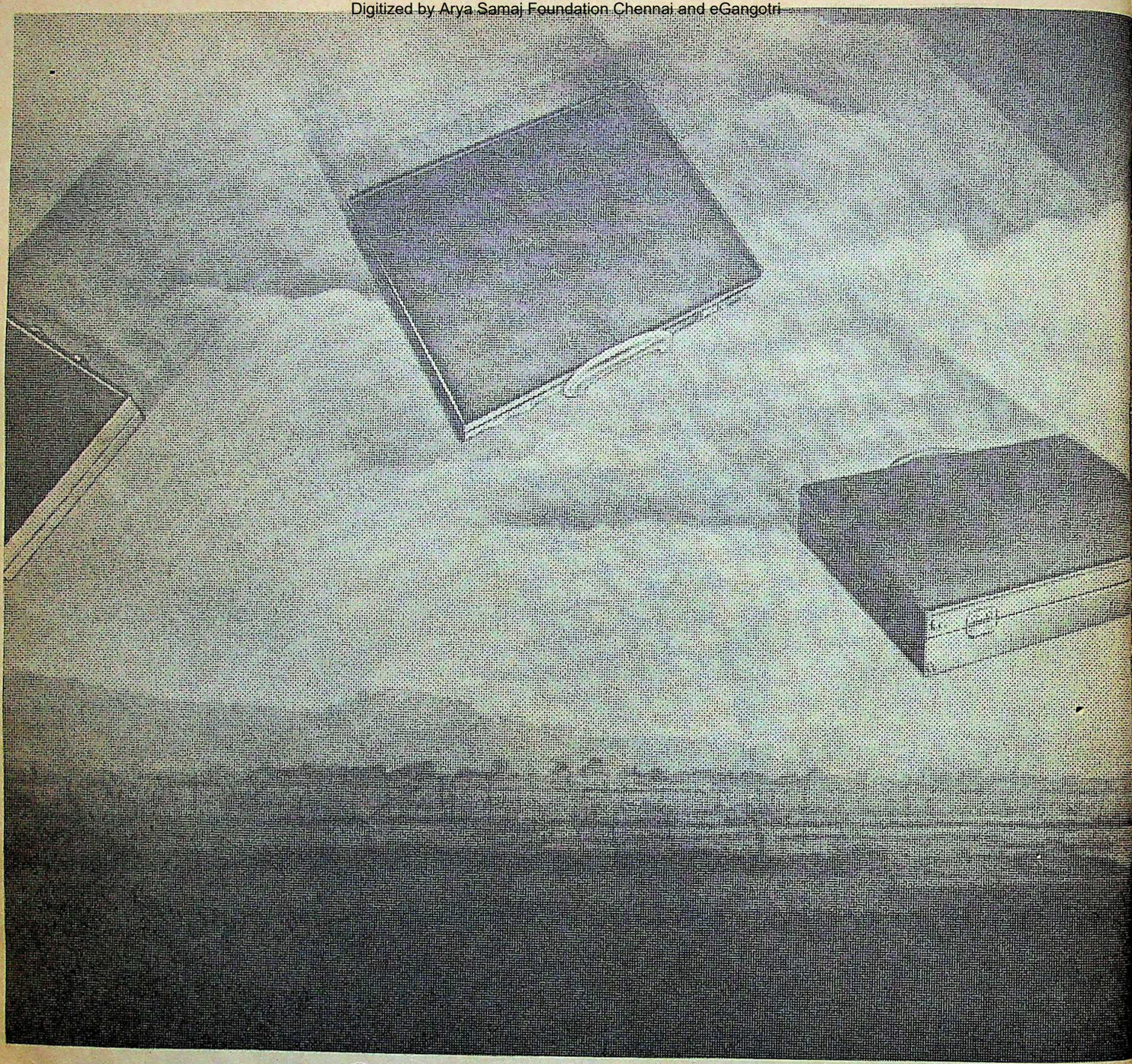

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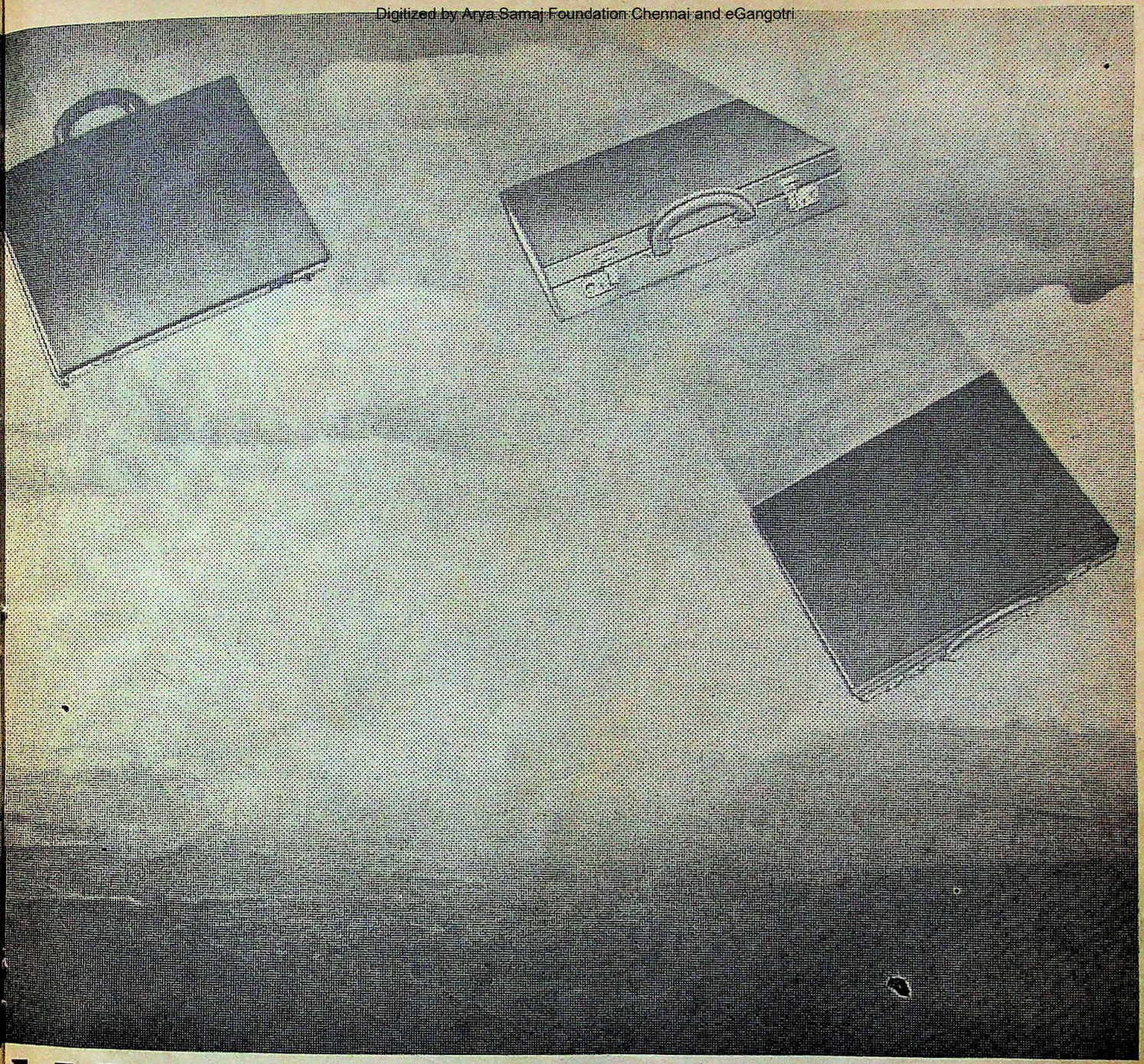

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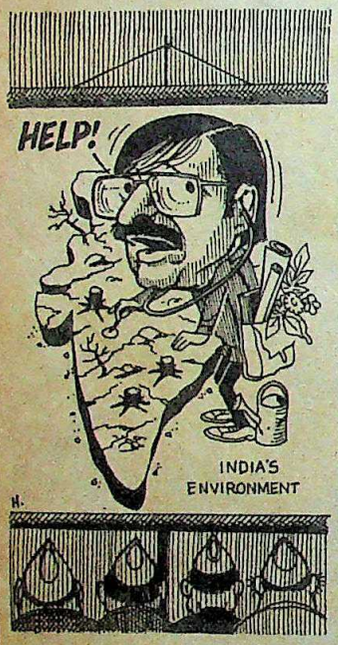
New Priority

● Computers have been replaced by concern for the environment at the top of Rajiv Gandhi's list of priorities. In a move that was virtually unprecedented, the prime minister recently summoned a full meeting of the council of ministers to do nothing but listen for two hours to environmentalist Anil Agarwal speak and present a slide show on the environmental disaster threatening the country. Agarwal had earlier addressed all the secretaries to the Government of India at a session



where the prime minister sat in. Rajiv now wants him to talk to all the members of Parliament by addressing the various consultative committees attached to the ministries, and Agarwal—who normally spends his time running the Centre for Science and Environment—is readying for the marathon effort of addressing 27 consultative committees, some of which are again chaired by Rajiv Gandhi.

Loyal Force

● The National Security Guards, the crack commando force formed by the Government in the wake of Operation Bluestar, has started displaying signs of fierce loyalty to its

chief, T.R. Nagrani. The force, now numbering about 4,000, was raised and trained by Nagrani who was recommended for the post by R.N. Kao, his former boss at the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). NSG commandos have been used intermittently in Punjab to deal with terrorist situations. Nagrani is due to retire at the end of July, but sources in the intelligence community indicate that his term as commando chieftain will be extended by two years because his men have exhibited an uncanny personal loyalty to Nagrani and have made several representations stating that his retirement will badly affect the new unit's *esprit de corps*. Government officials have approached Rajiv Gandhi on this issue and the prime minister is reportedly in favour of an extension for Nagrani.

Special Status

● The Indian Government pulled out all the stops for Vice-President R. Venkataraman on his recent visit to Paris. In an unprecedented move, the visit was given all the trappings of a presidential one. Air-India was directed to place a special Air-India 707 at the disposal of the vice-president's party to fly them to Paris in connection with the closing ceremony of the Festival of India. Air-India had to cancel one of its weekly flights to Moscow to accommodate the vice-presidential trip.

When the festival was inaugurated last year by the prime minister, the French Government was given the impression that the closing ceremony would be conducted by the President, Giani Zail Singh. Instead, the French were told at the last minute that the vice-president would officiate instead. The Chief of Protocol in the Indian foreign office, Salman Haider, was specially flown to Paris to ex-

plain to the French the change of plan. Obviously to salvage prestige, Venkataraman was afforded the facilities normally reserved exclusively for a head of state.

The Dean Deal

● John Gunther Dean, American ambassador in New Delhi, has been catapulted into controversy by the New York Times, which reported that Michael Deaver, former White House deputy chief of staff and now a high-powered lobbyist, stayed with Dean during a recent visit to New Delhi and that Dean helped fix some of Deaver's appointments with Indian businessmen. Quid pro quo was sug-

gested as Deaver had helped Dean get his Delhi posting in the first place.

Dean issued a denial, but the New York Times produced evidence to show that Dean had tried to help Deaver meet businessman V.K.Modi. Dean says "The linkage that he got me my job and then I offered help is indecent." Is this a case of Eager Deaver getting Clean Dean into trouble?

Envoy Option

● Having co-opted veteran T.N. Kaul as Indian ambassador to Moscow—the age of our man in Moscow going up as the Soviet leadership's comes down—the Government is still in a quandary over the other key vacancy—that of Indian ambassador to Washington. The Government was keen on inducting another veteran, B.K. Nehru, 72, who had served as ambassador in Washington 20 years ago. Nehru cited old age and a recent operation as reasons for being reluctant to strap on his diplomatic guns again, but the prime minister's office is persisting in its efforts to get him back in harness. Only lately has the option been broadened and the likely candidate, if Nehru is adamant, is former foreign secretary M.K. Rasgotra, now in semi-retirement in Delhi.

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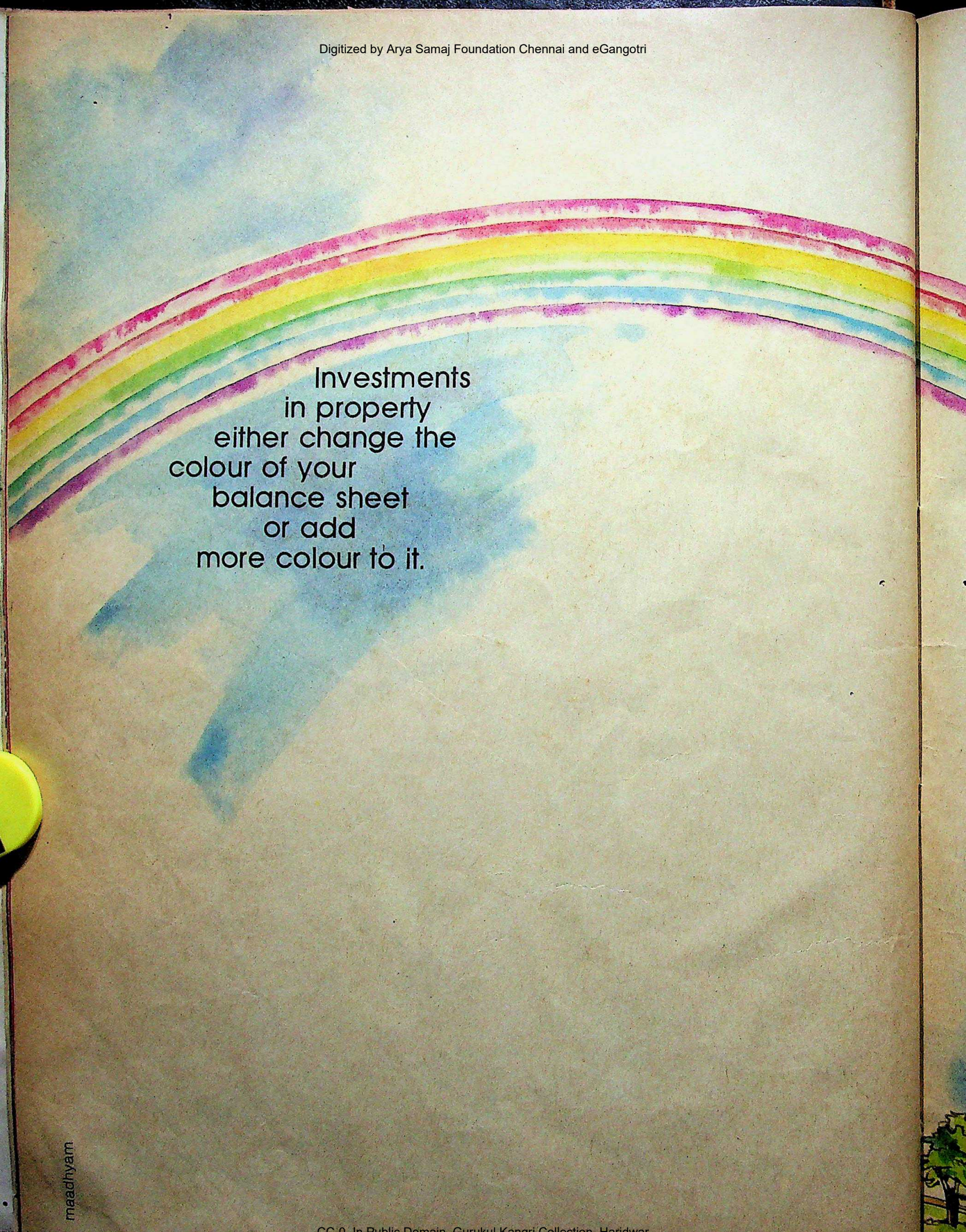

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● *The greatest genius of J.R. Jayewardene, the President of Sri Lanka, is that he has succeeded in convincing even those Tamilians of Jaffna, who never thought of a separate state in the island, that they cannot coexist with the Sinhalese hereafter.*

■ CHO RAMASWAMY in *Sunday*

● *Mr Basu is trying to compete with me but he will not be able to as he is over 70 while I am just 50. He should go to the lunatic asylum at Ranchi as he has gone completely mad.*

■ A.B.A. GHANI KHAN CHOWDHURY, Union minister for programme implementation, at municipal campaign rallies in West Bengal, quoted in *The Times of India*

● *Everybody must be clear on the point that when an issue is remitted for adjudication, the verdict should be accepted.*

■ RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE, Karnataka chief minister, on the Mahajan Commission report, in *Frontline*

● *Hegde is a Janata Party man. I am not trying to embarrass him. One should know that the Janata Party passed a resolution rejecting the Mahajan Commission report.*

■ S.M. JOSHI, Janata Party leader and president of the Maharashtra Seema Samiti, in *Frontline*

● *Chandra Shekhar kept saying that he never wanted to be president and had already been president for too long. It is obvious now that he did not mean a word of what he said. In fact, Chandra Shekhar wants to be the first and last president of the Janata Party.*

■ DR SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY in *Imprint*

● *Some Indian traditions deserve to be abandoned and one of them is that boys are superior to girls. I know that, as a daughter, I am much more considerate to my family than my brother.*

■ MANEKA GANDHI in *Probe*

● *For the rebuilding of India it is necessary that interaction between the rulers and the ruled be restored and the former re-learn the art of listening.*

■ DHARAMPAL, historian, in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

● *Everybody nowadays has become conscious of their rights and clamours for more. In the process, they have become more or less oblivious to their obligations.*

■ JUSTICE A.N. SEN, chairman, Press Council, in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

● *The Akalis have been insistent on no reduction in the over 10 per cent Sikh representation in the army. By the same token, they should not be averse to a minority of over 40 per cent being given a larger representation in the Punjab Police than the present less than 20 per cent.*

■ S.K. SINHA in *The Statesman*

● *Maninder Singh's figures of 20.4-12-9-3, in which he employed extremely attacking fields and turned the ball on probably no more than two occasions, were considerably more mystifying than the Indian rope trick.*

■ TREVOR BAILEY in *Sunday Mail*

● *I know the craft of acting. I don't believe in skipping a bath for three days just because I have to play a Shudra.*

■ SHASHI KAPOOR in *Frontline*

● *It's awful staying alone when all your life you have been surrounded by people. There is such a vacuum in me. I get so frightened sometimes.*

■ NADIRA in *Stardust*

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M. A. K. PATAUDI

GWALIOR SUITING

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KEYSTONE COPS

■ The Bombay police have a reputation for being dogged in their crusade against crime in the city, except they often wind up barking up the wrong tree. With the city's banking circles in something of a panic over the recent rash of bank robberies, police stations were naturally under pressure to bring the bandits to heel. Thus, when the police station at Andheri received a

phone call at 3 a.m. from the manager of the United Western Bank, they swiftly moved into action. The manager, who lived in a flat above the bank premises, had said that he could hear peculiar noises emanating from the bank at that unearthly hour.

Thirty policemen armed with Sten guns and revolvers surrounded the bank while the officer-in-charge bravely opened the front door and in the best Clint Eastwood tradition, called upon the robbers to surrender. The sound of whimpering from inside the bank suggested that the bandits had caved in rather tamely. But when the intruder finally emerged, it turned out to be a mangy, flea-bitten pie dog that had been locked in by accident the previous evening. The sheepish cops holstered their weapons and returned to their crime-busting, with their tails between their legs.

LOVER'S KNOTS

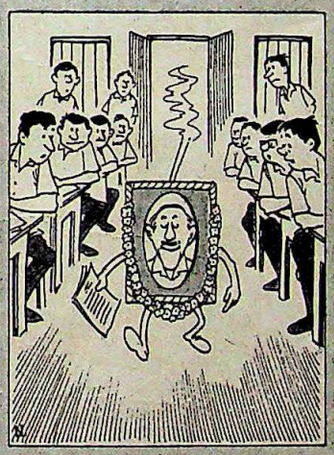
■ Marriages may be made in heaven but where the bureaucracy is concerned, heaven can wait. Ask Shalin Parker, a freelance photographer who finally focussed on his soul-mate, a graphic designer, and decided to tie the nuptial knot in Delhi in a civil manner. But his path to bliss was strewn with bureaucratic roadblocks. At the Delhi marriage office, he was asked to produce his birth certificate even though his greying hair clearly proved his 'marriageability'. As he did not possess such a document, he was asked to get a radiology test certificate from a local government hospital.

Armed with a letter of introduction from an MP to the Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, he met the medical superintendent who sent him to

the Physical Examination Department. They shunted him along to the Radiology Department where the doctor asked him why he had come. After explaining his problem, she sent him back to the Physical Examination Department who returned him, on the verge of a nervous collapse, to the medical superintendent who advised him to go back to where else? The marriage office.

GHOST WRITERS

■ Grave issues have been raised recently concerning the eligibility of certain people appointed by the Uttar Pradesh School and Intermediate Board as examiners. Last month, the Vipin Behari Intercollege in Jhansi received an urgent telegram from the board's Allahabad office asking one of its teachers to rush to the centre where he had been appointed



to invigilate an examination. The board was late—he had passed away quite peacefully ten years earlier. Barely a week later, another urgent missive arrived appointing another teacher as deputy head of the committee entrusted with finalising the maths papers. Again, the board was asking for a Lazarus-type miracle since the poor fellow had receded into history.

Undaunted, the board then trained its posthumous guns on its own doorstep where an Allahabad teacher was appointed as "examiner" to evaluate answer papers of this year's high school examination in the city. He too, by some fateful coincidence, was dead and buried some six years past. The only conclusion is that the board likes living in the past or has a macabre preference for ghost-written examination papers.

LIAR'S LAIR

■ With the annual summer hordes fanning out in all directions, animals in game sanctuaries are retiring to their lairs to escape the hordes. One wily guide at the Kaziranga Game Sanctuary in Assam, however, convinced a Bengali family that he would, for a little extra, show them rhinos and leopards since he knew every lair.

The only liar, of course, was him. Herding them onto elephant-back, he led them to a field of tall grass and pointing to a large and distant object in the middle, told them it was a rhino. The gullible, tourists happily clicked away. He then drew their attention to a bulge in a distant tree—a leopard!

The next day, the family informed some fellow tourists of their good fortune and of-

fered to show them. On closer sight, however, the 'rhino' turned out to be a large boulder and the 'leopard' nothing more than a bulge in the tree trunk that could, with some stretching of the imagination, be said to resemble one. The redfaced family complained to officials but found that the guide had gone into hibernation—in the foxes lair no doubt.

—Compiled by DILIP BOBB

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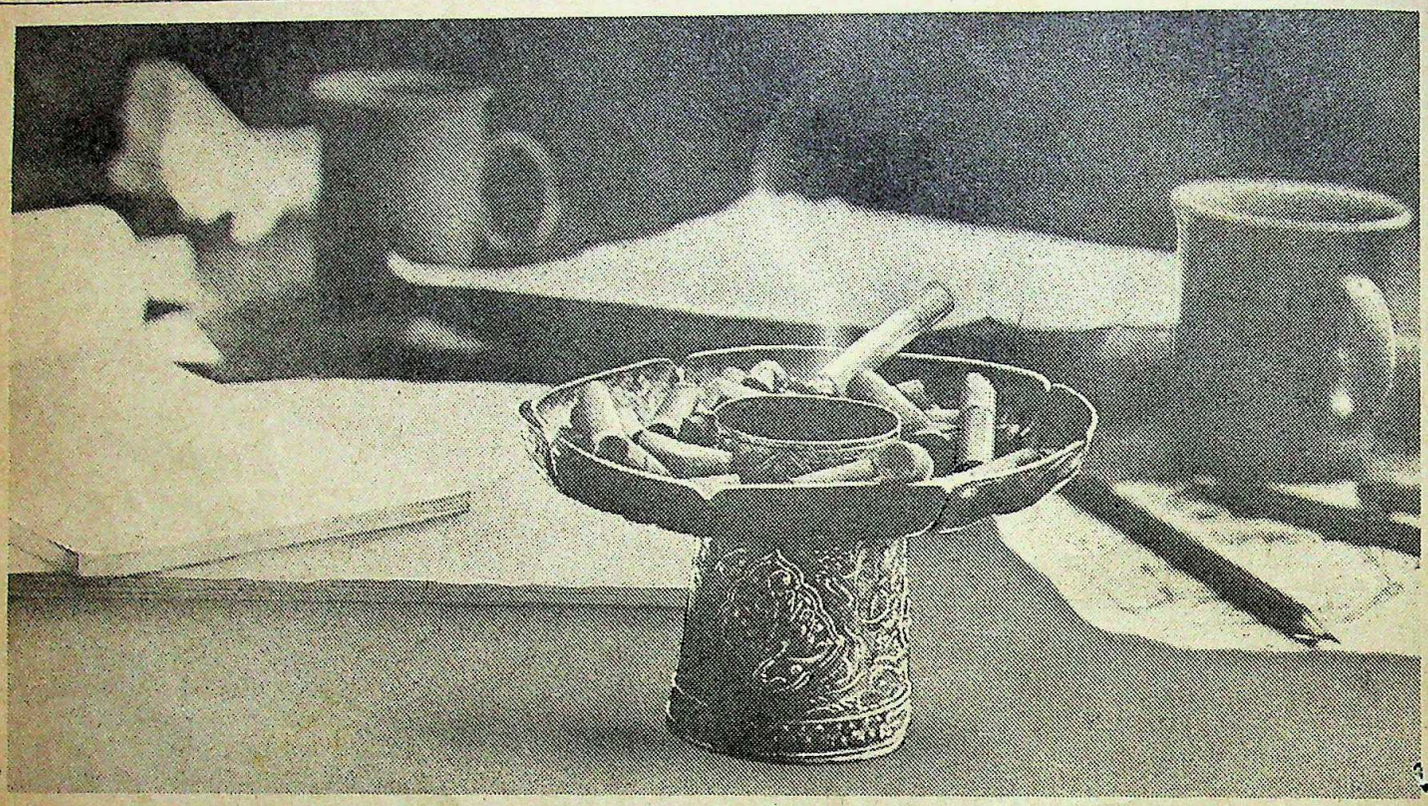

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PUNJAB

An Escalating Crisis

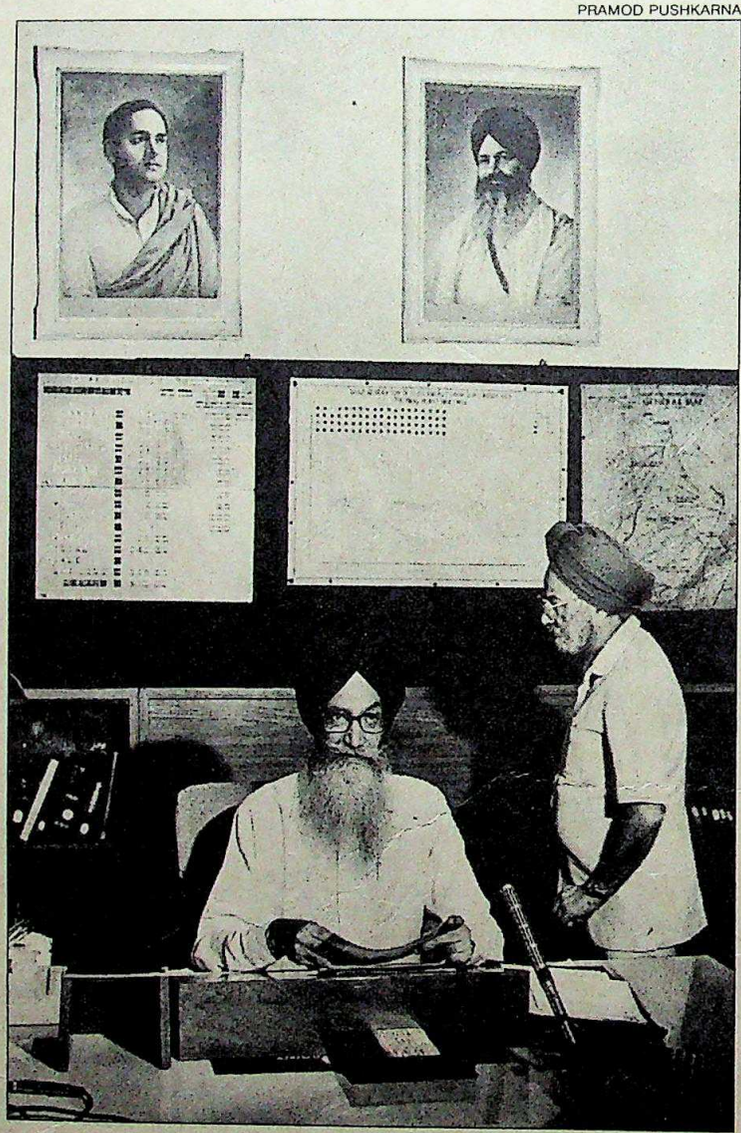
LAST fortnight, Punjab seemed headed for a new crunch. Surjit Singh Barnala's Government stood isolated and weak after new complications arose on the vexatious issue of the transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab. Its diminishing strength also raised doubts on the survival of the Rajiv-Longowal accord which had, less than a year ago, promised to bring permanent peace to Punjab. On the contrary now, violence in the state had even crossed the heights scaled in the pre-bluestar period. Worse it had spilled into the streets as communal mob violence giving a frightful dimension to the perennial crisis forcing the Government to devise a new security plan for the state. To gauge the crisis INDIA TODAY Principal Correspondent SHEKHAR GUPTA visited the trouble-spots in the state for a week. His report:

THE LOSS of weight shows even on his tall, wiry, frame. The flowing, bushy beard fails to camouflage the deepening furrows on his gaunt face. There is even a persistent and exaggerated tremor to his hands, the hands that hold the reins of the most strife-torn part of the country today.

Surjit Singh Barnala, the chief minister of Punjab is today lonely and more or less friendless in a hostile world, fighting for survival simultaneously on four fronts: against party dissidents, terrorists, against the distrust of the minorities and now against the Central Government.

The fourth front was opened last fortnight after new, daunting complications arose on the territorial issues between Punjab and Haryana, threatening the very basis of the Rajiv Gandhi-Longowal accord. "The Centre has given a most tragic twist to the whole negotiation process," he complained, while announcing his cabinet's decision to repudiate the formation of the Justice Desai panel to decide the territories to be transferred to Haryana from Punjab, in lieu of Chandigarh. He more or less agreed with the suggestion that, with this the spirit of the Rajiv-Longowal accord had perished and the dissidents wore "we told you so" grins. Said a triumphant Parkash Singh Badal: "I had predicted this at Anandpur Sahib after Sant Longowal signed the accord. See how correct I was." Coming in the wake of a steep increase in terrorism and the migration of the minorities from the state, this change had escalated the crisis.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Barnala with Balwant Singh: increasing isolation

Along with a steep increase in terrorism and the migration of the minorities from the state, this new mood of confrontation had escalated the crisis to new heights and put the future of the Rajiv-Longowal accord in the shade.

Indications of the shape of things to come had, in fact, been available even the previous evening as Barnala continued his frantic discussions with the prime minister. He was away in Delhi for his second meeting, when the remaining members of his cabinet called an impromptu meeting where tempers flew high. Some ministers even drew *kirpans* out of their scabbards, and waving these, angrily shouted that Punjab did not need Chandigarh. "Why should we put this dead snake round our necks? Let the Centre give us Rs 200 crore and we will build our own capital at Ranjitgarh (in central Punjab)," shouted a minister. The others argued that it will be political suicide for the Akali Dal to convince their Jat following that 70,000 acres of land is a worthwhile price for a small city. "The Jat, it is said, willingly gives a lump of jaggery but try and take away even one sugarcane stick from his farm and he will give his life. The same is true of his reaction to giving away 70,000 acres of land in place of a few villages," explained another irate minister.

By midnight, it was clear to Barnala that there was no

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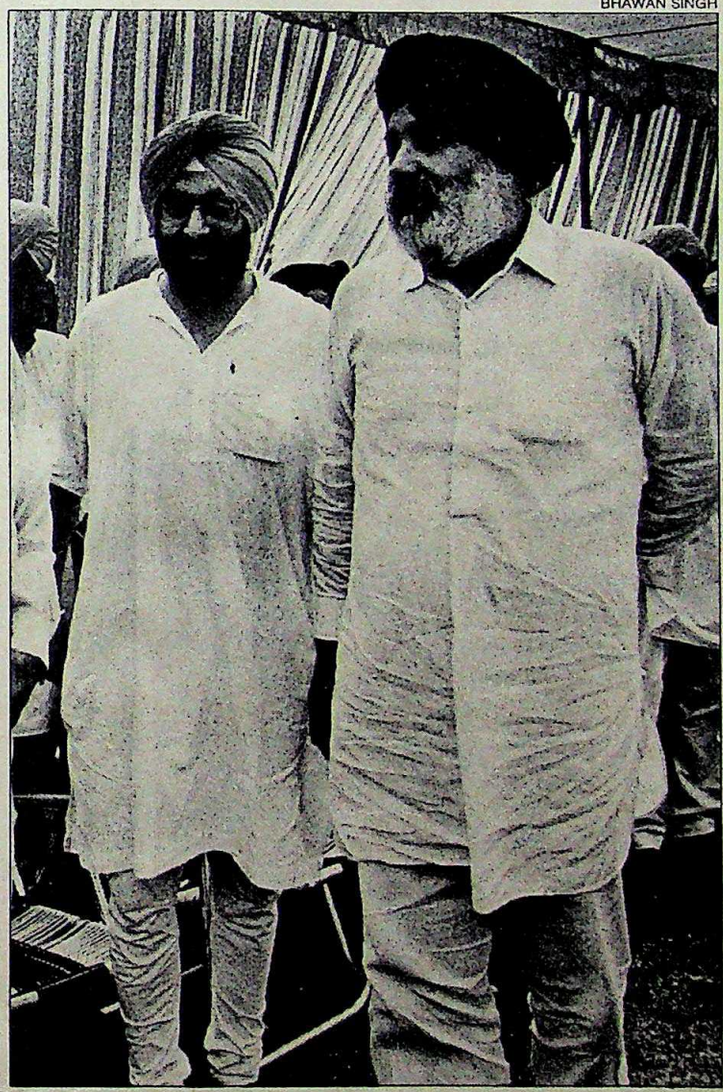
way his cabinet was going to accept the bargain. Fortunately for him, the escape route was provided by none else than the Centre which, almost quixotically decided to set up a commission and asked it to give its findings within 18 hours. "Nothing could be more ridiculous or a greater insult of the judiciary," said Barnala. Added Finance Minister Balwant Singh: "There is communalism in the Home Ministry bureaucracy. If you want to solve our problem, just put the entire Home Ministry on a ship and sink it in the Indian Ocean."

The confrontation had changed the political scenario in the state drastically and had put into shade the very survival of the Rajiv-Longowal accord and the Barnala Government. For two months since former chief minister Parkash Singh Badal led the exodus of dissidents from his party, Barnala has been heading a minority government (with a strength of 47 in a house of 117 sustained on the support of the Congress(I). Now he was threatened with the loss of even this oxygen vent. In Delhi, senior Congress(I) leaders were now inclined to blame him for the virtual failure of the accord. Accusing him of turning his back on the Desai panel under pressure from his cabinet colleagues, Congress(I) Vice-President Arjun Singh told INDIA TODAY: "The terms of reference (of the Desai panel) were drawn in consultation with him. He accepted the panel. But obviously people in his government are not supporting him on this." *(see interview)*

In Chandigarh the Akali dissidents attacked him for "failing to achieve anything despite being a court-jester in the Delhi durbar". For the dissidents this was their best chance to pull down Barnala. Said Amarinder Singh, former agriculture minister: "As far as the Sikhs are concerned Barnala does not exist any more. He is dead either way, whether he goes along with the Centre or confronts it." It was obvious that the dissident group now wants to ride the anti-Centre populism in the state, something Barnala had so far eschewed doing. Said former education minister Sukhjinder Singh, reflecting the dissident Akali mind: "Mr Barnala is a decent person but he forgot the basic fact that for us Sikhs, the real Akali Dal is one that fights the Centre. They do not bother whether it is led by a Sajan Singh or Bhajan Singh." Now, however, Barnala was in real danger of falling into the same trap of seeking confrontation to safeguard his political entity.

BHAWAN SINGH



Badal (right) and Amarinder Singh: gunning for Barnala

In Chandigarh efforts have begun to achieve that elusive commodity in Akali politics called panthic unity. The dissident leaders wear 'we-told-you-so' smiles. In Barnala's discomfiture they see their best chance of a good bargain.

Whether he does it or not will be clear in the coming fortnight, but in Chandigarh the political grapevine was abuzz with rumours of fresh efforts to achieve that elusive commodity in Akali politics called panthic unity. While Barnala finally admitted that he found himself weaker in the absence of "my old friends who left me at such a crucial time" *(see interview)*, the dissidents saw in his discomfiture their best chance of getting a good bargain out of him. Accordingly they were demanding a high price: party presidentship for Badal, Barnala's resignation from chief ministership and, to top it all, a complete repudiation of the Rajiv Gandhi-Longowal accord by the Akali Dal. "We are not trying to destroy the country or the Akali Dal. We want to remove this government of two ministers and their gunmen," argued Sukhjinder Singh. The mediators, however, were unsure of finalising anything unless Barnala found himself in an entirely hopeless situation.

That situation can only arise in two events. The first is if the dissident campaign to woo Balwant Singh away from the Barnala camp succeeds. Over the past few days, Amarinder Singh has broadly hinted that his group would not mind accepting Balwant Singh as the new chief minister as long as he set up a high-level political affairs committee within the party to take major decisions. On the face of it, Balwant Singh dismisses it all as "a campaign to create a rift within our party", but high-level Akali sources confirm that last week he had secretly met Sukhjinder Singh to discuss terms for unity.

Barnala, thus is truly cornered now, hunted at home and hated outside where most people blame him for turning his back on the question of territories transfer. And yet the pity is that among the Akali leadership, he is the only one with a strong-enough commitment to fight the terrorist menace, a case of the right person being in the right place at the wrong time.

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"He is an absolutely decent man, too decent for his own good. But now he has been used and reduced into a sacrificial goat," laments Lt-General Gurbachan Singh Buch (Retd.), president, Punjab Sikh Forum.

Late last week, however, Barnala showed more political guile than his detractors credit him. He succesfully countered the first challenge to his existence in the Rajya Sabha poll—where the dissidents had been expecting substantial cross-voting from his group in favour of Simranjit Singh Mann, the sacked IPS officer now under detention. But the next challenge is not far away. It could come on July 15, when the Desai panel gives its report or on virtually any other day when the Centre, harried by increasing violence, gives in to the demand of calling in the army, an alternative to which Barnala has frequently expressed opposition. Either way he will be under pressure to return to the old phase of confrontation.

S.S. BARNALA

"I don't want the army"

HIS IS the hottest of all hot seats in the country today. Threatened by the extremists from one flank and by the dissidents on the other, Punjab Chief Minister Surjit Singh Barnala is waging a lonely battle. In an interview with Principal Correspondent SHEKHAR GUPTA, *frequently interrupted by messengers who trooped in with news agency flashes from the secretariat teleprinter on fresh violence, he answered a wide range of questions on the challenges before his government. Excerpts:*

Q. *Haven't things worsened for you politically since you took over?*

A. There is one big difference in that many of my friends have left me. To that extent we are weaker. Once you have a lesser strength in the Assembly, you depend on others and you go down in their eyes. It is always possible, of course, that my friends did not have the courage or the nerve to face the wrath of the extremists.

Q. *Are you trying to bring these people back to the party?*

A. The problem is, they only want my chair. But I hope they soon begin to realise that it is not possible. They have gone to the masses to try and get a denunciation against me but failed.

Q. *Is it true that some of them have links with the extremists?*

A. They think that by speaking the extreme language, they will save their lives. Did you hear what Tohra said at the Golden Temple the other day? (He said that if God did not take Barnala away, one of his proud sons would.) What harm have I done to him? For 14 years he was the head of the SGPC and now he was unable to even go and pray at the Harmandir Sahib. I at least made it possible for him to go there and deliver a speech. Is that my crime?

Q. *What went wrong with the accord this time?*

A. That is the question to which I deserve an answer. When I talk to the prime minister, he sounds forthcoming and sincere. But something goes wrong at the last moment. This time they came up with this outrageous idea of asking a judge to give his verdict within a few hours and that was a most tragic twist to the whole process of reconciliation. It really was so humiliating to be told that a judge was now going to solve the whole problem by doing something overnight.

Q. *But one impression is that you first agreed to the formation of the commission and then backed out.*

> **"The prime minister was sincere but it was humiliating that a judge was now going to solve the problem overnight."**
> SURJIT SINGH BARNALA
> *chief minister, Punjab*

A. When I had my last meeting with the prime minister this never came up. But suddenly in the evening we got a copy of the Government of India resolution announcing the formation of the commission. We had to move fast or we would have been faced with a fait accompli in the morning. So I flew to Delhi and told the prime minister that we had waited for Chandigarh for over 20 years. Now if there was another fortnight's delay, it wouldn't be such a calamity. But again they disappointed us by setting terms of reference for the Desai panel that left us completely baffled.

Q. *Is it so that some of your people don't want Chandigarh now?*

A. No, not really. The problem, let me tell you, is that everybody wants Chandigarh. But nobody wants to pay the price for it; 70,000 acres of land is, in any case, a stiff price.

Q. *Do you agree that the law and order in Punjab has worsened?*

A. I do not suffer from the illusion that there could be a quick solution to the Punjab problem. But the violence is overstated. The terrorists are on the run after the loss of their base in the Golden Temple. Many of their important leaders have been nabbed. The intelligence is giving us fairly good information now and we are better equipped in terms of communication, firepower and motivation.

Q. *Now that you yourself are waging a battle against these people, don't you think that the demand for the release of the Sikh detenus in Jodhpur and elsewhere is misplaced?*

A. On the other hand that may just help matters. I know this personally because, as a lawyer, I have even gone and defended the people in Jodhpur jail. Most of them are innocent people who had nothing to do with extremism. They should be released.

Q. *Even Simranjit Singh Mann?*

A. Yes. He has been in the jail for more than two years now. If no case is made out against him he is entitled to release.

Q. *Do you foresee having to call in the army in near future?*

A. The army, I am afraid, is no solution to the Punjab problem. The trouble with the army is that they only know how to kill and that means trouble. If the army comes people will run helter-skelter in fear and many will cross the borders again. Also, terrorists will leave Amritsar and Gurdaspur, go to other districts and kill people there. I don't want the army. They were here and did not do very much. In fact they are responsible for creating the current situation.

Q. *Do you still expect things to take a turn for the better?*

A. These are difficult times. But I am not afraid. I pray a lot, keep my cool and hope for better times.

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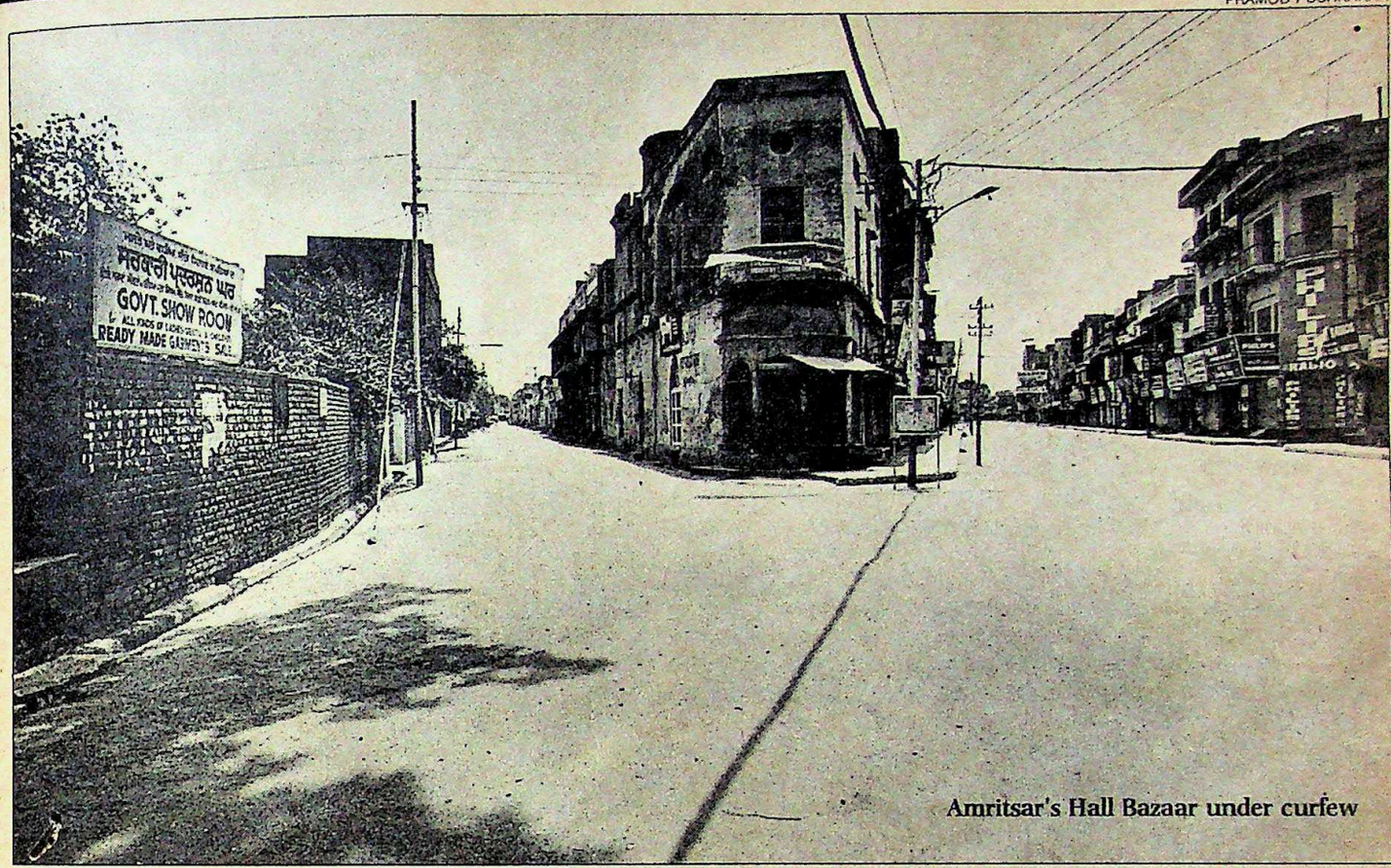

Amritsar's Hall Bazaar under curfew

A State Of Desolation

NO LONGER does death in Punjab flow only from the barrel of the extremist Sten-gun. In a state where, till recently, Sikhs and Hindus used to jointly help the victims of terrorist attacks, they are suddenly turning at each other's throats, giving a fresh fillip to the migration of the minorities. And with the growing communalism inevitably leading to tension between the paramilitary forces and the local constabulary, the Punjab Government and the Centre were forced to recast their strategy to effectively combat the terrorists.

A new communal monster now stalks the once lively plains of Punjab, reducing them to a frightful state of desolation. The evidence of the new threat lies scattered all over. Communal clashes have broken out recently in Patiala, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Nakodar, Batala and Amritsar, towns where curfew has become a part of life. Amritsar remained under curfew continuously for over 96 hours, beating even the 66-hour record set during Operation Bluestar. The death toll in streetside stabbings and clashes last fortnight was just four but there was enormous destruction of property and a clear schism was emerging between the two communities in the cities where Hindus are generally in majority. And as Shiv Sena activists went out on rampage against the Sikhs each time there was a terrorist strike, communal poison also spilled to the villages, where Sikhs were increasingly inclined to help terrorists. The same divide had also helped the Khalistan campaign become a movement among the Jat Sikhs in the sensitive districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur.

In this complicated scenario, extremism acquired an entirely new edge. Last fortnight, terrorists hiding in the wastelands along the Ravi river fired at a low-flying helicopter of the BSF. And though the airborne security men killed two of the terrorists with a light machine-gun and grenades, the message, that the men sneaking in from Pakistan were now bolder than before, was not lost on anyone. The terrorists were now operating in strength and with a sense of purpose. Killings were followed by widespread "orders" from loudspeakers mounted on vans. The extremists' main objective is to push Hindus out of the state so that it could lead to anti-Sikh riots outside, setting off a Sikh migration. From their point of view, fear in Punjab and outside is the key to Khalistan and they were using both the bullet and psychological warfare to achieve that objective.

The terrorists' mastery of psychological warfare is displayed with rustic ruthlessness in Tarn Taran, the Amritsar subdivision that terrorists claim to be Khalistan territory. The catchword for fear here is *jaago aayee* (wake up, your death has come), a chorus used with deadly effect in a series of supposedly-devotional songs available on cheap cassette tapes. These have several lines praising Bhindranwale and his cohorts punctuated with the invocation of *jaago aayee* said in a deadpan, menacing rhythm.

For the village Hindu, it is a bloodcurdling chant. In several passenger buses plying in the region, the tape has replaced age-old favourites, the bawdy drivers' lyrics. Admits a fearful resident of a village near Tarn Taran: "We have learnt to live with it in buses, melas and

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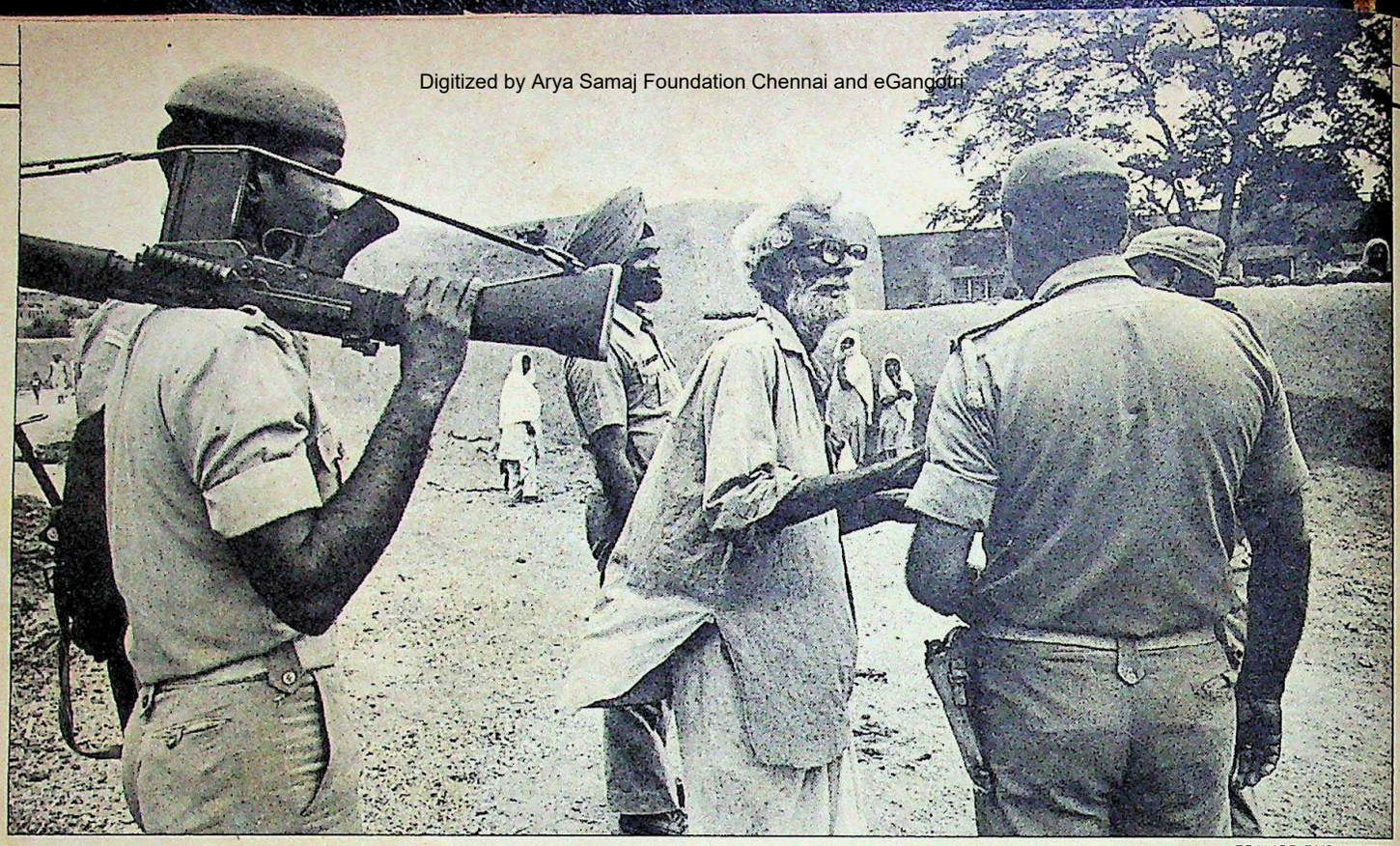

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

The bombardment of the minority mind is unrelenting. Most Hindus receive threatening letters and phone calls and the policemen have a tough time persuading them not to flee

dhabas. But once you hear it in your village gurudwara or from a vehicle mounted with a loudspeaker, it is time to pack up your boxes and leave."

The bombardment of the minority mind is unrelenting. Most well-to-do Hindus of the region receive threatening letters and phone calls. They pay outrageous amounts of money as tribute to the terrorists. In the sprawling gurudwara at Tarn Taran, a room proudly displays the signboard of the "Khalistan Commando Force". The blackboard kept alongside reads out the message of terror in stark relief: the names of people who still owe "tax", scribbled in white chalk. Last week the CRPF finally entered the shrine to arrest 17 youngsters from the room amid protests from gurudwara leaders.

Sikhs in several localities of Hindu-dominated cities live in a similar fear. In Amritsar's Krishna Nagar, where 12 Hindus were killed in a terrorist raid in May, a large number of Sikhs have left for the safety of Sikh-dominated localities. Sikhs also felt the vengeful wrath of Hindus in Nakodar (pop: 35,000) near Amritsar, where a number of Sikh shops and houses were ransacked by Shiv Sena hordes after the terrorist firing last fortnight that left over 15 persons injured.

The Hindu frustration is now finding a new expression in Punjab. Says Anil, a young activist of the Hindu Shiv Sena in Nakodar: "What can we Hindus do except to try and save our lives when the prime minister of the country does not have the time from planting trees ?" But the Shiv Sena people are themselves doing no good to the cause of their nation or even the community. They do not even go out to help the rural Hindu families which have shifted to the cities. On the other hand, they make lives of the village Hindu, a hopeless minority, even more insecure.

WITH the day-and-night vigil that security men have to keep, they are inevitably becoming edgy and trigger-happy. The sad fact was startlingly evident in several incidents last fortnight. Near Dera Baba Nanak in the Gurdaspur sector, an ambush party of the BSF fired, even without shouting a warning, at one of its own patrols that had happened to stray into the region. Two men died. In Chandigarh, a Hindu lawyer had an altercation in his house with a young Sikh client and began to shout that a terrorist had come to kill him. The panicky youngster fled and was shot by the guard at the adjoining house.

But both these incidents pale into comparison with the one at village Rupewal near Nakodar in the Jalandhar district where the death of Joginder Singh, a prosperous Jat farmer, and his son, Balwant, brought over 10,000 angry villagers into the streets and made the Punjab Police register a case of murder against nine CRPF jawans. It all started when Bachna, a Harijan, bought six watermelons for Rs 5 from Joginder Singh's farm, but on his way out, tried to filch two more. Joginder Singh's son Balwant caught him and gave him a sound thrashing. Bachna first went to the police station at Shahkot, 8 km away, but when the policemen dismissed his injuries as minor, he made for the nearby CRPF post and complained that he and the other Hindus in the village had been beaten up by Sikh terrorists hiding there.

In a fit of over-zeal, the CRPF sent a nine-man patrol to the village. "They came shouting abuses and beat up all of us," says Charan Kaur, Joginder Singh's widow. In the altercation that followed, the CRPF men shot Joginder Singh and his son. The incident caused widespread resentment as villagers refused to cremate the bodies till action was taken against the CRPF men. The Punjab Police promptly registered a case of murder against them.

Fresh evidence of the growing distrust between the CRPF and the predominantly

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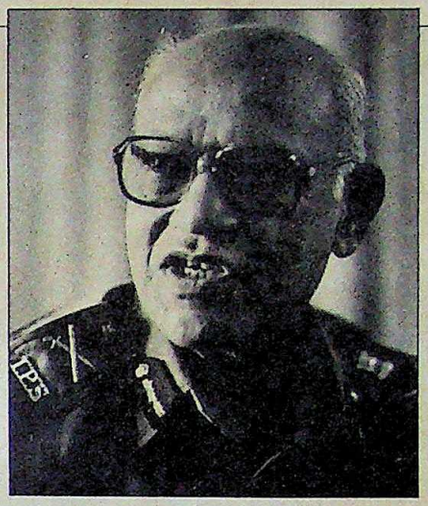
Sikh Punjab Police—an inevitable fallout of the growing communal divide—came from Amritsar where personnel of the CRPF and Punjab Police openly clashed on the streets. After the Punjab Police openly accused the CRPF of "murdering" Harminder Singh Shammi, a small-time Sikh leader who, they claim, was carrying a revolver and had defied their road-block, a CRPF patrol on the same day angrily protested when a police party fired indiscriminately in the predominantly Hindu Katra Dullo locality. When a Punjab Police officer fired at the CRPF, a hand-to-hand scuffle ensued. Later in the day, the Punjab Police registered a case against the CRPF patrol for dacoity. They in turn filed a similar first information report.

The developments caused immediate consternation in the Union Home Ministry. The directors-general of Punjab Police and the CRPF were immediately rushed to Amritsar, where they held a joint *durbar* of the two forces. The rift, however, did serve a useful purpose. It gave an impetus to the finalisation of a new security plan for the region, which was being debated in the corridors of North Block for several days. Under the plan, law and order in the region will be handled under a unified command. In Amritsar, for example, Superintendent of Police S.S. Virk, an officer from the Maharashtra cadre like Ribeiro, has been promoted and appointed the deputy inspector general of the CRPF. The Government also inducted K.P.S. Gill, an Assam cadre officer, as the inspector-general of the CRPF in the district heading the unified command of the state police and paramilitary forces. A similar move is planned for Gurdaspur. Besides, Ribeiro has been appointed ex-officio director-general of police for the 60,000-strong CRPF and BSF units in Punjab.

The hope is that the unified command will help dilute distrust between the two forces. Also it will make for more coordinated working. But the change will also have to be accompanied by a new, firm perspective plan. "Our effort so far has been based on knee-jerk reactions. This is sheer waste," said an officer, adding: "Operating like this amounts to what the Punjabis would call *goo wich lathi marna* (banging your lathi in horse-shit)."

In Delhi as well as in Chandigarh several new plans were being discussed. Said an officer: "Now it is a state of insurgency and the Government has finally decided to tackle the terrorism before thinking of political solutions." Consequently, the Centre has told the state that resources will not be a constraint. Punjab is to shortly take delivery of 60 new Maruti Gypsies fitted with wireless sets, apart from new arms. Besides, the army has been asked to release a large number of Jonga patrol vehicles, which are sturdier and faster than Jeeps. This will be followed by helicopters for surveillance and pursuit.



Police Chief Ribeiro believes that his forces have succeeded in their first task of engaging and drawing the terrorists into combat.

ON A long-term basis, Home Ministry planners are considering the proposal to give the CRPF and BSF jawans the ordinary police powers of search and arrest, besides substantially increasing the number of police stations. It has also been decided that Amritsar district, which includes the holy city with its one million fractious people and over 1,300 villages, is too unwieldy to be managed by a single police chief. Accordingly, a new police district will be created for Tarn Taran and later for Batala in Gurdaspur.

The Government will wait for the outcome of this effort before considering army deployment. At the moment that alternative is not even being contemplated. Barnala is strongly opposed to calling out the army *(see interview)*. The army itself, smarting under the impact of the post-Bluestar desertions, is not too keen to do a repeat of Operation Shop, the code-name for the highly unpopular clean-up campaign in the Punjab countryside after June 1984. Also, experts dispute the hypothesis that the army will be able to bring back normalcy. They argue that the army, which operates in large number and with exaggerated firepower, will have the anaesthetic effect of a shot of morphine rather than be a remedy. "The army," said an officer, "could at best stay in that strength for six to eight months and once it goes, terrorists will raise their heads again."

It has even been suggested in some security circles that in case it is considered unavoidable to use expertise and manpower from the army, a certain number of troops and officers could be taken on deputation in the CRPF or the BSF. The precedent is the appointment of an army brigadier as the IG of police in Mizoram in the tumultuous mid-70s. "Armymen operating in khaki is the best way of using them without causing any fresh feelings against the olive-green," said a BSF officer in Gurdaspur.

That these options are even being discussed now is an indication of the increased concern about the situation. Last fortnight when Barnala talked of declaring a "total war" on terrorism, he was underlining his admission of the fait accompli of having to fight terrorists bullet-for-bullet without expecting a quick return to peace.

Some indication of the new resolve was available last fortnight as a combined BSF and Punjab Police patrol killed three dreaded terrorists, including Baba Ranjit Singh, one of the top 10 terrorists in Punjab, and the Punjab Police in Amritsar arrested Avtar Singh, the officiating chief of the Babbar Khalsa group. Four of the 38 names on the police hit list of top terrorists have now been accounted for. Almost immediately, Ribeiro recommended a promotion for the commander of the BSF party, offered to induct him in Punjab Police and ensured that the cash reward of Rs 1 lakh for the policemen was paid out in a record 48 hours.

Ribeiro believes that his forces have succeeded in their first task, of at least engaging the terrorists and drawing them into combat. In his scheme of things, pressure from the unified command will lead to more such encounters, draw the terrorists out to attack the security forces and give his men the chance to hit back. But, unfortunately, this will mark the onset of not peace but of the more conventional insurgency which could only mean that the next chapter in the state's violent history will also be written in Indian blood.

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CONGRESS(I)

The Rajiv Sabha

IF IT was an attempt to fill the Congress(I) Parliamentary Party with those loyal to him personally, then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi scored a clean victory over virtually everybody else in the party last fortnight. As the countdown for the election of 45 new Rajya Sabha members began, it was evident that most of the 30 Congress(I) candidates, who were assured of their victory, owed their selection only to the party president and to nobody else.

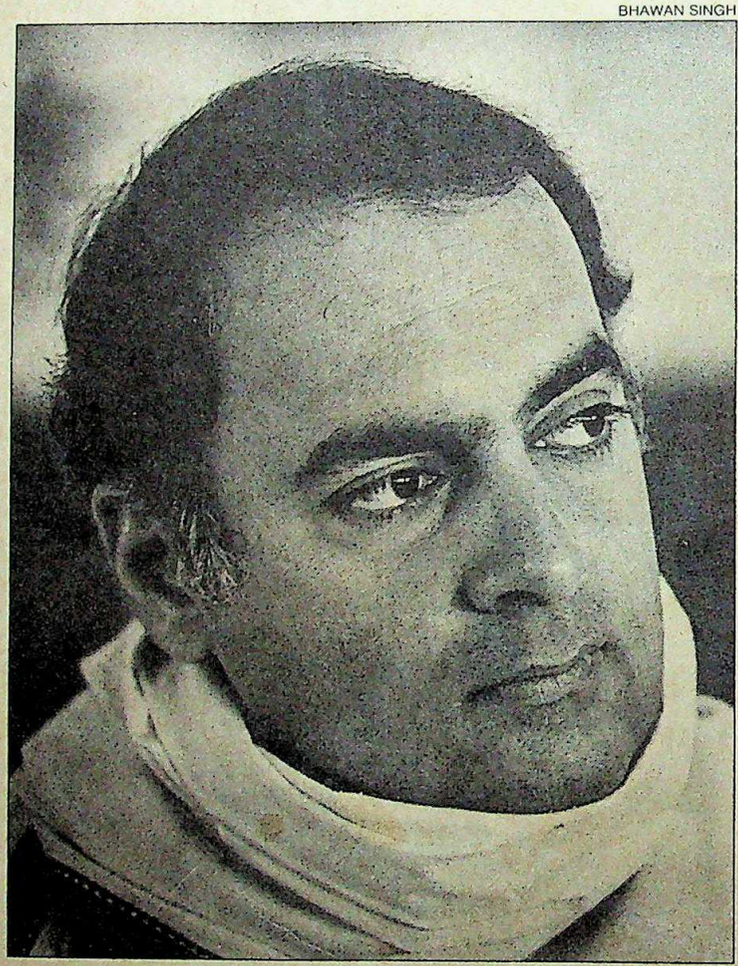
Once the decision to show the door to those of doubtful loyalty to the party supremo was taken, the axe fell indiscriminately on 21 of the 30 retiring Congress(I) members. In the process the political careers of several luminaries were abruptly jeopardised—including the AICC(I) Working President, Kamalapati Tripathi, Secretary of the Congress(I) Parliamentary Party J.K. Jain, and a former president of INTUC, N.K. Bhatt, all of whom were denied renomination. Also unexpectedly dropped was AICC(I) Treasurer Sitaram Kesri, a veteran of 16 years' standing in the Rajya Sabha, on the plea that he was overaged and was needed for party work.

While the party's bigwigs fell like ninepins, they were replaced in most cases, barring that doyen of administrators L.K. Jha, by upcoming safari-suited young men and well-educated women with savvy in their 30s. As many as eight of the 30 party nominees are in this age group. In fact, the average age of the 30 Congress(I) nominees was less than 43, as against over 50 during Mrs Gandhi's regime.

And when the party workers left for their states after the nominations had been decided, it was clear that none of the chief ministers, Union Cabinet ministers, PCC(I) chiefs or local power-brokers could claim that they were able to influence the selection of any of the 30 candidates finally approved by the Congress (I) Parliamentary Board (CPB) in which Rajiv and his own collection of data had played a decisive role. Said Raghunandan Lal Bhatia, one of the AICC(I) general secretaries: "It was a well-thought-out decision to give representation to young and professional Congress(I) workers who can be expected to make a useful contribution to the debates in the Rajya Sabha. And age is no limitation for that kind of job." Added Arjun Singh, AICC(I) vice-president: "Their selection was done after careful examination of their track record and their capacity to meet the challenges ahead for us."

Obviously the selection process was tailored to meet the challenge to Rajiv from within the party. For the first time, the CPB did not lay down any guidelines for the selection of its Rajya Sabha nominees. The high command allowed the PCC(I)'s from the eight states—Rajasthan, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab—to collect applications for filling the vacancies in the Upper House. The PCC(I)'s received over a thousand applications for the 30 seats and over 100 applications were received by the AICC(I) directly but a majority of those selected were from the latter lot.

BHAWAN SINGH



The selection process was tailored to face the challenge to Rajiv from within the party...

Not surprisingly, the two meetings of the CPB at the prime minister's residence were a bit of a formality. All the chief ministers and the PCC(I) chiefs landed there unaware of the fact that the decisions had already been taken and they had been summoned only to sign on the dotted line. Admitted a dejected chief minister who was unable to get any of his nominees included in the list of candidates from his state: "All the names suggested by us were rejected on one ground or the other. We had no alternative but to accept the names suggested to us because we had nothing against them. After all, they had been chosen by the prime minister after careful scrutiny."

The only qualification that mattered was loyalty to Rajiv. Once that was ensured nothing else seemed to matter—not inexperience in contesting elections or failure in recent polls or even a sullied image. The prime minister and his aides had done their homework well in advance so that even as the members of the CPB sat flipping through numerous applications, the Prime Minister's Secretariat was getting in touch with the potential candidates directly. It was in response to summons from the Prime Minister's Secretariat that over a dozen candidates were flown into the capital on the day of the CPB meeting.

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Jayanthi Natarajan, a 34-year-old advocate and TNYC(I) general secretary, was pulled out of a court hearing in Madras by the local police and put in the executive class of the first available flight to Delhi. In the capital she was received by TNYC(I) President Thangabalu, driven to the prime minister's office at 10.30 p.m. and told about her nomination to the Rajya Sabha, given to her in the teeth of opposition by the seniormost AICC(I) General Secretary G.K. Moopanar.

Ballav Patnaik did not have a clue of what was happening in his state. He reluctantly gave his nod when the name was brought for approval in the CPB meeting.

Similar surprises were in store for other chief ministers too. For example, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Moti Lal Vora had a list of over 100 candidates, including veterans like former chief minister Govind Narain Singh, former minister K.P. Singh and even J.K.Jain, but he

Khatoon, 37, even withdrew quietly from Congress politics during the Janata regime to "improve her educational qualifications". Said Thakur: "I am personally indebted to Rajivji for giving me the chance to do something for the party under his leadership." Added Khatoon: "Rajivji has shown great respect to women belonging to the minority community by choosing me for such a responsibility."

In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh too, the

NOMINATED

L.K. Jha

Jayanthi Natarajan

Satish Sharma

Kalpnath Rai

Saeeda Khatoon

S.S. Thakur

She was on board the flight to Madras next morning to be in time for filing her nomination. A granddaughter of former chief minister Bhaktavatsalam, she had never fought an election earlier and joined the party only two years ago. Said an exultant Natarajan: "The Rajya Sabha ticket came as a surprise to me as well. My selection is entirely due to the prime minister."

In Orissa also, a similarly dramatic operation was carried out by AICC(I) Joint Secretary Tara Devi, who flew in a special plane to Bhubaneswar to inform Sushila Tiriya, again a general secretary of the state Youth Congress(I) —and a tribal— to file her nomination for one of the three seats from Orissa. Chief Minister Janaki

...Most of the 30 Congress(I) candidates owed their selection only to the party president.

was handed over a list which had unexpected names like state Youth Congress(I) chief Surinder Singh Thakur and Saeeda Khatoon, a former Youth Congress(I) worker. In addition, Captain Satish Sharma, a former Indian Airlines colleague of the prime minister who quit his job in 1983 and has been looking after Amethi, was also foisted on the state.

While Sharma has never fought an election, both Thakur and Khatoon were defeated in the last assembly elections.

chief ministers were totally ignored. While L.K. Jha was chosen to replace Sita Ram Kesri, Surinder Singh Ahluwalia, a nonentity in local politics and a rich trader was selected, ignoring the claims of many senior and loyal party workers. Ahluwalia's claim for a ticket was that he was one of the few Sikh leaders who had supported Operation Bluestar and has been in close touch with Minister of State for Defence Arun Singh.

In the process of locating loyalists, even the oft-trumpeted criterion of a clean image was forgotten. Mahendra Prashad, one of the six party candidates to lose in the last Lok Sabha election in Bihar and known as "King Mahendra" in the state for his strong-arm tactics, was renomi-

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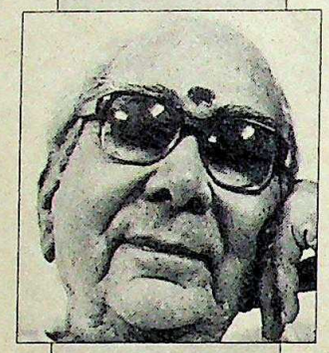
nated for the second time as the party's fifth candidate from Bihar. The ruling party can win only four candidates on the basis of its own strength but it allotted its surplus votes to Prashad, known to be close to Makhan Lal Fotedar.

In Uttar Pradesh too, Kalpnath Rai, who is hardly known for his clean image, was able to secure a second nomination for himself. In 1980, he was chosen for the Rajya Sabha by Sanjay Gandhi even after losing the Lok Sabha election and was subsequently made a minister in the Union Cabinet. Considered to be a close associate of R.K. Dhawan, he was dropped from the Cabinet for his controversial dealings as a minister. Rai has been a most vocal and outspoken dissident but according to a party insider, he got the nod because he personally assured the prime minister that henceforth he would stand by him.

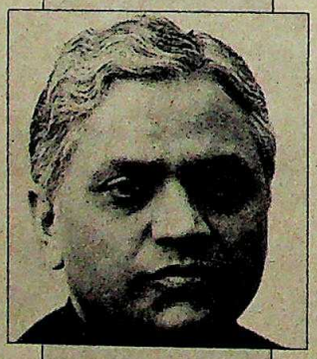
Similarly, in Maharashtra also, none of the nominees of Chief Minister S.B. Chavan or ex-chief minister Vasantrao Patil or even state party chief Prabha Rau were favoured with a ticket. Instead, the three fresh candidates the party chose were all those who—unlike the aforementioned trio—had stayed with the party from the very beginning. In fact, the selection of the Nanded journalist, Suryakanta Patil, and Chandrapur district chief Naresh Pugalia was a rebuff to Chavan and Rau, respectively, as Patil and Pugalia are known to belong to factions opposed to them.

DROPPED



K.P. Tripathi

S.R. Kesri



J.K. Jain

The party nominations—centralised and based on no other criterion other than loyalty to Rajiv—expectedly drew flak. Ram Dhan, AICC(I) general secretary, sent in his resignation from the post in a letter he shot off to Rajiv the day after the CPB meeting, taking objection to the fact that no new Harijan candidates were nominated from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Ram Dhan's dissatisfaction with the nominees was shared—though for different reasons—most acutely by Bihar's leaders. Even Kamalapati Tripathi, who himself lost Rajya Sabha nomination, joined Ram Dhan when he made a public statement that more Harijans and tribals should have been selected for the Upper House. But Arjun Singh refuted the charge of Harijans being ignored. Said Singh: "If we look at the selection nationally and not statewise then this charge is baseless."

The nomination of "outsiders" has always been resented by local units and Bihar was particularly unfortunate this time round. Three of the party's candidates—Jha, Ahluwalia, and C.P. Thakur, a Delhi University lecturer who came into contact with Rajiv during the latter's days as general secretary of the party—though technically Biharis, only nominally belong to that state. None of them have been politically active in Bihar. Manorama Pandey was renominated for the fourth ticket and the surplus votes for the fifth seat were given to the controversial leader, Mahendra Prashad, thus shutting out any fresh faces. Expressing the general feeling, a senior MP known to be close to Rajiv confessed: "Old-time Congress workers have got nothing and there is great demoralisation in the rank and file."

As party leaders nursed their bruised egoes, one thing became clear: the Rajya Sabha nominations are only the latest evidence of Rajiv Gandhi's desire to shape the party and the Government the way he wants it. And this is not a recent trend. Of the 50 nominations given by the party when the Rajya Sabha elections last took place in March 1984, as many as 10 were Rajiv's favourites. The Congress(I)'s direction is clear, but not so the quality or impact of the emerging Rajiv Sabha.

—PRABHU CHAWLA with bureau reports

UTTAR PRADESH

Fires of Hate

THE SMOKE had barely settled over riot-torn Barabanki in eastern Uttar Pradesh last fortnight, when another communal conflagration erupted in Allahabad, leaving four dead and scores injured. The city of Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru—which had survived for the last six years as an oasis of peaceful communal coexistence—was plunged suddenly into a nightmare of chaos and dusk-to-dawn curfews as police grappled with mobs to restore law and order.

In Barabanki (INDIA TODAY, June 15) the authorities were able to make a convincing case that the riots were the handiwork of criminals and smugglers who converted a communal conflict, arising from the Babri Masjid controversy, to their advantage in order to embarrass the district administration. In Allahabad, while it is difficult to prove that criminals were behind the mayhem, it is quite evident that there was an element of careful planning and coordination behind the riots. The timing—on June 14—was a little too perfect to be dismissed as merely a coincidence. On that day, the entire district administration including the district magistrate, the additional district magistrate, the superintendent of police, the senior superintendent of police and even the station house officer were on leave. Police protection for the city had dwindled to a minimum because the bulk of the force had been transferred temporarily to Varanasi for the prime minister's visit. And on the night of June 14 when mobs clashed with the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC), there was a power black-out throughout the city. This was followed by simultaneous bomb blasts in five different localities. According to police sources, 50 country-made bombs were lobbed.

What sparked off the arson, looting and bombing were nails driven into the wall of a mosque by a shopkeeper who was constructing an adjoining wall. The mosque was a more or less deserted monument in the Patthar Gali of the Nakkas Kona area in the thickly populated section of the walled city. It was built, not by any Muslim emperor, but by Bega Bai, a prostitute. It is situated in the Hindu populated area, a stone's throw from the Muslim mohallas.

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Communal passions began to run high when mobs gathered to demand that the construction of the wall be stopped. A police officer in the area was in the process of negotiating a settlement between the two factions when an explosion shattered the air. That was all that was needed to trigger off clashes between the two communities in which shops were looted and burned. Said shopkeeper Ram Parshad: "This was definitely a pretext to aggravate the already communally surcharged atmosphere in the city simmering since the Ram Janmabhoomi issue."

Only a small police party assisted by some PAC men was on duty under the charge of a circle officer. It became the target of brickbatting from the streets as well as from rooftops. With senior officials on leave and little or no reinforcements in sight, the occasion seemed tailor-made for trouble-makers. Quickly, the clashes spread to Mirpur, and Tulsipur— localities as far away as 2 km from the Beka Bai mosque—an indication, the police said, of planning.

T. Tripathi, DIG (Kanpur range), said that an investigation has already been launched into charges that the riots were pre-planned. He said that crude bombs were used by rioters to "scare away the masses and with the intention to incite communal fervour". Added Director-General of Police D.K. Aggarwal: "In essence it was not a communal riot. There was a lot of pent-up frustration and criminals took advantage of it."

While the absence of senior district officials encouraged rioters to run amok, the absence of political leaders delayed the start of the healing process during the aftermath. Six of the area's nine Congress(I) MLA's did not even visit the affected areas for a week. And the city's flamboyant Member of Parliament, Amitabh Bachchan, issued newspaper advertisements from Delhi appealing for communal harmony. Ravi Wadhawan, chairman of the Amitabh Bachchan Fans Association, toured the riot-affected areas with a bus-load of workers and a relief van. He claimed it was "the appeal of Bachchanji that helped assuage communal feelings".

But a local social worker disputes this claim. He said that during and after the riots, a large area covered by five police stations was under curfew. "How could one read the appeal of Bachchan in the newspapers," he asked, "until the relaxation of the curfew which began on June 22?" On the other hand, Lok Dal Vice-President H.N. Bahuguna, who was trounced by Bachchan during the last general elections, was not allowed to enter the city. Tripathi said that Bahuguna had not been denied a curfew pass as an individual. But he had insisted on taking a crowd of workers with him to the area and this was found to be impermissible because it would have politicised an already tense situation "and made matters worse," he claimed.

Photographs by S. PREMI

PAC on patrol (top); and Naseem Khan with dead birds: communal nightmare

A bunch of other VIP's, however, visited the city in rapid succession. Chief Minister Bir Bahadur Singh, who has rarely paid visits to cities torn by communal strife, made an unscheduled visit to Allahabad. Singh later told reporters that the riot "was not communal but engineered by anti-social elements". And he sounded a stern warning in which he vowed "not to spare any anti-social elements taking advantage of communal feelings." Union Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions P. Chidambaram, and Union Minister of State for Welfare Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, also toured the affected areas of the city on June 25 .

Arrests followed. Vashist Narain alias Bhukkal Maharaj, a man with a criminal record, was rounded up for "aggravating tensions". And the police are now on the look-out for two other underworld leaders from the minority community for their complicity in the riots. One of them, in fact, had earlier been taken into police custody but had to be released when a Congress(I) MLA intervened. This has given the prevailing communal atmosphere a strange twist. Sentiment in the majority community perceives discrimination in the way the underworld figures have been handled and Bhukkal Maharaj has become somewhat of a hero to them.

Meanwhile the PAC continues to come under fire. Shopkeeper Naseem Khan, who does a thriving business selling birds, told INDIA TODAY that during the curfew he was not allowed to go out and feed his parrots and pigeons and many of them died of starvation. On one occasion, he said, when he attempted to feed them he was beaten up by PAC personnel. But members of the majority community maintain that the police was not tough enough and exhibited too much restraint. One senior police official said that in cases like this "we always get it from both sides. But we have accepted that this is going to be our lot. We are always going to be criticised for being pitted against one community or the other. But it is better to have a situation in which it is police versus community rather than community versus community".

In the aftermath of Barabanki and Allahabad, one fact is abundantly clear— that the Ram Janmabhoomi issue is far from dead and even the smallest incident is capable of converting a city into a battleground. Criminal elements as well as politicians have exploited this situation, a fact that will call for ever-increasing police intelligence and vigilance.

—S. PREMI in Allahabad

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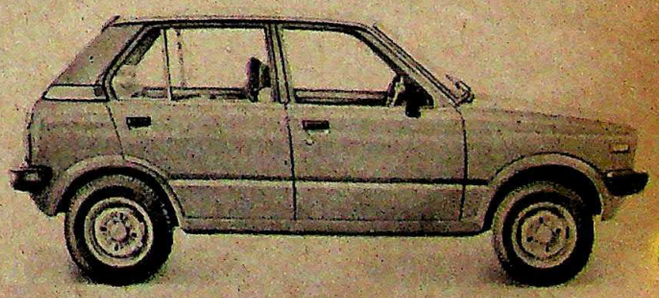

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MIZORAM

Peace Time

IN THE bustling Upper Bazar in Aizawl, the once-embattled capital of the Union Territory of Mizoram, scores of teenagers throng a modest building displaying a signboard that reads: "Emissaries of Peace". They crowd the narrow, wooden staircase leading to the modest first-floor office which has a portrait of Laldenga and Mizo National Front (MNF) slogans on the walls. In command, obviously, is a slim Mizo woman with an air of quiet efficiency.

She is none other than Vanlalzari who, as the teenaged stenographer to the then inspector-general of police at Aizawl, had been convicted for a role in the conspiracy to kill her boss, a deputy inspector-general and a senior superintendent in the Aizawl police headquarters. Then a fanatic in love with one of the assassins, Vanlalzari is chastened and mellowed after nearly a decade in jail. "It is true that we fought for sovereignty," she says and asks almost self-righteously: "But sovereignty by itself does not mean freedom; Poland is sovereign, but is it free?"

This realism and yearning for peace found a new expression last fortnight as Laldenga, the former Indian army havaldar who led one of the bloodiest insurgencies in Indian history for over two decades, signed an agreement with Congress(I) Vice-President Arjun Singh. Under the agreement, he would share power with the Congress(I), with him as the chief minister, during the interim period between the agreement and the elections next year in Mizoram, now destined to be the 23rd state in the Union.

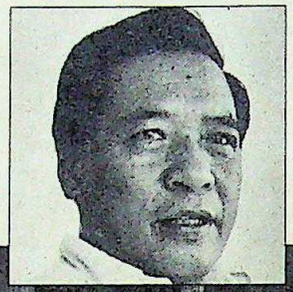
There was instant jubilation in Aizawl. Said C. Rochama, general secretary of the newly-formed Mizo Convention Party (MCP): "People of my age who saw the mayhem dread the very thought of it starting all over again. Everyone wants peace but with honour."

The political agreement stems from a clearer understanding of the reality on both sides. Laldenga and his close aides, including his army commander, "Brigadier-General" Tawnluia, were getting increasingly aware that with the change in the internal political situation and the Chinese preoccupied elsewhere, it was unlikely that their storm-troopers could take on the might of the Indian Army's 57 Mountain division based at Aizawl.

Similarly, the Congress(I), though unwilling to sacrifice power in the manner of Assam and Punjab, saw the writing on the wall. It had won the last election on the promise of peace with Laldenga and the delay in carrying out the promise had already caused fissures in the party. Party president and MP Lalduhoma and general secretary Malsawma quit and formed the MCP. The 10-year-old attempt at an accord finally succeeded when both parties realised that they did not have too many bargaining chips and needed each other.

State Congress(I) Chief Minister Lalthanhawla, a former functionary in the MNF civil wing, sums up the party's policy, saying: "Everyone wants to guard the interests of his party but we never held it above national interest. But we had to be careful. There have been accords in other places such as Punjab and Assam but the problems remained."

Even in Mizoram there is no guarantee that all the armed insurgents—about 500 in Bangladesh and 100 in Burma—will surrender along with their arms. Sources close to Laldenga are apprehensive that the rank and file of the MNF armed wing, which includes several hawks who will balk at the prospect of sharing power with the Congress(I), may pose problems for Laldenga. In the past, he has several times reached half-agreements with the Centre which his armed supporters have rejected. The Government, smarting under the Nagaland experience where a large section of the insurgents stayed back in the bush along with their weapons, was naturally unwilling this time to install Laldenga in power before he fulfilled his promise.



PIB

Laldenga (inset); and Rajiv with Lalthanhawla and Mizoram ministers

> "We fought for sovereignty. But sovereignty by itself does not mean freedom: Poland is sovereign, but is it free?"
>
> VANLALZARI
> *MNF activist*

But contrary to his slippery, non-committal reputation of the past, Laldenga is now emphatic that he will succeed in his mission. "Our fight was for acceptance as a self-respecting, self-determining and distinct ethnic group within India. Now that we have achieved that the problem is over," he says. If he means what he says, Mizoram could see an era of peace and prosperity and Aizawl, the only Indian city to be bombed and strafed by Indian Air Force fighters, is unlikely to see a repetition of the nightmare.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Aizawl

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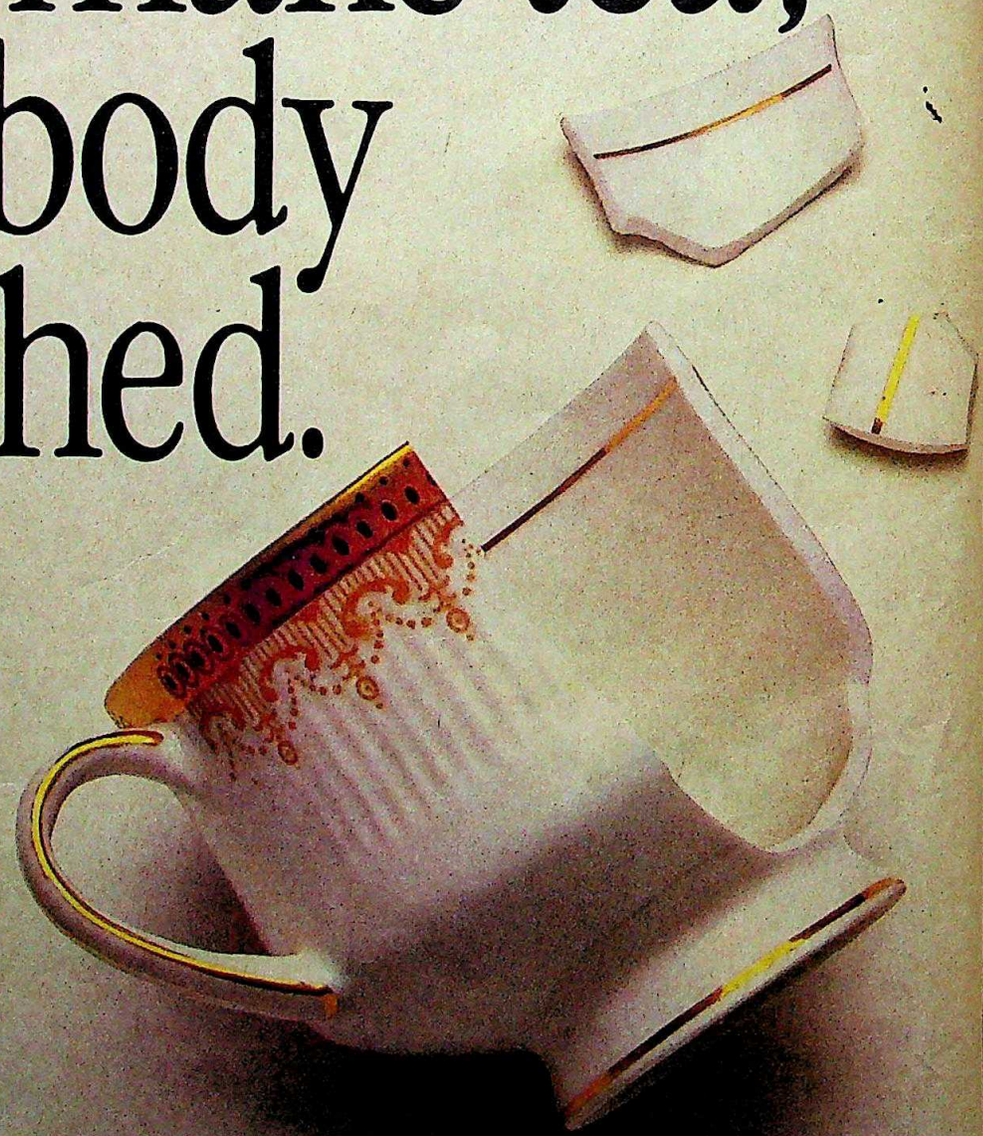
When Kilburn said they knew a better way to make tea, everybody laughed.



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For over a hundred years, tea had been made the same old way.

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Undeterred, Kilburn put their design engineers to work. They came up with a fermenting and drying process that's revolutionised tea making for ever: a vibro fluid bed dryer.

Here's how it works.

Tea, when it comes to the dryer, is in the form of soggy lumps. Its flavour and aroma come from the fine black hairs under the leaf. If the leaf gets damaged due to heat or friction, the taste suffers.

Kilburn's engineers overcame this by fluidising tea leaves (making them move like liquid with the help of air-jets). And using vibrations to lift the tea leaves as they move along the dryer, up into the air stream.

They also found that two-temperature drying at 140°C and 105°C was far better than the conventional 100°C.

A pilot plant was constructed to test this out. Some 6000 samples later, Kilburn were convinced they had a winner on their hands.

One vibro dryer replaces two conventional dryers in terms of output.

It has a fuel efficiency double that of a conventional dryer.

And because of its superior processing, tea producers can realise higher prices for their tea.

No wonder then, that 103 dryers have been sold worldwide.

By word of mouth alone.

Of course it's not as if Kilburn has gone overboard on tea.

This kind of fanatical attention goes into every Kilburn Project.

Whether it's Asia's largest spray dryer for instant coffee.

The conveyorised band dryers built for Synthetic Rubber.

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Kilburn is the only organisation in the country that caters to the entire spectrum of drying systems.

With a team of highly qualified design engineers. (They range from Aeronautical engineers to Metallurgists.)

Comprehensive pilot plant drying facilities to test solids, liquids and gases. (Recognised by the Dept. of Science and Technology, Govt. of India, as a full-fledged R&D unit.)

A quality control system so ruthless it would put Ghengiz Khan to shame.

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* (Aristotle. Philosopher and Guide.)

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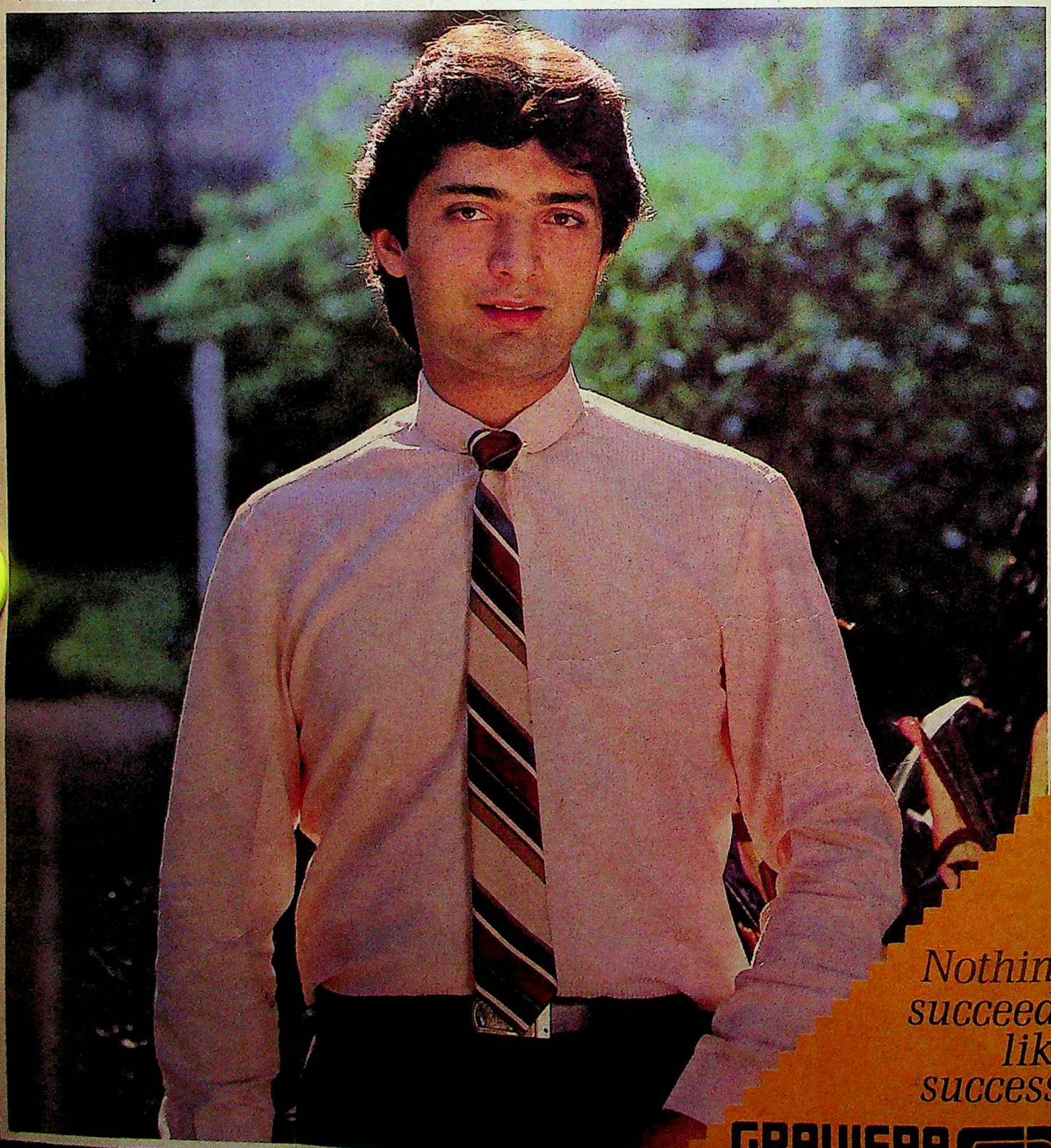

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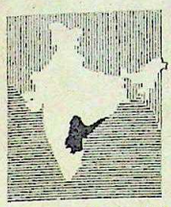
ANDHRA PRADESH

The Class Struggle



TELUGU DESAM Education Minister Galli Muddu Krishnama Naidu is a man in a hurry. Ever since the former lecturer in political science turned a minister in October 1984, he has been on a relentless campaign to "make education less of a business". His motto may not sound as grand as Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao's boast that his government "will not allow the sale of Saraswathi on the streets", but the 39-year-old grim-faced Naidu means business and is showing reformist zeal in making the quality of education in the state "a model for the entire country".

Many trend-setting schemes have been launched under Naidu's tutelage, but last fortnight a dismayed Naidu reluctantly applied the brakes when even parents joined hands with school-owners and managements to protest against the ceiling of Rs 25, Rs 30 and Rs 35 as tuition fee for primary, upper primary and high school students. The school-owners argued—and surprisingly, the parents agreed—that the stipulated fee was much too little and the fees they charged, between Rs 60 and Rs 100, was justifiable in view of the rising costs. Though the rule was made last year, Naidu was keen on enforcing it from this year but the school-owners retaliated by threatening to keep their schools closed even after the scheduled opening.

However, Naidu finally bought peace by taking recourse to the old strategem of setting up a committee. Even his worst critics agree that Naidu—one of the many professionals given Telugu Desam tickets in 1983; his was given at the instance of the villagers of Padanandipadu when he was teaching in Guntur—has pioneered several path-breaking programmes in education:

► Some 50 lakh school-goers in the 5-11 age group are screened twice a year and given free treatment for diseases and nutritional disorders.

► Twenty-eight lakh children in classes one and two whose parents earn less than Rs 6,000 a year get textbooks and two sets of uniforms every year.

► One thousand select schools in three districts will get 16 mm projectors to use audio-visual techniques for teaching class One and Two, for which video lessons have been devised by well-known film director Bapu and writer Mullapudi Venkataramana.

Naidu means business and is showing reformist zeal in making the quality of education in the state "a model for the entire country".

► Thirty thousand students, from the top 10 in the seventh and tenth classes and the intermediate examinations, in each of the 23 districts, will get Rs 500, Rs 700 and Rs 1,000 a year till they complete the tenth class, intermediate and graduate courses, respectively.

► Grants to all schools and colleges will be audited compulsorily by the Government every year.

Yet, many of Naidu's schemes have found disfavour with managements of educational institutions. Private colleges even went to court on the creation of the Andhra Pradesh College Service Commission (APCSC) for the recruitment of teachers. But their claim that they had a fundamental right to recruit staff was overruled by the high court and the APCSC began work in May this year. Now all 439 private colleges in the state can recruit teachers only through the APCSC.

Teachers also went to court, with the same fate, against the government order banning private tuition. The ban was imposed soon after the Telugu Desam came to power in 1983 but was not strictly enforced till April this year when Naidu even organised raids by revenue officials assisted by the police. Explains Naidu: "Salaries have gone up in few professions as in teaching. I joined as a lecturer for Rs 432 in 1973 and when I resigned to contest the elections in 1983, my pay was Rs 2,300. Teachers are given free time to read and prepare for their classes but instead give private tuitions and show little or no interest in college work." Naidu is now proposing to regulate the fees collected by tutorial colleges also.

Yet teachers have dubbed Naidu "anti-teachers" and accuse the Desam Government of carrying on a vendetta against them for going on strike before the examinations. Their feeling of being persecuted was reinforced last month when 1,700 out of 4,000 government lecturers were transferred from places where they had been teaching for more than six years. Argued Naidu: "The move is to prevent teachers from developing vested interests and concentrate on the job. Some of them even own bars and wineshops."

The only serious setback for Naidu came when the high court struck down as "unconstitutional", the state Government's decision to list the nominees to university syndicates instead of holding elections. The Government has gone in appeal to the Supreme Court against the high court's decision.

Meanwhile, the five-member committee to go into the question of the school fees is expected to tour the southern states to see if the suggested amounts are rational. It is expected to submit its report early this month. It is quite likely that the fees will be officially raised but this one small setback does not deter from the merits of the effort of Naidu in getting Andhra Pradesh struck off from the Union Government's list of "educationally-backward states".

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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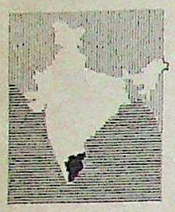
TAMIL NADU

Spy Seizures



WHEN the Tamil Nadu police swooped down on five Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils and repatriates last fortnight, the arrests quickly became the talk of the town. Tamil newspapers played up the story about how the police had, for the first time, all but busted a Sri Lankan spy ring. Said a top police official, who did not want to be quoted: "From what we have unearthed so far, the objectives of these spies were to infiltrate into the Tamil militant groups and sow seeds of dissension among them, to create political problems in Tamil Nadu by using the presence of the Tamil militants here, and finally to spy on the secrets of the groups and pass on information to the Sri Lankan Government."

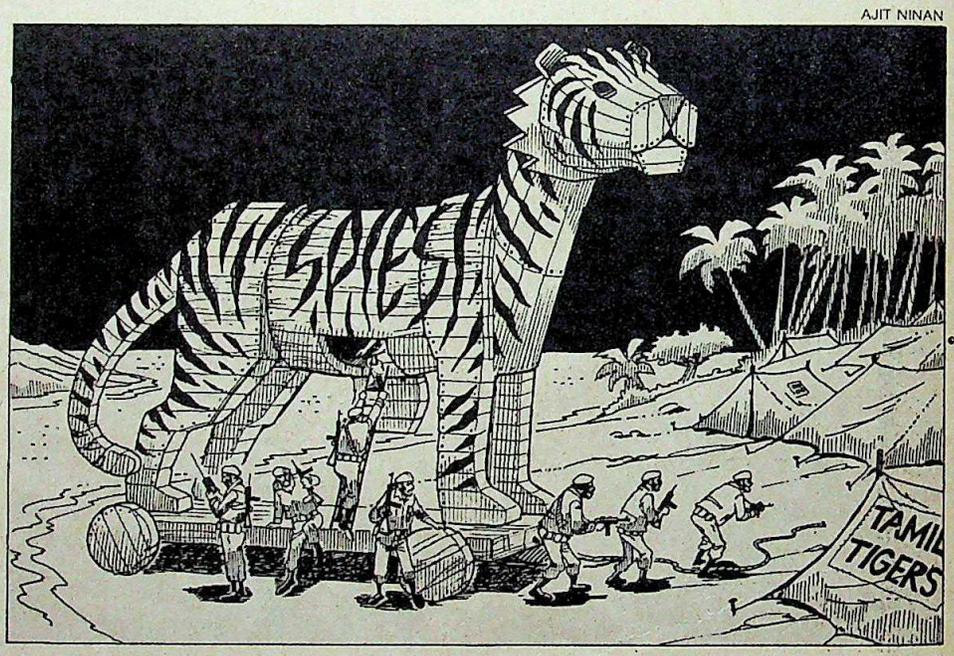
The five arrested were: Kandaswami Naidu, 42, a Sri Lankan Tamil and former CID sub-inspector and security officer to Sri Lankan Minister for Rural and Industrial Development; S. Thondaman, who came to India after the July 1983 riots; A.S. Manavi Thambi, 57, a Tamil repatriate and DMK sympathiser, who had come back from Sri Lanka under the Bandaranaike-Shastri pact; V.K.T. Balan, 35, partner of a travel agency in Madras; P. Ranjan, 22, a Sri Lankan Tamil who had taken refuge in Tamil Nadu and Radha Krishnan, 34, from Tamil Nadu.

The five were in police custody for two weeks, after which the Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, P. Murugesan, released both Thambi and Balan on conditional bail and remanded the other three to judicial custody. But other than these five, the police have also detained many more for interrogation on suspicion of complicity with the spy ring. According to reliable sources, even the Intelligence Bureau of the Central Government is involved in the investigation of the case.

Observers of the Sri Lankan scene have felt for some time now that moles had gained entry into the Tamil militant groups. The possibility of external agencies at work was first suspected after the bomb blast at Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) spokesman A.S. Balasingham's house in Madras. The suspicion was strengthened after the recent bomb explosion near the Marina Beach podium, from which DMK President M. Karunanidhi was addressing a meeting.

The growing disunity among the Tamil militants after the Thimpu talks had also raised doubts about disruptive forces at work behind the scenes. The LTTE disengaged itself from the apex body of all the militant groups—the Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF)—and then went to war with another ENLF constituent—the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation in Jaffna. There were also clashes between the LTTE and the Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF). And finally, there were serious internal dissensions within the Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE).

AJIT NINAN



All of this led to the feeling that there were outside agencies deliberately fomenting trouble. As K.Ketheeswaran, spokesman for the EPRL observed: "It was clear that Sri Lankan intelligence agencies had infiltrated into Tamil Nadu to capitalise on and aggravate some of these problems. These agencies were able to exploit the LTTE's misconception and misperception of itself for their own purposes."

The state police moved in, when it intercepted some communication between Naidu and the Sri Lankan Government. Although the contents of the messages are not known, the police official was categorical in saying that they were directly between Kandaswami and Colombo and not routed through the Sri Lanka deputy high commissioner's office in Madras. In the interrogation, Naidu is also reported to have owned responsibility for the bomb blast in Balasingham's house. The police also found that Naidu had made a couple of secret trips to Colombo under a bogus passport taken out in the name of Nadarajah. Expectedly, cases have been registered against the suspected spies for violation of the Official Secrets Act, the Indian Passports Act, the Indian Foreigners' Act and the Explosives Act.

In apprehending only those known to be close to Thondaman—leader of the Tamils of Indian origin in Sri Lanka, who has denied having anything to do with the five arrested—the Tamil Nadu police has created the impression that they have been selective in the arrests they have made. Police sources confirm that the spy scandal investigation has been wholly the initiative of the state. It is not coincidental that Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran was unhappy that Thondaman had not visited him on his last trip to Madras but had met Karunanidhi. He is reported to have said: "I gave him so much bandobast, but he did not care to meet me," although the fact is he had not given Thondaman an appointment.

While the full dimensions of the spy scandal will only unfold in the court, the case took a new dimension with Kandaswami's admission that he had undertaken to promote the interests of the Sri Lankan president's son, Ravi Jayewardene, as the potential successor, as against the National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali. With the arrest of known DMK sympathiser Thambi, the disclosures in court may well have repercussions not just on Indo-Sri Lanka relations but also on intra-party relations in Tamil Nadu.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

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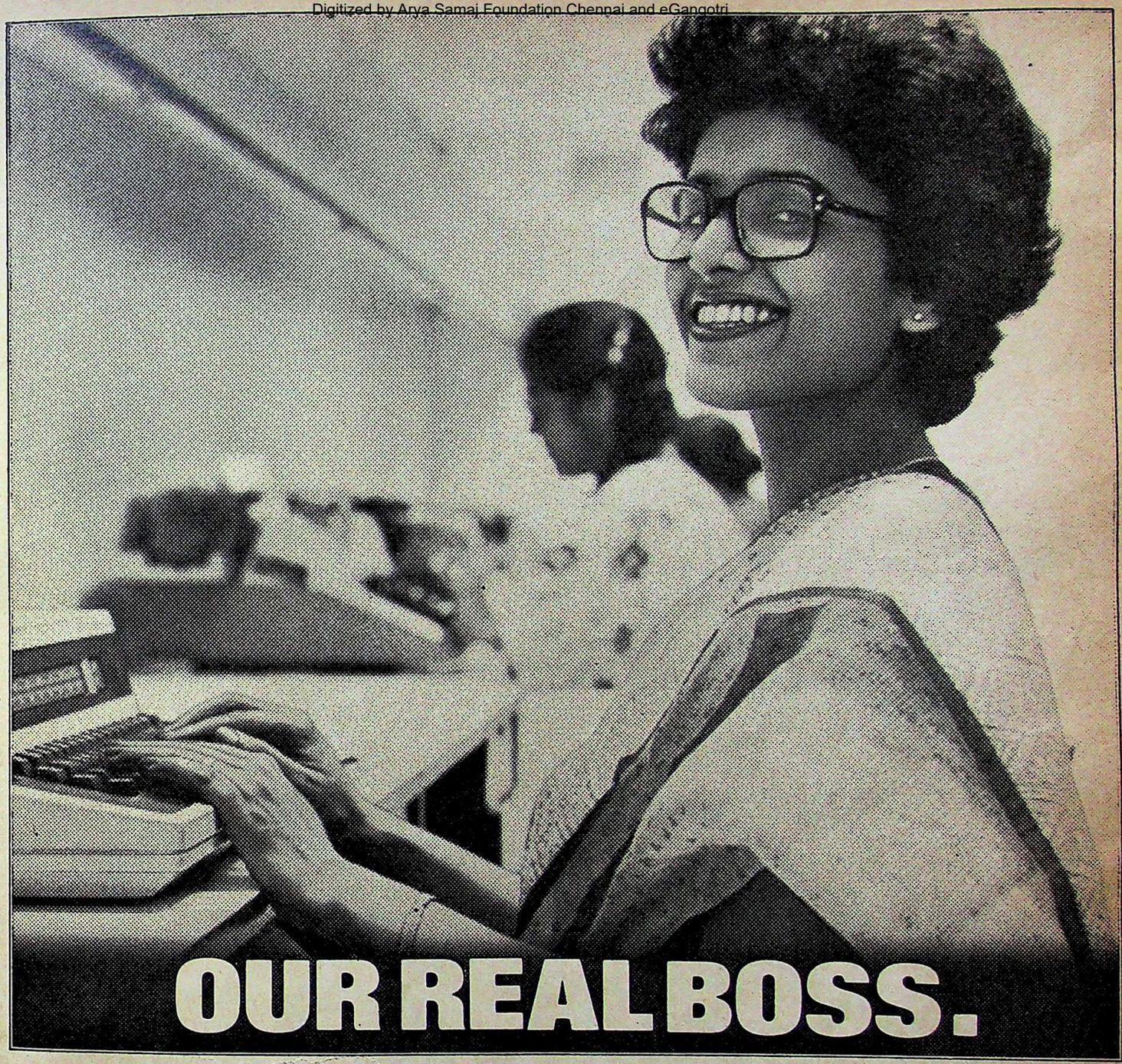

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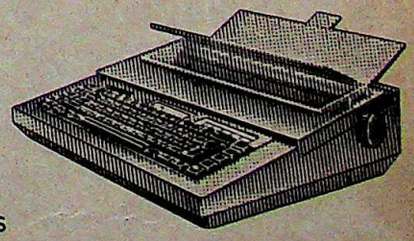

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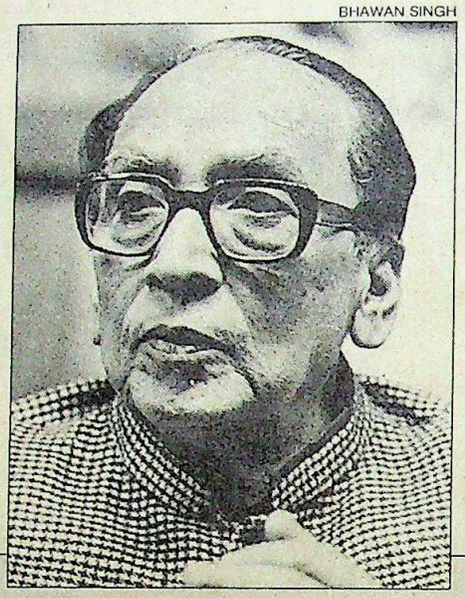
ASOKE SEN

Property Problems

BHAWAN SINGH



ASOKE Sen, Union law minister and one of the country's finest legal brains, is currently embroiled in an unseemly controversy involving some prized residential property in Calcutta. Battling the law minister are 19 flat-owners of Penn Court—a six-storeyed block of deluxe apartments in the city's most exclusive locality of Alipore. At stake for the flat-owners—most of whom are businessmen not wanting to be identified—is their right to the premises of Penn Court, and for Sen, 72, the right to construct another set of apartments in an adjoining plot which can fetch upwards of Rs 4 crore on sale.

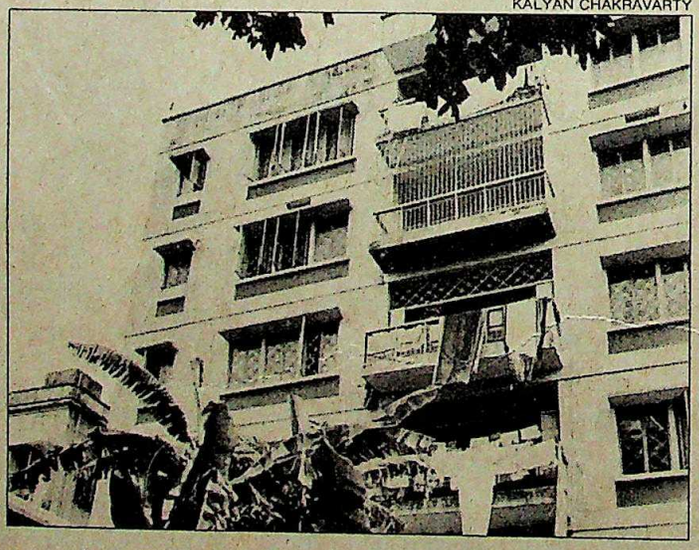
Accusing Sen of having misled the Calcutta Municipal Corporation (CMC) for obtaining permission to construct a new block of apartments, the flat-owners claim that Sen is now trying to evict them because they have been resisting his efforts at encroaching on their property. Sen, on the other hand, contends that the Penn Court residents are trying to "blackmail" him by raising "ridiculous" objections against the new building when, in fact, their contentions have no legal substance at all.

Flat-owners claim that Sen has misled the Calcutta Municipal Corporation and is now trying to evict them because they resisted his efforts at encroaching on their property.

The dispute arose in April when Penn Court residents found a new building coming up on a vacant adjoining plot of land and workers dumping debris on their parking lots. They learnt to their dismay that Penn Properties, owned by Sen, his wife and children, was claiming ownership over the entire undivided property—a boundary wall dividing the two had been pulled down in 1976 on Sen's request—and had obtained the CMC's sanction to construct an 11-storeyed building with a built-up floor area of about 80,000 square feet. The flat-owners also discovered that the parking space for the new building would entail demolition of a part of their own parking space, water reservoir and pumping station.

After several unsuccessful attempts to get the construction stopped by the local police, the enraged flat-owners hired Congress(I) MLA and lawyer Rajesh Khaitan to file a petition challenging Penn Properties' claim to show the two separate plots as a single consolidated property. Sen, they argued, had signed separate agreements with each of the 19 flat-owners, agreeing to convey the flats along with parking and other space totalling 24,024 square feet to Penn Court residents.

KALYAN CHAKRAVARTY



Penn Court; and (top) Sen: building a controversy

In 1983, they pointed out, when the CMC had instituted proceedings against Sen and his wife Anjana for recovery of tax arrears on the Alipore properties amounting to Rs 5.67 lakh, Sen had got a stay from the high court on the plea that since the Penn Court flats had been sold to various flat-owners, the CMC should collect the tax from them. But, according to them, these facts had been concealed from the municipal authority. The plan for the new building, the flat-owners charged in their petition, "has been obtained by suppression of material facts and by deliberate misrepresentation."

In the records of the CMC, however, Penn Properties continues to be registered as the joint owner of the amalgamated three-bigha plot. Explains the law minister's solicitor: "The corporation does not recognise a sale unless the conveyance deed is registered with the Registrar of Assurances and the necessary mutations are made in the record." This has not been done.

According to the sale agreement between Penn Properties and Penn Court flats' buyers, the building, along with the land appertaining to it, was to be transferred to a limited company formed for the flat-owners by Penn Properties or to a co-operative society. But neither was a cooperative society formed nor did the flat-owners register their purchase—a lapse not altogether unusual in a city like Calcutta. Property-buyers shy away from registering their purchases, partly because of the high stamp duty—20 per cent of the property's value—and partly because they fear the Government could acquire it if they were to deflate the flat's declared value. Sen argues that the legal position is that Penn Court has been agreed to be sold but not actually sold. Says Sen: "The sale agreements have not been registered and the flat-owners only have the right to occupy it provided they adhere to all the terms and conditions of the agreement."

By not paying municipal taxes (arrears to the tune of Rs 7.7 lakh), Sen says the flat-owners have "breached the sale

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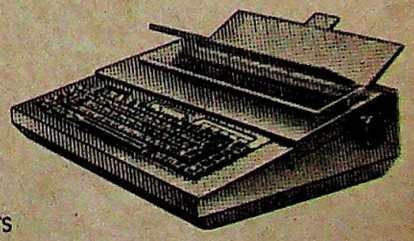

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agreement and now I can evict them". Eviction notices have already been served on the owners. But they say that they have been unable to pay the taxes because the "law minister made no attempt to make the necessary changes in the municipal records so that our individual share of taxes on the property could be properly determined".

Penn Properties is also trying to get around the dispute by claiming that it had originally agreed to give precisely half of the amalgamated property—a plot measuring 134 ft X 156 ft and not 154 ft X 156 ft—to the Penn Court premises. Sen obviously knew that the 20-feet strip could create problems for him. In his agreement with the builders of the new block, he had mentioned that a part of the land was under dispute and had passed on the entire responsibility of handling any possible legal dispute to the builder.

So far, the law minister appears to be getting off both ways—neither has he had to pay the municipal taxes nor has he had to give up his claim on the ownership of the Penn Court land. So confused is the scenario that even Calcutta High Court Judge Prabir K. Mazumdar, in his judgement handed down in May, threw up his hands and passed the buck to the CMC, saying: "It is made clear that I have not gone into the merits of the case and all the points made in this writ petition are left open." Mazumdar ordered the CMC to settle the dispute and decide which of the two parties actually held the right over the land. Mayor Kamal Basu told INDIA TODAY that his legal department had issued notices to the concerned parties and would take a decision after receiving all the relevant documents and arguments.

Now if the CMC rules in favour of the Penn Court flat-owners, a fresh sanction will have to be obtained for the new building, with a significantly reduced floor area. Says Jalan: "At the maximum, we will have to reduce our floor area by about 10,000 square feet." A reduction that will easily mean a loss of about Rs 50 lakh for Sen and his family. But many Penn Court residents, clearly overwhelmed by the law minister's counter-offensive, are beginning to doubt the wisdom of their action. A couple of flat-owners have already opted out of the court case. For, they have realised that in fighting for some parking space, they may even lose the houses they live in.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

KERALA

Odd Man Out

IT WAS an unusual sight for the waiters of the Indian Coffee House attached to the state Legislature in Trivandrum. M.V. Raghavan, the firebrand Marxist MLA, was sitting all alone while his comrades, who would normally crowd around him, were huddled in a corner avoiding his stony stares. There was anxiety and suspense in the air as the state committee of the CPI(M) was meeting barely a kilometre away at its headquarters in the A.K. Gopalan Centre. At the top of the agenda was the fate of Raghavan. Already under a one-year suspension since January, it was now likely that he would be expelled though he had given no fresh provocation to the party leadership.

Raghavan's expulsion draws the curtain over a tale of ideological bickering and personal squabbling which began nearly a year ago.

The suspense was ended when the CPI(M) released a nine-page statement declaring that Raghavan was being expelled for falling a victim to "parliamentary revisionism". Party General Secretary E.M.S. Namboodiripad, who attended the meeting, along with politburo member M. Basavapunniah, said later: "The party is greater than Raghavan. Nothing will happen to it while Raghavan will end up in political oblivion." Raghavan, normally very outspoken and blunt, was strangely subdued, saying merely: "I will always remain a Marxist and for that I do not require anybody's certificate." He did add though that the expulsion was a result of the "generation gap" between him and the party bosses. At 54, Raghavan was the youngest member of the state committee.

Raghavan's expulsion draws the curtain over a tale of ideological bickering and personal squabbling which began nearly a year ago when Namboodiripad suddenly changed the course of the CPI(M) in Kerala. After first inviting the Muslim League into the portals of power and decades of hobnobbing with both the League and the other avowedly communal party, the Kerala Congress, EMS, as the general secretary is better known, suddenly issued a diktat that the party would in future have nothing to do with communal parties in Kerala. He then went on a protracted tour of the state delivering speeches against the Shariat.

Raghavan opposed the change in strategy, arguing that the party's political line should be that the "capitalist Congress(I) is the enemy number one and there is nothing wrong in allying with bourgeoise and petty bourgeoise parties to isolate it". He had never justified the Shariat—in fact, opposed it openly—but he felt that the strident manner in which the party was taking up the issue would only strengthen the Muslim fundamentalists and isolate the party from the Muslim masses. Raghavan was suspended from the party in January for circulating an alternative document to the party's official party document at the state-unit convention last November, canvassing support for his document and for creating a separate group within the party.

Under the veneer of ideological differences, however, Raghavan's expulsion came about more because of caste- and region-based factionalism in the Kerala CPI(M). In the last few years two clear groups have emerged in the party—the Travancore group led by state Secretary Achutanandan, where the party is dominated by the backward Ezhava community, and the more vociferous Malabar group led by Raghavan, where the organisation is more in the hands of the upper class Nairs and

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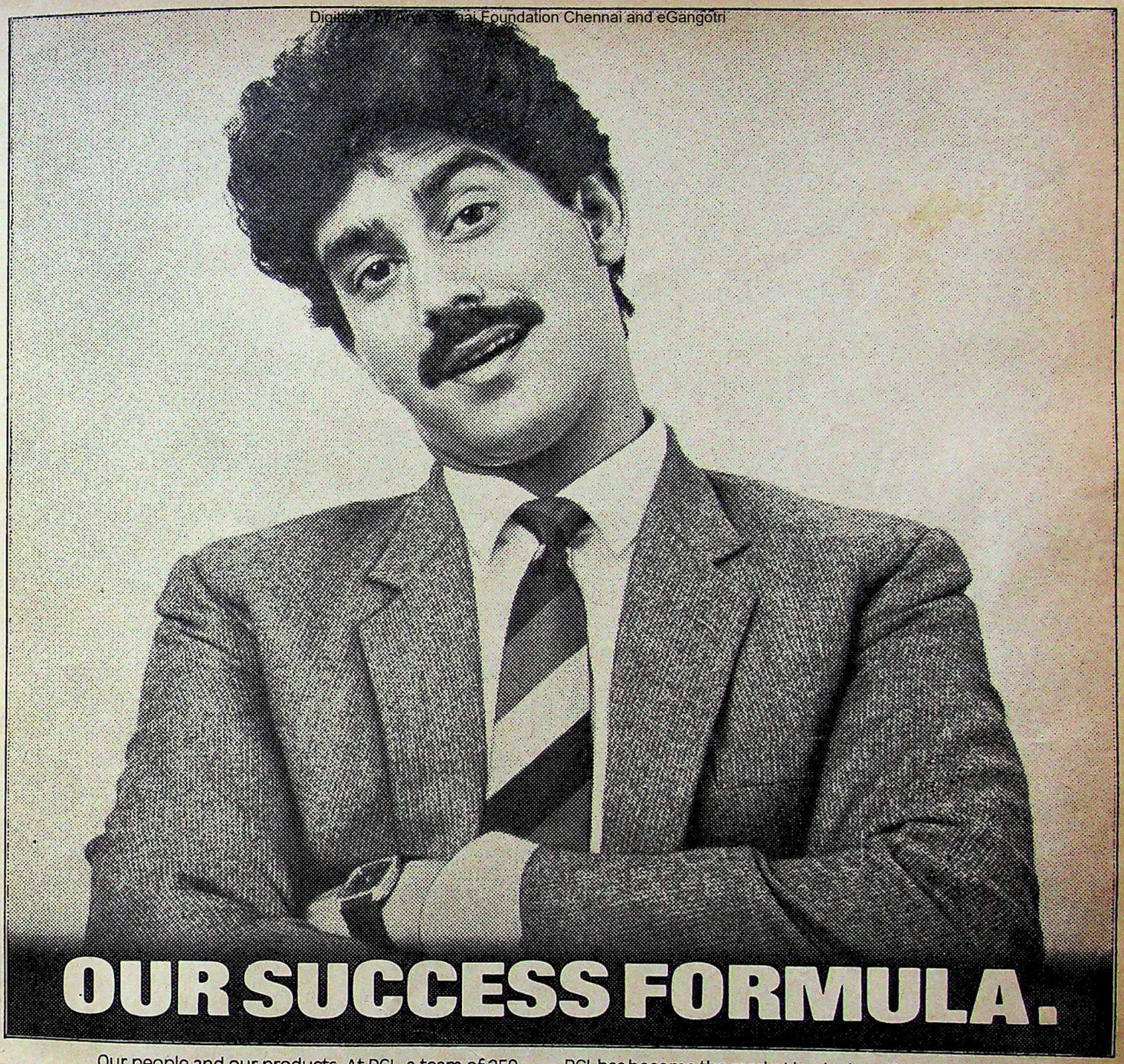

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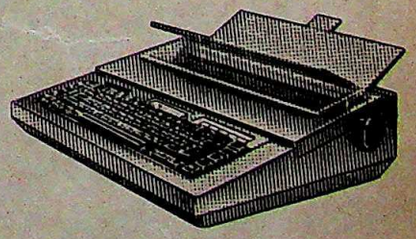

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Nambiars. While the Ezhavas have been the backbone of the party—because of their greater number and their firm support for the party—the party's MLA's have mostly come from the northern Malabar regions: currently 18 of 30 MLA's come from the Cannanore and Kasargod regions.

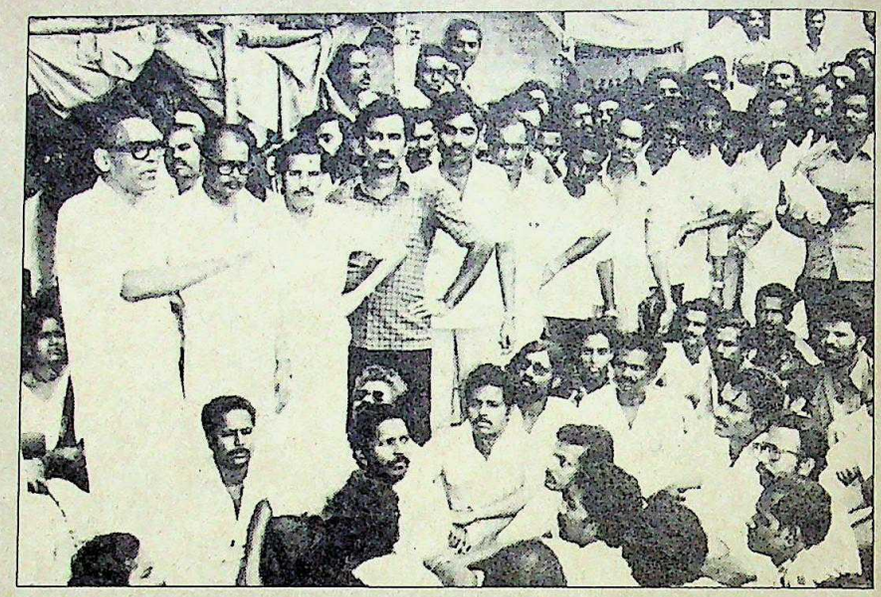
Achutanandan, known to be a fanatic Ezhava, has been building up Balanandan, politburo member and former MP, as the party's prominent leader in the hope that Balanandan—who was present at the meeting which decided on Raghavan's expulsion—would emerge as the party's candidate for the chief ministership should the Marxists triumph in the coming elections. But Raghavan, with the tacit backing of the Malabar group, had emerged as a strong contender. Expectedly, Raghavan and Achutanandan had several major—and not so major—rows.

Raghavan runs a hospital and a snake park along cooperative lines in his village at Pappinesserry in Cannanore district. Achutanandan asked him to hand over both institutions to the party. Raghavan refused. Recently, when Raghavan went to the Gopalan Centre for a meeting with Achutanandan, he refused to have a cup of tea with the state secretary. He was promptly charge-sheeted. Partymen in Cannanore were sent a warning circular for having lunch with him. R.S. Babu, correspondent of the party mouthpiece, *Deshabhimani*, was transferred out of Trivandrum because he was seen talking to Raghavan. Raghavan's fate was sealed when EMS—though a Nair himself—sided with the Ezhavas.

Political observers feel EMS is being a little rash in writing off Raghavan as a political force. With his skilful use of the rustic common man's tongue, Raghavan has become the greatest crowd-puller among the Opposition's leaders. As a Marxist journalist says: "Raghavan, with no formal education to boast of, has made intellectual giants like EMS look like fools. While EMS blasts Reagan and his Star Wars, Raghavan concentrates on the evil deeds of Karunakaran."

Though Raghavan refuses to talk about his plans for the future, sources close to him say he is expecting seven more MLA's to join him. With elections to the Assembly round the corner, the CPI(M) party bosses will have to work overtime to undo the setback of Raghavan's expulsion.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI



University staff on strike

EDUCATION

Academic Stir

YET ANOTHER agitation has overtaken Kerala's highly emotive education industry. The latest provocation came from the Congress(I) Government's decision to delink the pre-degree course from the universities and create a separate board to supervise it. The decision has aroused the ire of a majority of the teachers and employees of the state's three universities—Kerala, Calicut and Gandhiji—who have gone on strike. With work at the universities at a standstill, results of the pre-degree course and other courses have yet to come out, creating problems for those seeking admissions in institutions outside the state.

However, Kerala Chief Minister Karunakaran and his right-hand man, Education Minister T.M. Jacob of the Kerala Congress, are unmoved. Says Jacob: "The plus-two stage—the two-year study after the 10-year school education and before the three-year degree course—is just an extension of school. That is why we want a separate board for it."

In their support, they cite a host of reports, ranging from the Kothari Commission's report of the 1960s to the Malcolm Adiseshaiah Commission of recent times, supporting the separation of the pre-degree course from the universities. Asserting that his decision will galvanise the pre-degree education system, Jacob points out: "The school syllabus has been revised thrice in the past 20 years but nothing worthwhile has been done at the university level to improve the pre-degree syllabus."

But teachers and university employees fear that the delinking will make a sizeable section of the staff superfluous and adversely affect their service conditions. Says a spokesman of the Association of Kerala Government College Teachers: "Nearly 6,000 teachers now teaching in colleges face the threat of losing their jobs. The education minister's assurance that they will be given protection cannot be accepted at face value since the Government would have to raise Rs 12 crore annually to keep the excess staff on the rolls."

The teachers fear that the plus-two classes will be eventually handed over to the schools, which will affect their status. Their fear is seconded by opposition parties who allege that with elections due the ruling parties may award the plus-two courses to private schools in return for contributions to party coffers.

Meanwhile, the Government has asked the vice-chancellors of all the three universities to study all the issues involved in the constitution of the pre-degree board and give its report within three months. But with employees and teachers refusing to go back to work till the Government withdraws its move, the students are going to have an extended vacation.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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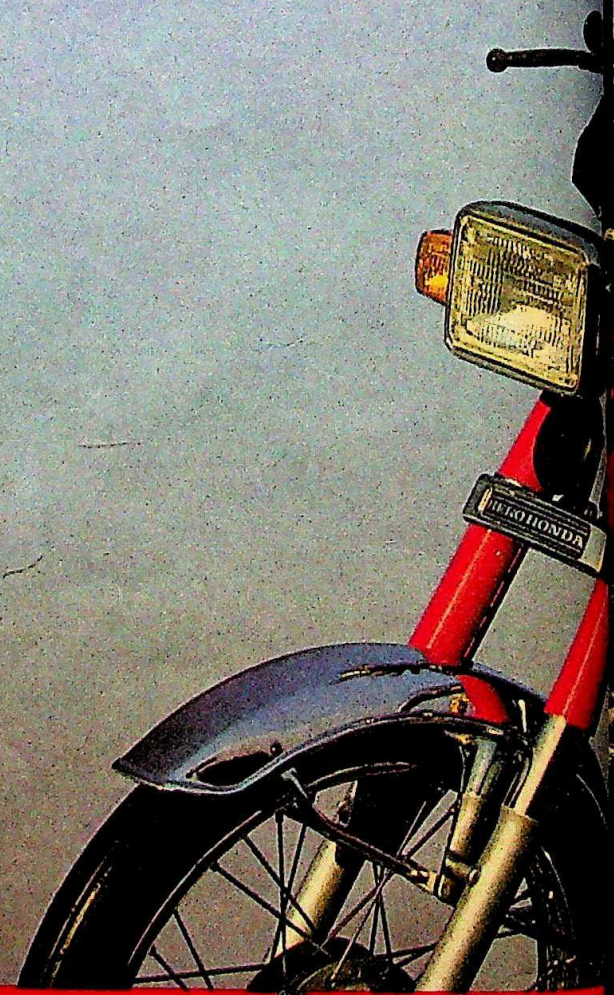

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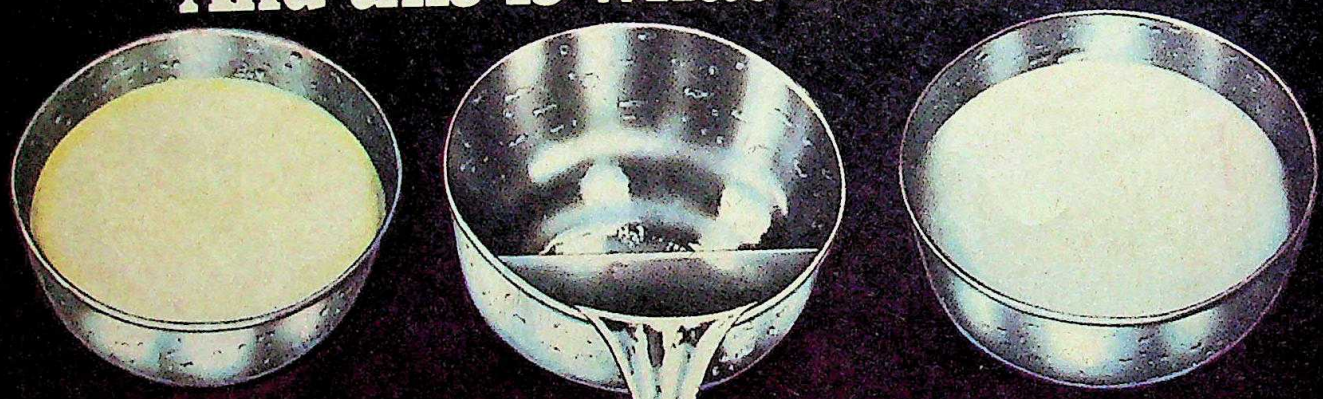

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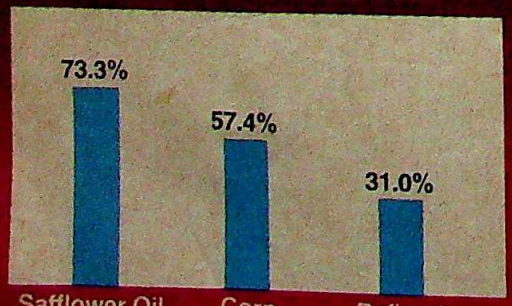

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DDA

Cleaning Up

AS METEORIC as his rise to the prestigious post of the Delhi Development Authority's (DDA) vice-chairmanship was his sudden and ignominious exit last month, wreathed in the shroud of scandal. For the last three years, the dapper Prem Kumar had run the sprawling DDA empire like his personal kingdom. But three weeks before his term was to expire, Kumar was abruptly asked to quit and faced the added humiliation of having CBI sleuths crawling all over his house in search of proof of connections between him and the numerous scandalous land deals and award of lucrative housing construction contracts to a clutch of favoured contractors during his tenure.

Axed along with Kumar was J.K. Varshney, DDA's engineer member and Kumar's closest colleague in the organisation, who was also raided by the CBI. After the raids, the CBI registered a case against both under Section 5(2)5(1)D of the Prevention of Corruption Act which deals with the "abuse of official position to cause pecuniary advantage to self or others".

Though both Kumar and Varshney were tight-lipped, the crack-down on them followed a flurry of corruption charges levelled against them recently by members of Parliament and Delhi's Metropolitan Council. A note submitted to the prime minister by a group of 16 MP's on June 3, demanded that "a thorough inquiry by the CBI should be held into the frauds committed by the DDA". The memorandum accused Kumar and Varshney of awarding house building contracts worth over Rs 140 crore to those whose "incapacity to carry out the projects was known to the DDA"—allotment of prized South Delhi flats to their friends and relatives, delay in the recovery of dues worth over Rs 40 crore from leading builders of Delhi and permitting the construction of a commercial complex on green belt land.

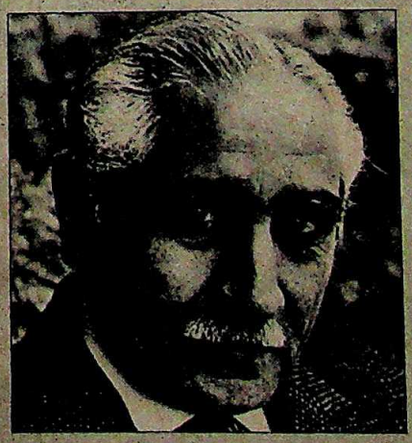
In addition, the BJP had also submitted a detailed charge-sheet to the prime minister listing specific cases of substandard houses, incomplete sewage works for which payments had already been made, and leakage of the highly confidential New Delhi Master Plan to selected builders and land developers. The memo also alleged that the DDA was not developing its own commercial complexes in west and east Delhi because of pressures from builders who were interested in keeping commercial building prices at a high rate owing to the artificial scarcity of commercial space.

They listed instances when, for example, the DDA engineer member delayed clearing the file containing designs for the development of a 200-acre Bhola Nath Nagar Commercial Complex in Shahadara for over a year because it would have led to a drop in commercial space prices. The DDA even ignored written instructions from Delhi's Lt. Governor H.L. Kapoor to expedite the development of commercial land in Delhi. The memo charged that it was solely due to connivance between the DDA and certain builders that commercial land prices in Delhi have soared by over 200 per cent during the last three years. While three commercial estates were developed earlier, not one was developed during Kumar's tenure.

Former vice-chairman Kumar

Kapoor personally met the prime minister and reportedly told him that the Government's image would be badly damaged if Kumar was allowed to continue.

Lt. Governor Kapoor



The allegations appeared to be somewhat substantiated by the fact that among the documents recovered by the CBI during their raid on the premises of prominent builders in the city were confidential DDA files. Said Madan Lal Khurana, president of the Delhi unit of the BJP: "The DDA was giving favours to property dealers who in turn were sharing their profits with DDA officials."

But ultimately, it was Kumar's proximity to a clique of politicians and civil servants which proved his biggest liability. Believing himself insured by the support of his friends in South Block, he openly defied the Lt. Governor, who is also the chairman of the DDA. He refused to accompany Kapoor on his visits to various localities and turned a deaf ear when questioned on his claims about the construction of over a lakh houses and removal of corrupt officials.

But Kapoor was made of sterner stuff than Kumar imagined. Since Kapoor had made 'Operation DDA clean-up' his prime objective, he compiled a confidential report on corruption in the DDA and sent it privately to the prime minister. Kumar, however, managed to stave off any immediate action with the help of Urban Development Minister Abdul Ghafoor and Ministry Secretary Ramesh Chandra, both of whom favoured another extension for him. He also succeeded in getting his name recommended for the chairmanship of Air India which was scuttled at the last moment by Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jagdish Tytler.

But this only made the Lt Governor more determined to bring Kumar to book. Kapoor personally met the prime minister and reportedly told him that the Government's image would be badly damaged if Kumar was allowed to continue. Soon after, Ghafoor received instructions to send Kumar and Varshney on leave pending investigations.

Having won his moral victory, Kapoor has accelerated his plans for cleaning up the controversial organisation. Said he: "We want to make the DDA a live and responsive organisation and not to work against the interest of those whom it is expected to serve." Not to mention the interests of those who served in it.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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WEST BENGAL

Red Revenge

THE POLITICAL fortunes of the Congress(I) in West Bengal are receding at an alarmingly rapid rate. Last fortnight's statewide municipal elections showed the party had lost ground in its last remaining bastions—the urban areas where it had once succeeded in eroding all Marxist moorings. The election results ended in the hammer and sickle flying triumphantly from 56 of the 75 municipalities where polls had been held. Whereas the Congress(I) secured outright victories in just seven municipalities and barely scraped through in four others

The defeat has hit the Congress(I) hard. They appeared to show little interest in the eight municipalities where neither of the two political parties secured a majority and where every party should have been making every effort to woo the undecided independents.

For the Marxists, the election results lift a dark veil which the 1984 Lok Sabha elections had cast over their political prospects in the state. At that time, the Congress(I) tide had swamped practically every urban constituency. But last fortnight, the architect of the victory, state Urban Affairs Minister Prasanta Sur, could justifiably claim: "We have broken through to the town areas."

Sur had been preparing the ground for a Marxist victory in the municipal elections for over a year, starting off by changing the laws to give more power to municipalities and vastly increasing the flow of funds to them. Intensive campaigning by younger state committee members like Biman Bose, ensured that every possible pro-Left vote was cast.

"The Congress(I) failed in their organisation and in the crucial job of getting their supporters to the polling booth," says Union Law Minister Asoke Sen, referring to the Kalna municipality in Burdwan where their candidates lost by just two and seven votes.

But the Congress (I) humiliation was not for any lack of effort on Das Munshi's part. Even Biman Bose concedes that he worked extremely hard, personally overseeing the entire campaign and setting up for the first time a network of party observers in the districts to monitor and report on the electioneering. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of Congressmen believe that they are handicapped by the Centre's apathy.

Even Union Programme Implementation Minister A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury, who never missed clarifying that he was campaigning only at the behest of the prime minister, for the first time proved to be a liability. His lurid election speeches never failed to include positively vampirish demands: "Give me blood and I will give you employment!."

Photographs by KALYAN CHAKRAVORTY

Prasanta Sur had been preparing the ground for a Marxist victory, giving more power to the municipalities and increasing the flow of funds to them.

The defeat has hit the Congress(I) hard. The pressures on state party boss Priya Ranjan Das Munshi to resign are mounting within the party.

His injudicious remarks on how much he hated Hindi and spoke only Bengali in Parliament was actually taped by the Marxists and replayed in the state's industrial municipalities dominated by non-Bengalis. As it turned out, the Congress(I) lost in every municipality where Choudhury contested, including his once-impregnable Malda town.

However, the inevitable political fallout is that the pressures on Das Munshi to resign are mounting within the party. Choudhury has already declared his support of Asoke Sen for the state leadership. But Das Munshi himself told party leaders that the high command had not asked him to resign.

In the wake of the municipal elections, the question before the Left Front is not whether they will be able to win the assembly elections slated for February next, but power sharing amongst the front partners. The CPI(M)'s analysis shows declining support for the smaller front partners and suggests that the party will be less accommodating towards them in the future. In the municipal elections, the CPI(M) had to once concede as many as 300 seats to its four smaller partners—CPI (126), Forward Bloc (107), RSP (67) and RCPI (8). While the CPI(M) won 566 seats out of the 811 it contested, the four smaller partners won only 144.

The municipal elections have also proved that for the two biggest parties—the CPI(M) and the Congress(I)—interference from the dissidents and smaller parties can at best be an irritant and not a significant factor in upsetting their political fortunes. This time both the Front and the Congress(I) had gone to the hustings with significant dissidence at the lower levels, including the untested Pranab Mukherjee force.

Though Mukherjee's supporters claimed they had bagged as many as 60 seats, according to estimates made by the major parties, the former Union minister's men could not have bagged more than a dozen-odd seats—only marginally better than some obscure left parties like the Marxist Forward Bloc. The Congress(I) tide might be ebbing from West Bengal but the Left Front knows that when the tide turns it will still be only the Congress(I) that can rock the Marxist boat.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

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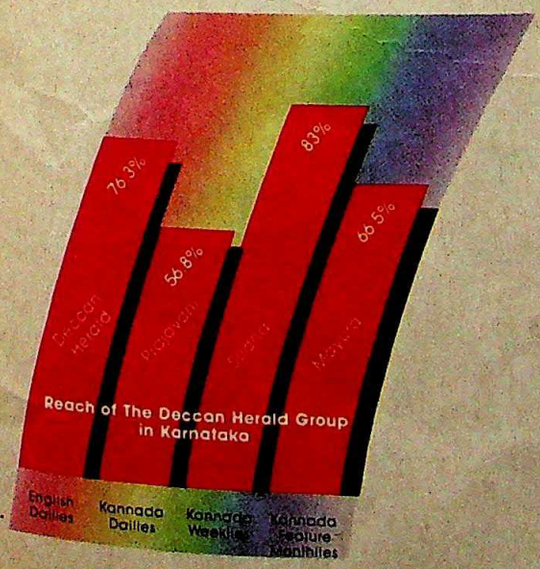

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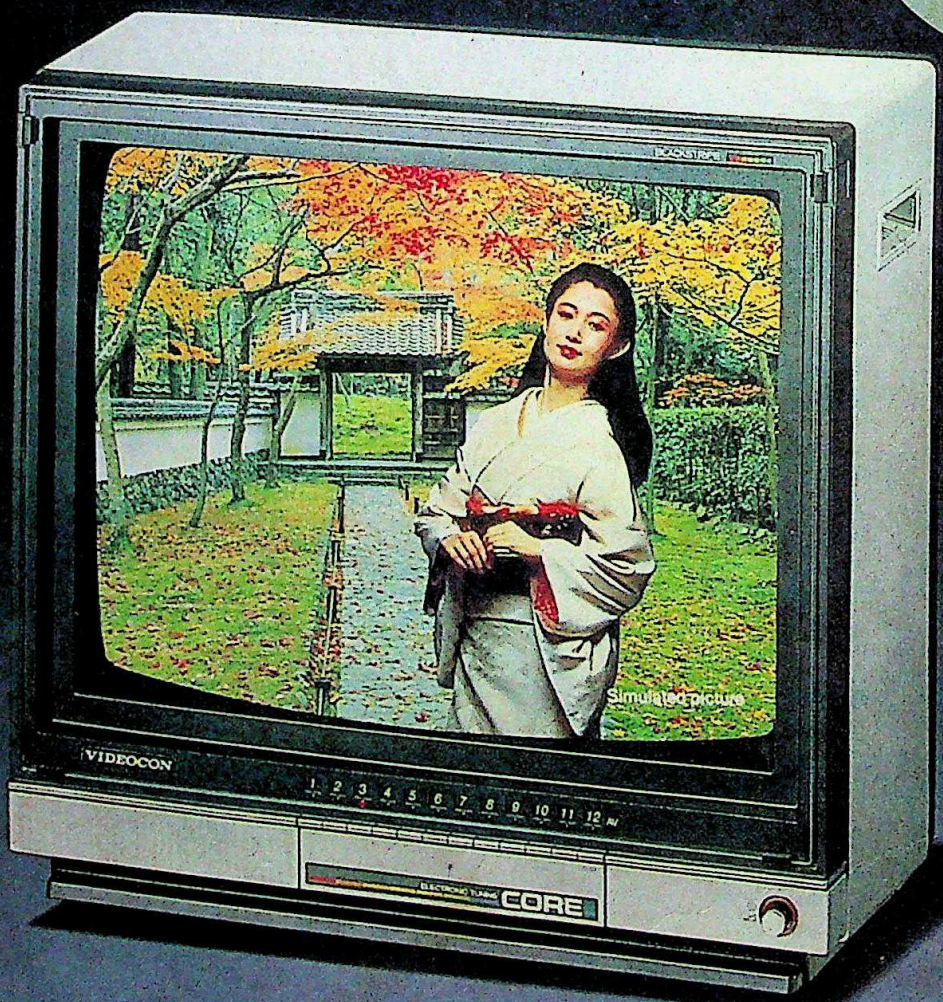

SUPER-SSI BLACKSTRIPE II

VIDEOCON

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BIHAR

Transfer Tremors

IN BIHAR, bureaucrats have come to dread Tuesday, the day when the cabinet of the otherwise ineffective Bindeshwari Dubey Government has its weekly meeting. Seemingly, the Cabinet does little else than decide on transfers of officers of the Indian Adminstrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS)—since it appears that some ruling party politicians find them a nuisance. In the 15 months that Dubey has been in power, his government has transferred an estimated 300 officers of the two cadres, in many cases even without giving hapless officials the time to unpack. Says an IPS officer of the deputy-inspector general rank: "It's a disgusting situation. Today in Bihar, IAS and IPS officers are the most insecure creatures."

Two recent transfers have brought matters to a head. Shiv Chandra Jha, an SP in the CID, went on leave last month after he was superseded and shunted out of his post because he had dared to forward a note to Director-General of Police S.B. Sahay, suggesting action against a Cabinet-rank minister for his involvement in violent activities in central Bihar leading to the Arwal massacre. Justifying the Government action, however, Dubey said: "What he wrote was beyond his jurisdiction and the department thought it was an act of indiscipline."

More questionable, however, was the case of Ajay Kumar, 34, who was transferred from his post of deputy commissioner of Deoghar within a year because he tried to get the famous shrine to Lord Shiva at Baidyanath Dham liberated from the clutches of *pandas* and politicians.

Horrified at the state of the holy Shiv Ganga tank and the temple complex, Kumar initiated voluntary labour to clean the tank. The 'Bhakti Seva' became so popular—with 15,000 people participating daily and members of the royal family of Nepal rubbing shoulders with lepers and beggars—that 50 million gallons of highly polluted water was drained out in 13 days at the ridiculously low cost of Rs 30,000. The same work would have cost Rs 25 lakh and taken three months had it been given on contract. After this, the tank was desilted at a cost of Rs 3 lakh—comprising mostly hire charges for heavy earth moving machinery—when the same job would have cost Rs 4 crore on contract.

> **In the last 15 months, the Bihar Government has transferred an estimated 300 IAS and IPS officers since it appears they were considered a nuisance to the ruling party.**

But before the next phase of work on the construction of a drain to a nearby river, could be initiated, Kumar was transferred to Patna. His plea to be allowed to stay on till the work was completed was ignored and his replacement was asked to take charge on a holiday without even waiting for Kumar, then in Delhi to hand over. Dubey explained: "Deoghar is a small district and an active and energetic officer like Kumar, we felt, was more suitable as director of employment and training. This (posting) is very prestigious and not a punishment."

But sources in the bureaucracy explained that Kumar's popularity had come as the last straw for Union Minister of State for Petroleum Chandra Shekhar Singh, who has long been unhappy with him. Baidyanath Dham is in Singh's constituency, Banka. Kumar had crossed swords with Singh during the by-election to Banka last year when the former was different enough to be neutral. Before that, Kumar, as managing-director of the State Warehousing Corporation, had had a showdown with one of Singh's confidantes.

Kumar's scheme also directly threatened the hold of Krishnanand Jha—the *pandas*' leader and the area's MLA. He had built a hotel on a 7-acre plot of government land adjacent to the main temple which brought him over Rs 20 lakh from pilgrims every year. Under Kumar's scheme, the hotel had been demolished and the ownership lease on the land, procured in the name of a charitable organisation, was about to be withdrawn. Singh and Jha brought pressure to bear on Dubey to remove him. Said Kumar ruefully: "The whole effort has literally gone down the drain."

But Kumar's case is no exception in Dubey's Bihar where 'punishment' transfers abound. For instance:

► Beguserai magistrate R.S. Sharma was transferred within a year to Purnea ostensibly because Purnea needed a good development-oriented officer like him. But the real reason was that he had hurt vested interests by initiating steps to remove the rot from the district's government hospitals.

► Vyasji, who was the sub-divisional officer of Jehanabad, was hounded out within six months of assuming charge by Congress(I) politicians known locally as the "Jehanabad lobby". His mistake—he had taken a firm pro-poor stand in a area racked by land disputes and infested with the private armies of landlords.

► Sanjay Srivastava has been transferred four times in the last 16 months because he has refused to knuckle under to politicians. He was first posted as collector of the Bhumihar-dominated Beguserai district but was transferred to Bhagalpur on the eve of the last assembly elections. During the elections, he arrested some ruling party

Kumar (in dark glasses) at Bhakti Seva

K.M. KISHAN

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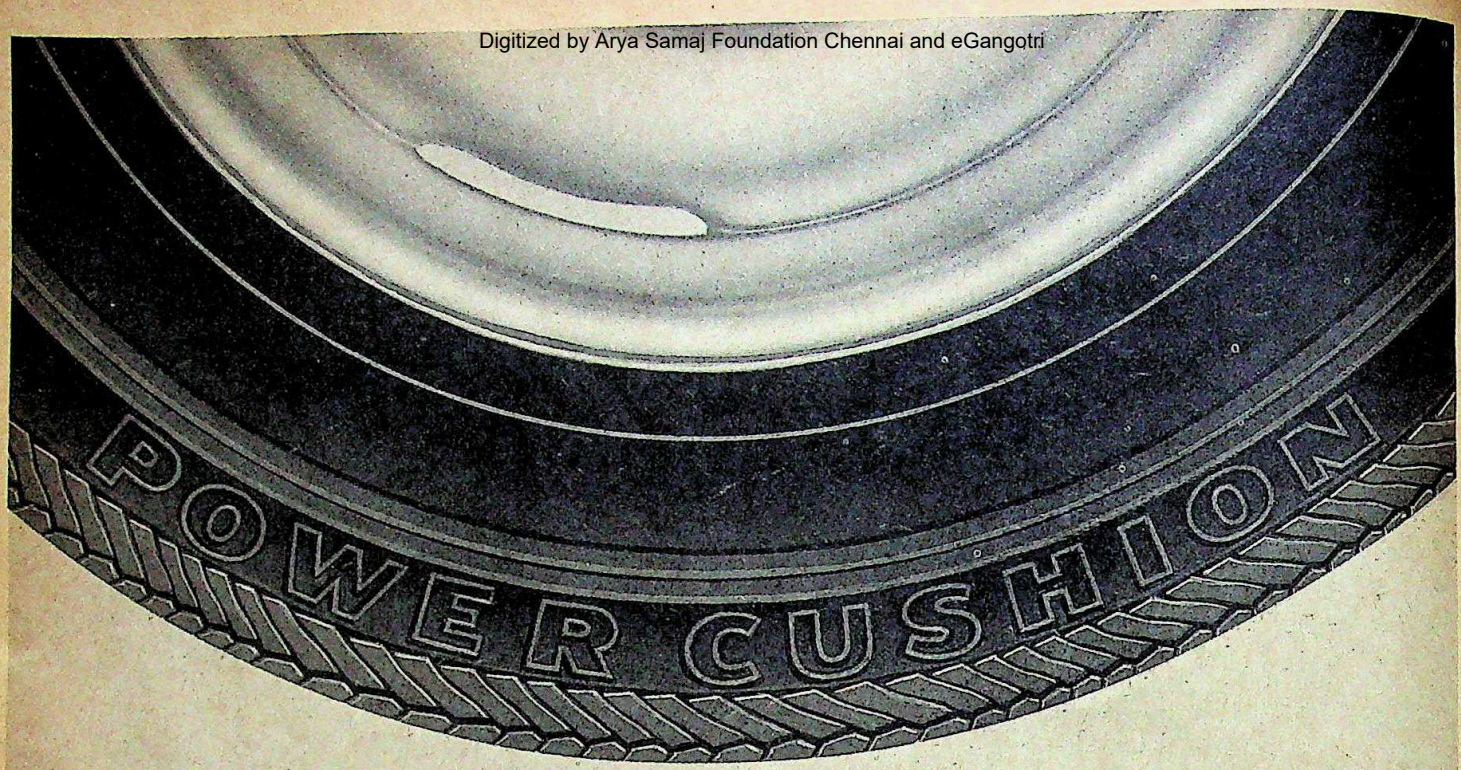

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musclemen, got their heads shaved and paraded them around town. He was promptly recalled to Patna and then posted as the collector of Munger.

▶ Srivastava's successor in Bhagalpur, S.P.Singh, was also transferred within six months because the Banka by-election called for a more 'cooperative' officer.

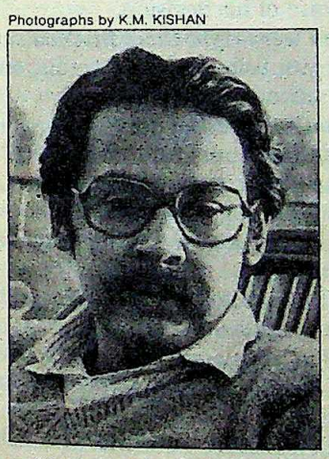
▶ In sensitive Darbhanga, another young collector, N.S. Madhavan, was shunted out in three months because Dubey was shown black flags by the supporters of Jagannath Mishra at a public meeting.

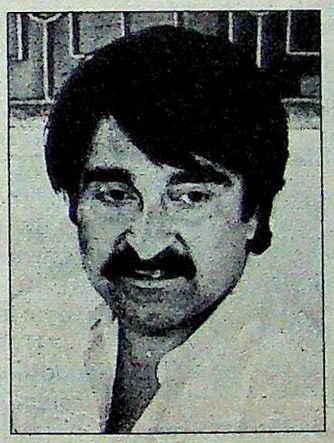
• None of Bihar's 38 districts has had a collector or an SP for more than a year. The notably backward Palamau district has had five SP's within the last year, followed by West Champaran, Saharsa and Madhepura with three each, and Patna and Bhojpur with two each. Says P.K. Sinha, former general secretary of the Bihar Administrative Service Association: "In the present regime no firm or upright officer can be allowed to hold any significant post much less charge of a district. Politicians are trying to politicise the bureaucracy and make them a partner in plunder."

Dubey: politicising bureaucracy

Dubey claims the transfers are to tone up the administration but the manoeuvring preceding the 300 transfers makes his claim ring hollow.

Photographs by K.M. KISHAN





(From left) Sanjay Srivastava, Ajay Kumar, Shiv Chandra Jha, Vyasji

Politicians not only transfer officials, they also block transfers at their own convenience. Navin Kumar, special secretary of sports and culture, was transferred as collector of Purnea but, before he could assume his new charge, his orders were taken back. Likewise, B.B. Srivastava, collector of Vaishali, was ordered to join as collector of Saharsa, but even before he could take charge, was sent to Patna as a joint secretary in the Finance Department.

The fate of even more senior officials is no less pitiable. J.M. Lyngdoh, ex-commissioner of Kosi, suggested an inquiry into the dubious dealings of the son of the powerful Agriculture Minister, Lahtan Choudhary, but even before Lyngdoh's note to the chief secretary could be considered, Lyngdoh was transferred out of Bihar. Zafar Ibrahim was first posted as the zonal inspector-general in Muzaffarpur then to Patna as the inspector-general (training) and within three months made the IG of Patna.

Postings of senior officials are done so often that almost every department has been busy giving farewells. The departments of education, irrigation, cooperatives and the 20-point programme have had four commissioners in the past year, while the departments of health and urban development and the state electricity board have had three commissioners and chairmen, respectively. Says Shivajee Singh, retired IG of police: "The process of destabilising the administrative machinery which started three decades ago has reached its climax now."

The only notable survivor to this continuing spree of transfers is the Chief Secretary K.K.Srivastava, who was once described by former chief minister Jagannath Mishra as a "most incompetent officer". But Srivastava reasons: "Bihar is a big state with about 400 IAS and 300 IPS officers, so some transfers and postings are natural."

It is understood that the Centre has taken note of the Bihar Government's proclivity to transfer officials and has even sought an explanation from Dubey's Government. Rajiv Gandhi had informed chief ministers last year that IAS and IPS officers should not be disturbed for three years at any posting. Predictably, however, Dubey claims that the frequent transfers are intended to "tone up the administration" so that developmental schemes can be implemented efficaciously. "Whenever I find that implementation of the government's programmes are slack, I try to send good officers," he maintains.

However, the dubious manoeuvering which has preceded every transfer makes his claim ring hollow, and Bihar's officials—both civil and police—are increasingly losing patience with the pointless runaround. In May alone there were four rounds of transfers involving about 70 officers. Warned a senior bureaucrat: "If this situation continues, we will have no alternative but to defy the politicians and that will be really a bad day for the administration." But if the speed with which the transfers are being effected is any guide, nobody in Dubey's Bihar is prepared to listen.

—FARZAND AHMED

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ARJUN SINGH

"Barnala has been found wanting"

SIX YEARS ago, few had heard of Arjun Singh outside Madhya Pradesh. Today, he is among the prime minister's closest confidantes, one of the key players in the Punjab drama, and after Rajiv Gandhi the most important man in the Congress(I). Among the shrewdest politicians in the country, Singh is phlegmatic and unflappable, smiling away provocative questions like a contented Cheshire cat, dismissively referring to himself as a nuts and bolts man rather than a central figure in the country's politics. Singh spoke to Executive Editor T.N. NINAN *and Assistant Editor* PRABHU CHAWLA *last fortnight on a wide range of issues. Excerpts:*

Q. Punjab is the No. one problem facing the country. Why have things gone wrong?

A. The laxity in the initial stages by the Government there in identifying and dealing with the extremist and terrorist elements was the first mishap. This emboldened these elements. Then the state Government began to combat them, but things had gone quite far.

Q. What about the two commissions?

A. Well, a more definitive finding by the Mathew Commission could have taken matters in a better way.

Q. Your own chief minister of Haryana didn't help either.

A. (Laughs) Well, may be he had his compulsions, But in a fluid situation, all these things add to the tension.

Q. Is that why Bhajan Lal had to go?

A. No, not in that sense.

Q. Haven't the conflicting political interests of the Congress(I) and the Akali Dal led to the present mess?

A. The Congress(I) and the Akali Dal have always been contending parties in Punjab. A fact which is forgotten is that the Akalis came into power with less than 1 per cent margin of votes.

At the same time, the Congress did not want to go on a course of collision. On the other, perhaps we have been leaning a little backwards to prevent this.

Q. The Congress(I)'s interests in Haryana might be in conflict.

A. Naturally the state Government has to look at its own interest.

Q. What will happen now?

A. It is difficult to say, because the Akalis have put their face against any determination by a judicial process.

Q. They have said 'no' because they object to the terms of reference, and to giving it 12 or 18 hours time.

A. These 12 or 18 hours only came in because of the prime minister's commitment to transfer Chandigarh on June 21.

Q. But no commission can do its work in that time.

A. I think there was sufficient material before him with which to do it. Anyway, once Mr Barnala said—and he gave it in writing to the prime minister—that he would not mind if the date was not kept on June 21, the prime minister did not insist that it would have to be done in these 12 hours. And the terms of reference which were drawn up after this request of Mr Barnala, I am quite positive on this account, were in consultation with him.

Q. Why didn't you consult him before setting up the commission?

A. It had to be done by a judicial panel. There's no other way of doing it.

Q. But even now they don't agree to the terms of reference.

> **The Barnala Government's lax handling of terrorists emboldened them and they became an important factor once again.**

A. That is why I say the sequence of events must be correctly put. Mr Barnala accepted the commission, and once he gave his approval on the revised terms, he accepted the Desai panel.

Q. You mean he had agreed to the revised terms of reference?

A. Exactly.

Q. And then his Cabinet said 'no'?

A. Yes.

Q. How do you explain this?

A. Obviously people in his government are not supporting him on this issue.

Q. Is he drifting away from the Congress(I) and the Centre?

A. Nothing was holding them so strong either. It was a relationship which was in Punjab's and the national interest. And there is no deviation from that.

Q. People say you are running the Punjab Government through Barnala.

A. Nothing could be further from the truth. I am not running the Government by proxy.

Q. When the commandos moved into the Golden Temple, Barnala consulted you but not his cabinet colleagues.

A. I am glad you brought this up because the record must be put straight. The impression that Mr Barnala took this decision at anybody's prompting is not a fact. This decision he took on his own.

Q. He consulted you, but not his cabinet.

A. Whom he consulted I don't know. But he took the decision, and it is true that I was aware of his decision.

Q. You were right there in Amritsar.

A. We went along because we also had to make our own assessment.

Q. That's the role of the Government. So how do you come into the picture?

A. The little knowledge that I have, I was trying to make use of it.

Q. How do you see things moving forward in Punjab now?

A. I think the initiative will have to come from Mr Barnala.

Q. What are your options if he does nothing? They've already said 'no' to the commission.

A. I don't think we need to totally despair on the whole thing. But nothing can be spelt out at this stage.

Q. Is the accord as good as dead?

A. I don't think so. But people who never wanted it to be born...(laughs)

Q. Going by the statement of Congress leaders like Tripathi, your party does not seem to trust Barnala any more.

A. There's no question of trusting Mr Barnala. The first priority has to be to deal with the terrorists, to restore the confidence of the minorities. And that is the responsibility of the state Government.

Everything that is possible to assist them has been done and is being done. I can't remember any other situation where any prime minister went as far as Mr Rajiv Gandhi went to mobilise opinion. All the opposition parties, they went all out to support Mr Barnala. The na-

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tional will was forged in a manner that he deals with these people. Now if that has been wanting....

Q. *Will you withdraw Congress(I) support to the Barnala Government?*

A. There is no occasion now to withdraw support.

Q. *Will anything be achieved if he resigns, and there's President's rule?*

A. We are not working towards that end, to force Mr Barnala to resign or have President's rule. Of course if that is the only option left, the Government of India has no other way but to do it. But it is not what we would like to happen.

Q. *Should you negotiate with the youngsters in Punjab as you did in Assam, and share power with them since that is what they seem to want?*

A. The analogy between Punjab and Assam does not exist. I don't think there were any extra-territorial aspects in Assam, whereas in Punjab there are.

Q. *You have lost power in Punjab, Assam and now in Mizoram. Don't you think Congress(I) control is shrinking?*

A. That argument could be built up in the short term. But both in Punjab and Assam, the Congress is very much there, and I see every sign that when the next elections take place the Congress has a very good chance of coming back to power. Where national interests have to be served, if there is a temporary setback, there's nothing to lose heart about.

Q. *What about party elections? Why have you postponed them?*

A. The schedule has had to be revised because it would have been difficult in some places to organise voting during the monsoon months. And even though we do not concede that there has been large-scale bogus membership, as has been alleged, there could have been some. We don't deny that. The Congress president wanted every complaint worth looking into to be looked into. This speaks of the prime minister's genuine desire to have that kind of party.

Q. *Don't you think senior party workers have been ignored for the Rajya Sabha nominations?*

A. If the prime minister is bringing in some professional people it is a good thing.

Q. *What are the criteria for nominations?*

A. You'll appreciate that in a political party or system, you cannot have UPSC criteria to select candidates (laughs).

Q. *Was there an attempt to keep the various groups and factional leaders away while giving party tickets?*

A. I think that is the best thing that could have happened to the Congress party. If an attempt is made to reduce the effect of factionalism, it is to be encouraged.

Q. *People say Harijans are neglected.*

A. I don't think that is correct. May be in one state. But if you take the totality of nominations, I think a very fair representation has been given to the Scheduled castes, Scheduled tribes, and Backward Classes.

Q. *What do you have to say to the charge that your assets have increased enormously compared to your statements of some years ago?*

A. What has been said is what I said about my wealth in 1960. There are 26 years between 1960 and 1986, my children have grown up, and are making their own living. So to pin me on what was said in 1960 and make that a yardstick without bringing up something concrete...

Q. *Would you be prepared to make a statement similar to 1960 today?*

A. Well, my properties are part of the family properties. That time I was the only individual, and naturally in the process a lot of things happened.

Q. *What is the source of your acquisition of wealth and assets?*

A. I think it is all documented wherever it has to be documented.

Q. *How much does this house of yours near Bhopal cost?*

A. It is not yet completed. I think it should be around Rs 11 lakh or Rs 12 lakh.

Q. *There was another charge saying your sons were part of a lottery business where the prize money was not paid.*

A. All the lottery accounts have been audited and submitted to the authorities. In any lottery, there are a number of prizes which remain unpaid for various reasons. The same is the case here. I don't think you can read in this that there was any deliberate attempt to deny the prizes and to appropriate the money for anything.

Q. *Isn't there a conflict between Rajiv and the party that Mrs Gandhi left?*

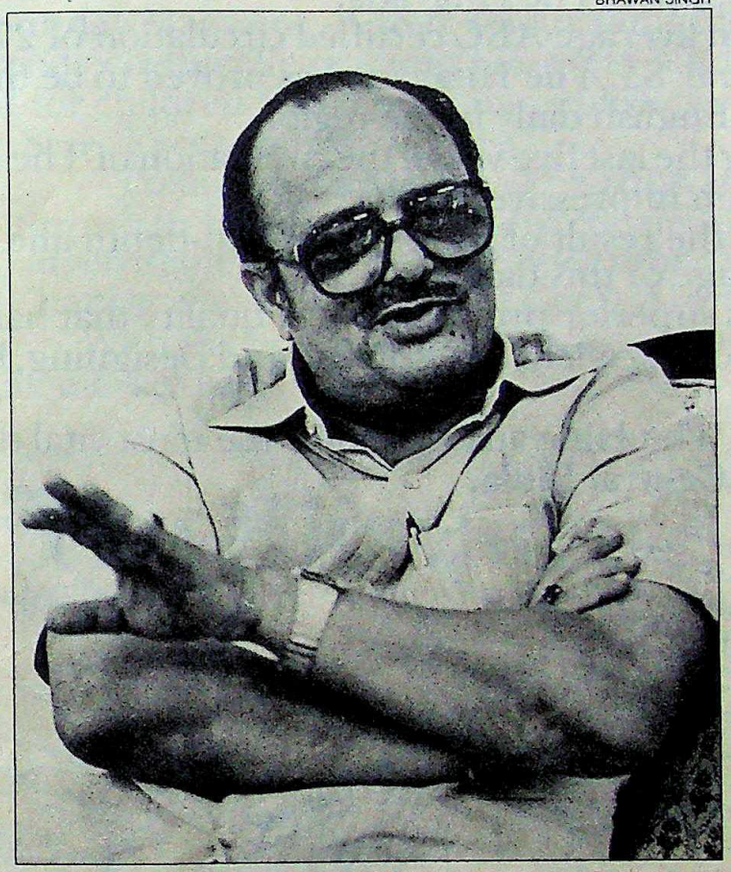
A. Some people would like it that way, but you can be rest assured that it will never be like that.

Q. *He has been trying to change and re-mould the party.*

A. Why not, and these conflicts will always arise. Do you think they were not there in Panditji's time? It came to a conflict when (P.D.) Tandon had to resign.

Panditji, Indiraji had a different stature, they were people of a different mould. The party at that time was also of a different mould. The situation which the prime minister faces now is different. So he has to cope with it in that way.

BHAWAN SINGH



"I see every sign of the Congress coming back to power in Punjab and Assam after the next elections."

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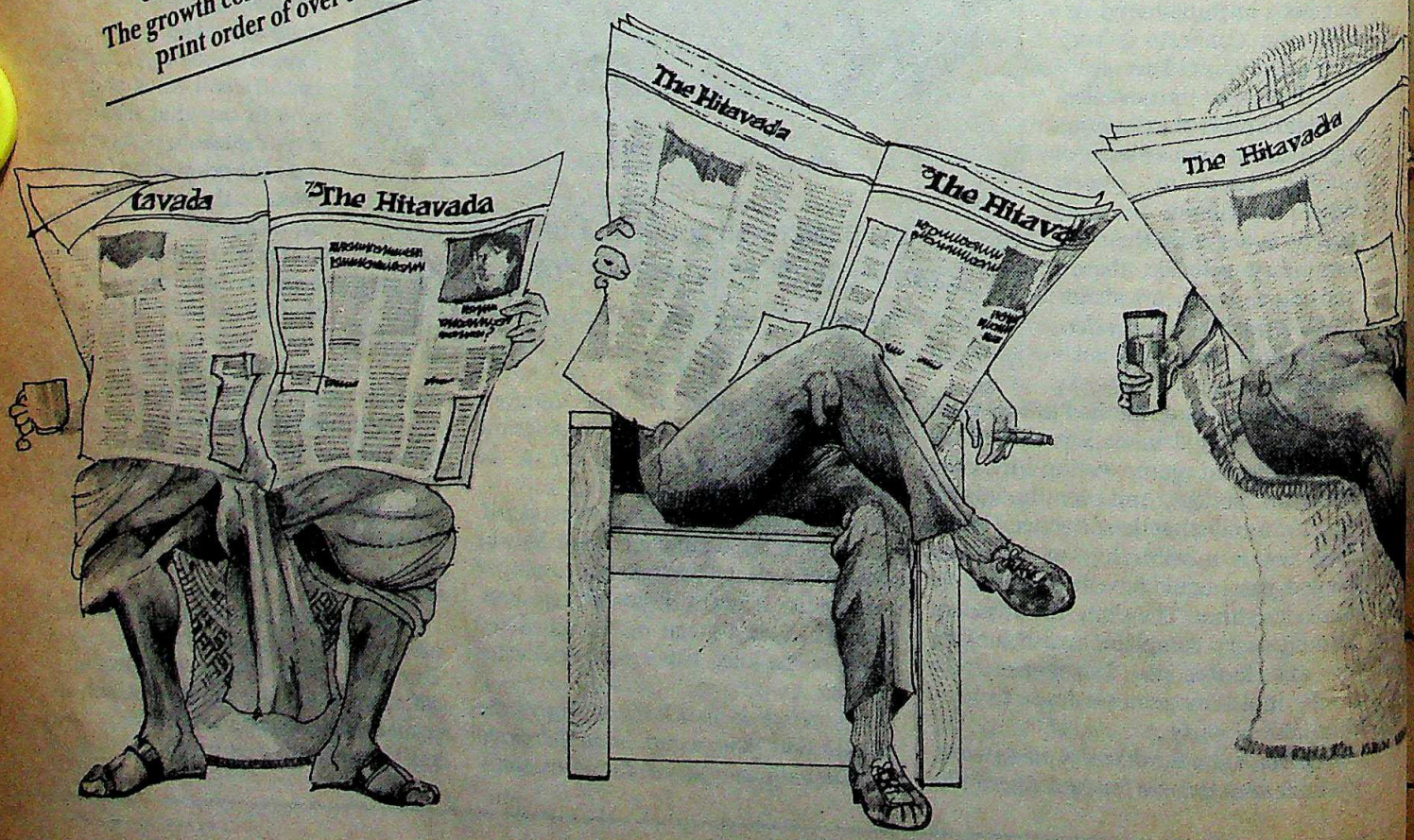

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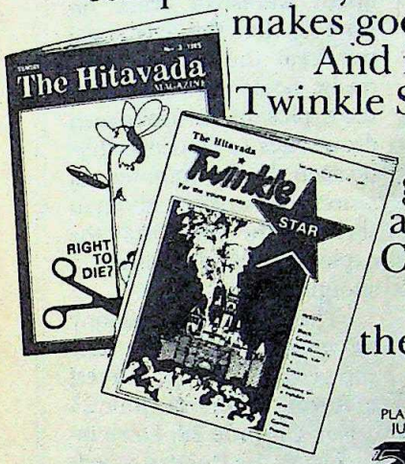

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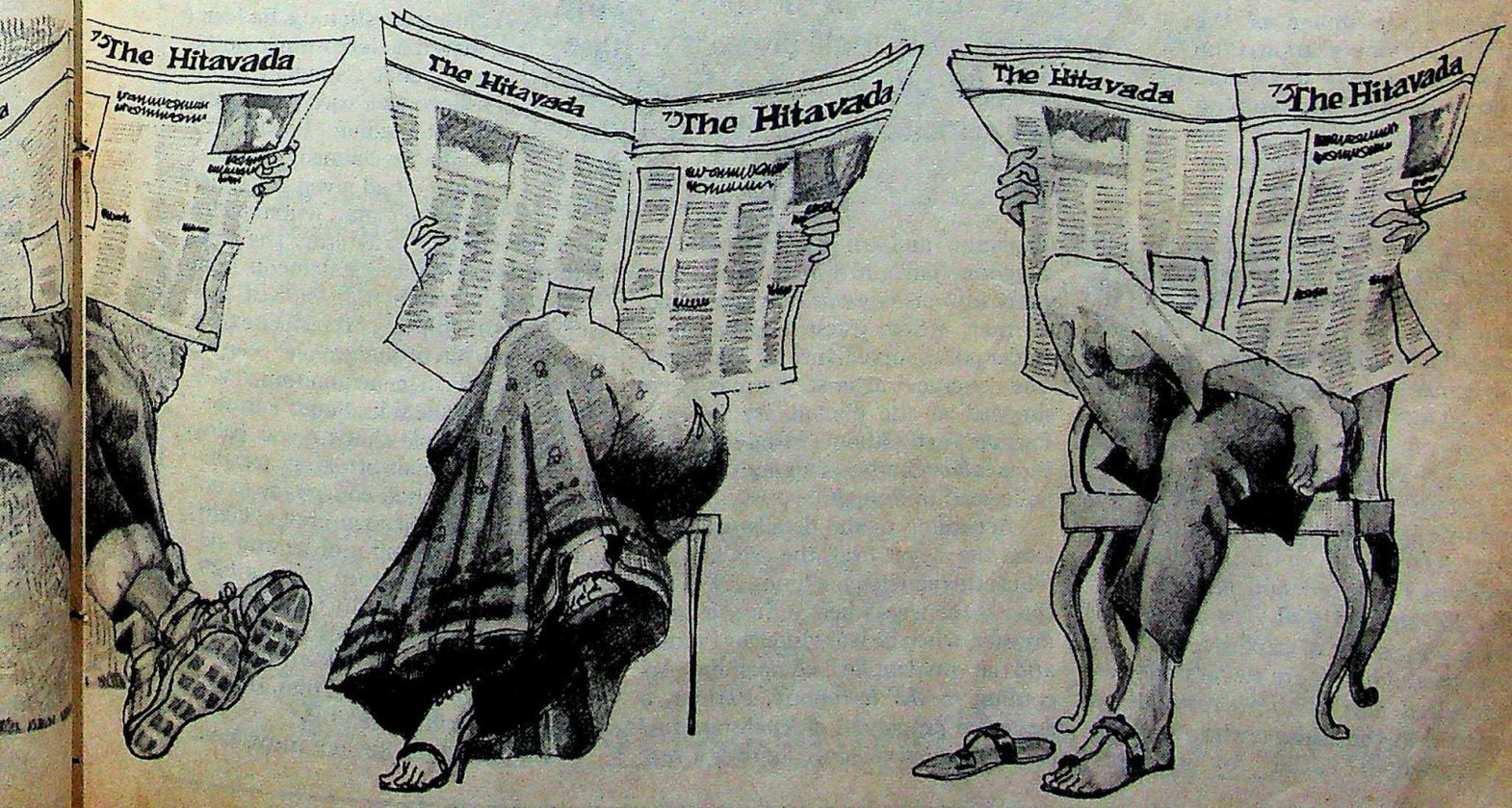

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CANADA

Unheeded Warnings

"Battles being waged in one's homeland cannot be allowed to be carried over into our country. Extremists must be made to understand that we do not regard this action as a political statement but simply as an act of senseless violence."

THAT angry outburst by Canadian MP Ken James recently in Ottawa's House of Commons is increasingly symbolic of the image which the Sikh community in Canada is fast acquiring because of the activities of a handful of hot-headed separatists. The incident that kindled James' ire was the ambush of Malkiat Singh Sidhu, Punjab's planning minister, while on a private visit to British Columbia. Sidhu's car was forced off the road by another car containing four Sikh youths who fired two bullets into him.

Though Sidhu survived the ambush, the incident sent shockwaves throughout the country and served to further tarnish the image of the Sikhs. Till a few years ago, the Sikh community in Canada was viewed as hard-working and progressive. But the Sidhu incident and the earlier tragic crash of Air-India jumbo Kanishka into the Irish Sea last year, during a scheduled flight from Toronto to Bombay killing all 329 people on board, coupled with the bomb placed in the luggage of a Canadian Pacific Air jet bound for Tokyo from Vancouver the same day, which exploded at Tokyo's Narita Airport while being transferred, has changed all that rapidly—and dramatically.

Barely two days before the Sidhu ambush Inderjit Singh Reyat, 35, an auto-electrician from Duncan, Vancouver, was convicted and fined $2,000 after he pleaded guilty to charges of illegal possession of explosives and an unregistered handgun. Reyat had been arrested as part of the investigations launched in the wake of the Air-India and Canadian Pacific Air incidents which triggered off the largest manhunt in Canadian history.

In November 1985, special police units raided a number of Sikh residences around Vancouver in connection with the two air incidents. In Duncan, they arrested Reyat after recovering a bag of dynamite and an unregistered .357 magnum handgun from his house. Also taken into custody was Talwinder Singh Parmar, a Sikh priest who had been under police surveillance for some time. The charges against Parmar were dropped at the preliminary hearing. Parmar's extradition is being sought by India to face charges of the murder of two policemen in Punjab.

According to the details emerging from the Reyat trial, the CSIS first got wind of his activities on June 4, 1985, less than three weeks before the Air-India disaster, when he was visited by Parmar and an unidentified companion. According to the testimony, Parmar, a dedicated proponent of Khalistan, had been under surveillance for over a year before he contacted Reyat.

That day, Parmar was followed by agents Larry Lowe and Lyne McAdams to Reyat's house from where the three drove to a wood near Duncan in Reyat's Ford LTD. Hidden behind a tree the two agents watched the trio remove something from the trunk of the car, and then disappear into the woods. "Moments later, there was a loud bang...something awfully loud, scared the hell out of me," Lowe testified.

The incident could have been crucial in the context of the subsequent Kanishka crash on June 23. But the agents did not treat the incident seriously. Lowe says that after the explosion, the three men drove back to Duncan while he spent "a few minutes" in search for a spent shotgun shell, in the belief that the explosion had been a shotgun.

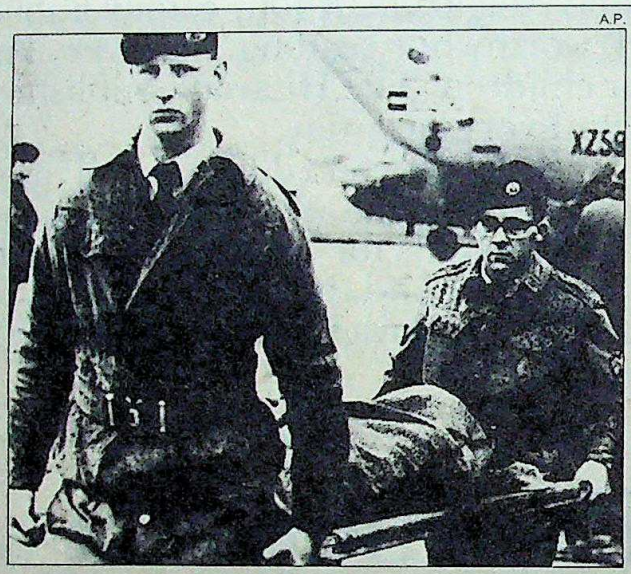
There was no testimony to indicate that the CSIS showed any further interest in Reyat till after the June 23 crash. On June 28, Lowe returned to the Duncan woods to investigate the possibility that what he had heard was a bomb or dynamite explosion and not a shotgun.

Reyat, according to what he had told the police during questioning, had purchased a stereo tuner of the make that Canadian police believe was used to conceal the Canadian Pacific Air bomb. He claimed, however, that he had given the tuner away to a man whom police have been unable to identify. The prosecution also produced statements from interrogation tapes that showed that Reyat was attempting to produce explosive devices "an acquaintance" wanted to use in India. The acquaintance was identified as Talwinder Singh Parmar.

Reyat was told that he was being arrested on suspicion of taking an explosive onto an aircraft, conspiracy to endanger the safety of an aircraft in flight, conspiracy to commit murder and aiding and abetting murder. On April 29, after Reyat pleaded guilty to charges of illegal possession of explosives and the unregistered gun, the Crown dropped the intent charges against him. He was convicted and fined $2,000.

Two days after Reyat's conviction,

A.P.



The bomb-in-the-woods incident could have been crucial in the context of the subsequent Air-India disaster on June 23. But the agents obviously did not treat the incident seriously enough.

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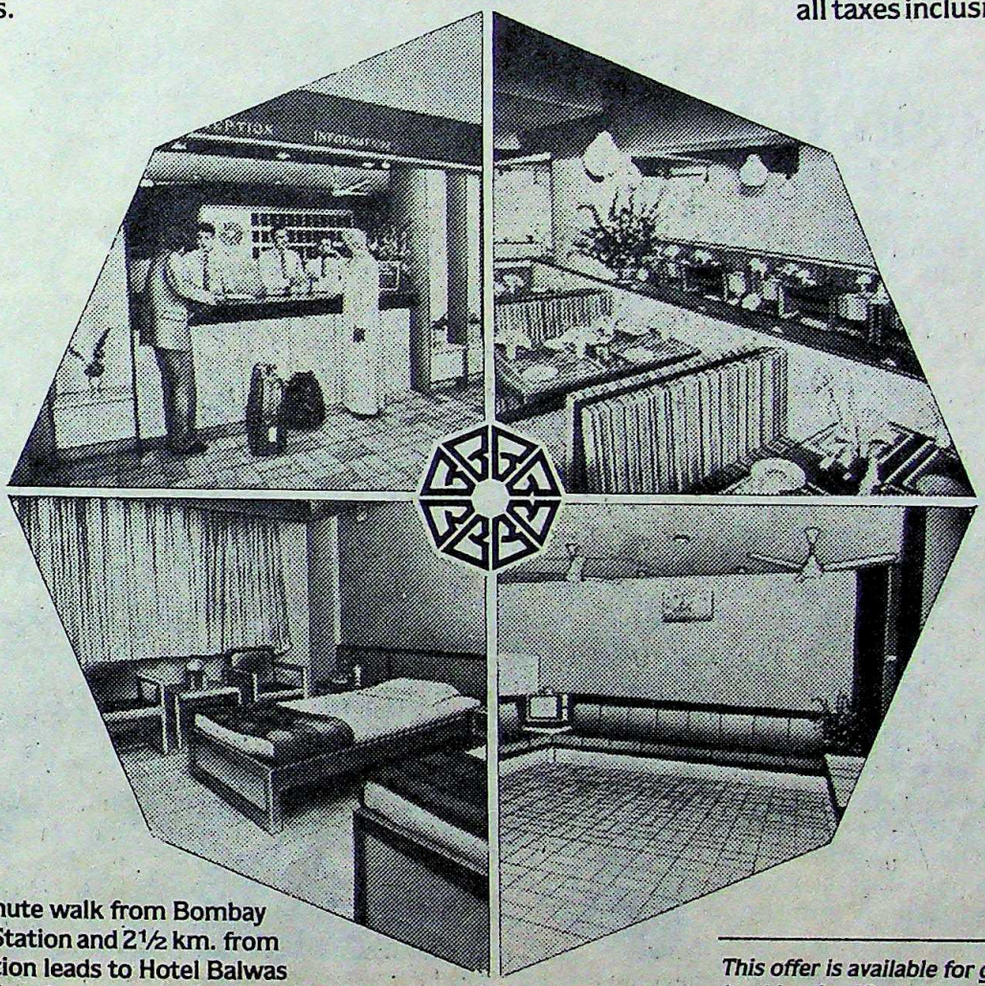

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APEX 86174

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four Sikhs—Amarjit Singh Dhindsa, 25, Jaspal Singh Atwal, 28, Jasbir Singh Atwal, 26, and Sukhdial Singh Gill, 27,—were arrested and charged with the attempted murder of Sidhu. The four were granted $50,000 bail each and told to surrender their passports.

On May 30 five individuals were arrested in Montreal on charges of conspiring to commit an indictable offence following an investigation involving five police forces in Canada and the United States. Those arrested are Gurcharan Singh Banwait, Kasmir Singh Dhillon, Chattar Singh Saini, Santokh Singh Khela and Ravindar Singh Anand.

RCMP Superintendent John Bentham said in Ottawa that the arrests had nothing to do with the crash of the Air-India jet liner or the Canadian Pacific Air explosion. While Bentham refused to give the specifics of the charges, he said they are charged under Section 423 (1) (d) of the Criminal Code. This section involves conspiracy "to commit murder or to cause another person to be murdered, whether in Canada or not." Subsection (d) states that "everyone who conspires with anyone to commit such an offence is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to the same punishment." Conviction under the section carries a prison term of 14 years. According to reliable sources, the five were taken into custody on suspicion that they were planning to blow up an Air-India plane scheduled to leave New York's Kennedy Airport on May 30.

—SURESH JAIN in Ottawa

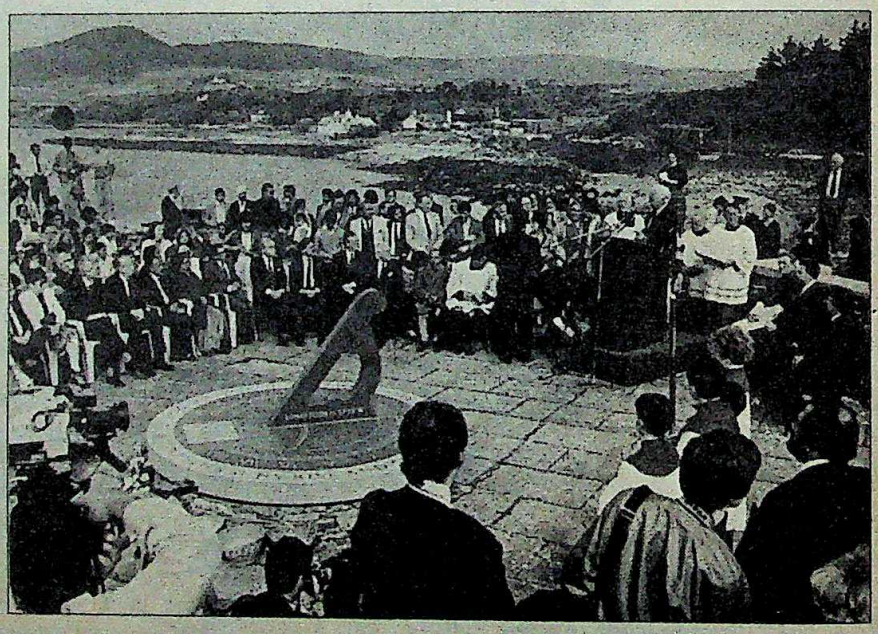
CORK

In Memoriam

A newly constructed but spartan memorial a few miles from Dunmanus Bay in the windswept South West Coast of the Republic of Ireland has become a shrine for several hundred families in India and Canada. Last fortnight in a solemn and dignified ceremony about 500 people congregated at the site to dedicate the memorial to the 329 people who perished in the ill-fated Kanishka—Air-India flight 182—which mysteriously plummeted into the Atlantic on June 23 a year ago. The memorial located just off Ahakista village on Dunmanus Bay is a 90-minute drive from Cork—the Irish Republic's second largest city and its largest county.

Out of the 329 passengers who went down the Atlantic, the bodies of only 132 were later found. And consequently for many relatives, both from Canada and India, the aching sense of loss was greater. On their own initiative, groups of relatives have been regularly visiting South-west Cork over the past year. Recently, as many as 700 of them—from Canada, India and relatives of the 45 Air-India personnel who died, visited Cork to pay homage and remember.

Officials from India, Canada and Ireland swiftly got to work to explore the possibility of erecting a memorial. The governments of India and Canada made a joint contribution of £70,000 (Rs 12 lakh) and the Irish Government gifted the present site—the nearest land area to the scene of the accident—and also agreed to its future maintenance costs. A young architect from Cork, Ken Thompson, was selected to work on the memorial. It consisted of a large sun dial, so astutely designed, that on 23 June at 8.15 a.m.—the time when Air-India flight 182 vanished from the radar screens of Shannon Airport's control tower—a shadow falls on the stark inscription in English, Hindi and French which states "in memory of those who died in the Air India disaster". The names of all the 329 innocent passengers who met a watery grave are also inscribed.



The ceremony at Cork memorial

Besides the large gathering of relatives, amongst the dignitaries were the foreign ministers of India, Canada and Ireland—Shiv Shankar, Joe Clarke and Peter Barry. The Indian delegation also included the Civil Aviation Minister Jagdish Tytler, Indian Ambassador to Ireland, Kiran Doshi, the External Affairs Ministry's Daulat Singh and senior Air-India officials. Whilst Shiv Shankar pointed out how the terrible tragedy brought together the three countries—India, Canada and Ireland—and Barry remarked that the disaster was a reminder of the "precarious existence of man", Joe Clarke, former prime minister and the current foreign minister, sounded a grim warning that his government would not rest till the "perpetrators of this outrage" were brought to justice. No mention was made of sabotage or bombs. As Barry presided over the simple ceremony, there followed orations by priests from various religions—Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsi and Jain.

On behalf of the relatives, a Canadian citizen, who had lost his son, spoke about the "terrible sense of loss" and how the memorial for several hundred people would now be a source of pilgrimage—like an annual pilgrimage to Hardwar. As the dignitaries dispersed, the sorrowing relatives walked to the sea and threw flowers and food into the Atlantic.

—RAMESH CHANDRAN

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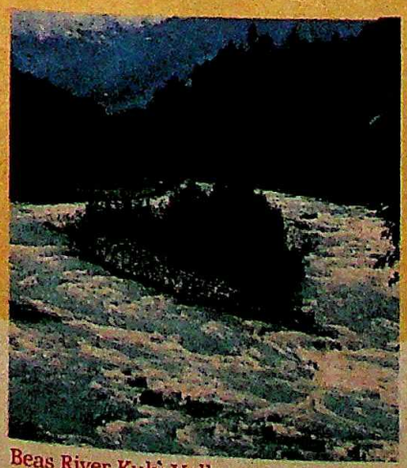
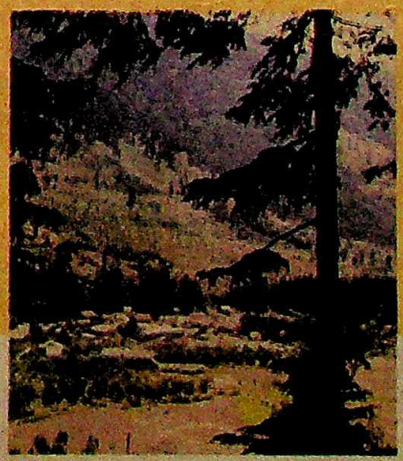


Beas River Kulù Valley



Manali Town

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HIMACHAL TOURISM

Compacta

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DOMESTIC TOURISM

Indians on the Move

INDIA is on the move. For once, quite literally. As the mercury starts its relentless upward climb and the annual summer exodus to the hills and the beaches gets under way, holiday-makers are discovering that things are not quite the same any more. Train and even plane bookings are almost impossible to get as are hotel rooms in traditional tourist resorts. On the snake-like roads leading to popular hill stations like Ooty, Shimla, Kulu and Mussoorie, traffic jams are as common as they are at Kemp's Corner in Bombay or Calcutta's Chittaranjan Avenue. Honeymooners looking for secluded and romantic hideaways find that there aren't that many around any more. And families loaded down with picnic hampers are trapped in the midst of a veritable sea of humanity.

Almost overnight it would appear, Indians are suddenly rediscovering India. From the Himalayan foothills to the sandy beaches of Kovalam, some 10 million Indians are currently getting away from it all, symbolising a new spirit of adventure and triggering off a travel and tourism boom of unparalleled proportions in the country.

And it isn't only the rich who are slapping travel stickers on their luggage. Last fortnight, K.P. Balaram, a Madras electrician, herded his family and neighbourhood friends of K.K. Nagar onto a bus en route to Rameswaram, Kovalam, Goa, Mysore and Bangalore. When last seen, T.S. Murthy, a government officer of Nagpur and his family of three were posing proudly in front of the Taj Mahal for a snap shot that would find its place in their expanding family album. And R. Sareen, a Ludhiana garment shop owner, was stripped down to his underwear last fortnight under a gushing waterfall in Mussoorie, balancing an aerated drink bottle on his rotund belly. As Nitish Sengupta, the chubby-faced director-general of tourism, observes: "Indians are learning to relax and enjoy themselves. The travel boom is on."

And how! In the last few years, Indian holiday-makers and week-end trippers have been creating an ever-expanding travel circus that now girdles most of the country and has transformed domestic tourism into a Rs 2,000-crore industry employing more than 4.55 million people directly or indirectly. The boom is in evidence almost everywhere *(see chart)*. Goa's legendary beaches, once the exclusive preserve of hippies and foreign tourists, are now awash with dhotis and sarees. In the caves of Ajanta and Ellora, hordes of rustic villagers stare wide-eyed at the exotic frescoes. The Taj Mahal in Agra is now ablaze with colours provided by a variety of ghagras, cholis, turbans and Gandhi topis. And the Malls of Mussoorie, Ooty and Shimla, once the exclusive hideaways of the rich, are now jam-packed with middle class Indians from all over the country. Says Deepti Bhagat, general manager of Ashok Tours and Travels of the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC): "Trying to measure the size of domestic tourism is like gauging the amount of water in an ocean."

The boom has succeeded in altering the face of tourist India to almost unrecognisable proportions. Ooty, at one time the quaint and quintessential honeymooners' haunt, now has probably more tourists in its six square km than the pine and eucalyptus trees that dot the surrounding hills. Last year alone it had 7.6 lakh visitors, up from 5.28 lakh in 1980 and the current season is set to break all previous records. On the spiralling road to Ooty last fortnight, traffic had been reduced to a crawl as buses packed with tourists with blaring transistors groaned slowly up the hills. Doddabetta, the highest peak in Ooty, is so crowded that people now have to wait for an hour to view the scenery through the telescope.

Down the hills in nearby Mysore, the Maharaja's Palace looks as if it is staging one of its legendary durbars, with tourists milling around examining the period furniture or preening themselves in front of the Belgian mirrors that line the stately halls. At the famed Brindavan Gardens last fortnight, there was a kilometre-long queue of cars and buses waiting to get in. Within five years, the number of Indian tourists visiting Mysore has doubled to 19.3 lakh annually, an average of 5,000 every day.

Goa too has been enjoying an unprecedented domestic tourist boom with the numbers rising from 3.32 lakh in 1980 to an astounding 6.82 lakh last year. Calangute Beach now resembles a fish market with rows of tourists sprawled on the sands or cavorting in the sea. Shaking

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Illustration by AJIT NINAN & ANUP GUPTA

his head in disbelief, Bosco Dacosta, a local electrician, says: "We used to have beach parties here every evening. Now we can't even get a place to sit on the beach." Elsewhere, the quaint Goan churches were filled with Indians busy listening to guides explaining the miracles of St Francis Xavier. And Goan bars and liquor shops are doing intoxicating business, having expanded from just 3,220 in 1980 to a staggering 7,548 last year.

UP NORTH, Shimla, once the placid summer capital of India, is choked with people. Traffic jams on the narrow hill roads are now routine, restaurants and hotels are packed to capacity and the Mall looks as if a mini-Kumbh Mela is on. The Himachal Tourism Development Corporation that runs coaches daily from Delhi had started getting requests for reservations way back in January and S.N. Verma, its managing director, said happily: "By April all our buses were booked till mid-July." Complains D.S. Dhillon, a Ferozpore landowner: "You have to fight your way to get a seat in the bus, a room in the hotel or food in the restaurant."

In nearby Mussoorie, as the season peaked last month, the prices of hotel rooms also reached new heights. A double bed which usually went for Rs 150 on the Mall now goes for Rs 500 and yet, maintains bespectacled Tourist Officer K.L. Shah: "You can't get a room for love or money now." This, despite the fact that 60 new hotels have been added in Mussoorie in the last five years. Domestic tourist arrivals have been climbing steeply from 6.3 lakh in 1980 to a record 9.5 lakh last year.

And unmindful of the burning desert sun, holiday-makers have been flocking to Jaipur and its environs in Rajasthan, resulting in a 180 per cent increase in tourist traffic in the past decade. The number of regular hotels has increased from just 30 in 1980 to 140 now, far outpacing the growth of tourists. At the City Palace Museum at Jaipur, Director Ashok Kumar Das says: "More than three-fourths of our visitors are Indians and the lower middle class now forms a very high percentage."

In an industry in which not only the weather but the political climate can lead to sharp fluctuations in traffic, domestic tourism has been rising steadily despite the troubled situation in strategic parts of the country in the past two years. In 1984, although the number of foreign tourists dropped from 8.84 lakh to 8.52 lakh, Indians wisely side-stepped troubled Punjab and Kashmir and visited Orissa in the east, Goa in the west and Ooty and Mysore in the south—resulting in only a slight slump in tourist traffic. Last year it was boom time again and if the first six months are any indication, 1986 is going to be another record year.

It is only the Kashmir valley which has been badly hit—tourist traffic fell from a record 5.98 lakh in 1981 to a paltry 1.92 lakh in 1984. It recovered to around 4.6 lakh last year, 15 per cent below the usual level. This year, after Kashmir's Mufti Mohammed Sayeed took over as Union tourism minister, he has been making

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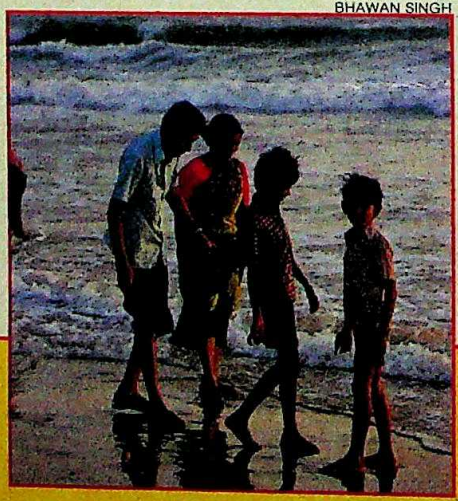
A Goan beach: replacing hippies

frantic efforts to attract tourists to Srinagar. Indian Airlines has chartered an additional daily flight to Srinagar and is offering a 30 per cent discount. And, as an added incentive, a rail-road link has been set up which enables a tourist to buy a ticket for a train to Jammu and a bus to Srinagar at the same counter. These measures have already shown results—there has been a dramatic increase in traffic, with more than 4,500 people arriving in Srinagar every day, up from an average of 900 barely a month ago.

With the phenomenal increase in numbers, new tourist spots are being flooded by travellers as fast as state governments can develop them. West Bengal, where 10 years ago tourists had to choose between Darjeeling and Digha, now boasts of a host of new tourist centres that include the picturesque Mirik lake in the mountains, Sojnekhali Bird Sanctuary on the edge of the Sundarbans and the Ayodhya hills, all of which have become instant hits with tourists. In Maharashtra, the state has set up a high powered committee to go into developing new tourist areas like the Ganpati Phule, a beach near Bombay, where the tourist corporation has built cottages that are already over-booked. The state is concentrating on developing a tiger sanctuary in Amravati and is trying to capitalise on the scenic spots near the Bhandara dams. In Madhya Pradesh, the Kanha Sanctuary and Pachmari hill resorts have been drawing unprecedented crowds. And in Rajasthan, the traditional fairs

BHAWAN SINGH



Folding his pants and carrying his chappals in his hand K.G. Thomas, 43, a naval yard mechanic from Cochin, ran into the sea lapping Calangute beach in Goa only to be pushed back by a huge wave. His sons, James, 12, and Manoj, 8, were more daring. They frolicked in the sea and gleefully splashed water on Molly, their mother, and Thomas while they lept back in dismay. Thomas and six other families from the same colony in Cochin had hired a matador van for the trip and travelled all the way to Bombay. Says Thomas: "Now all of us have become great friends even if we are Hindu or Christian."

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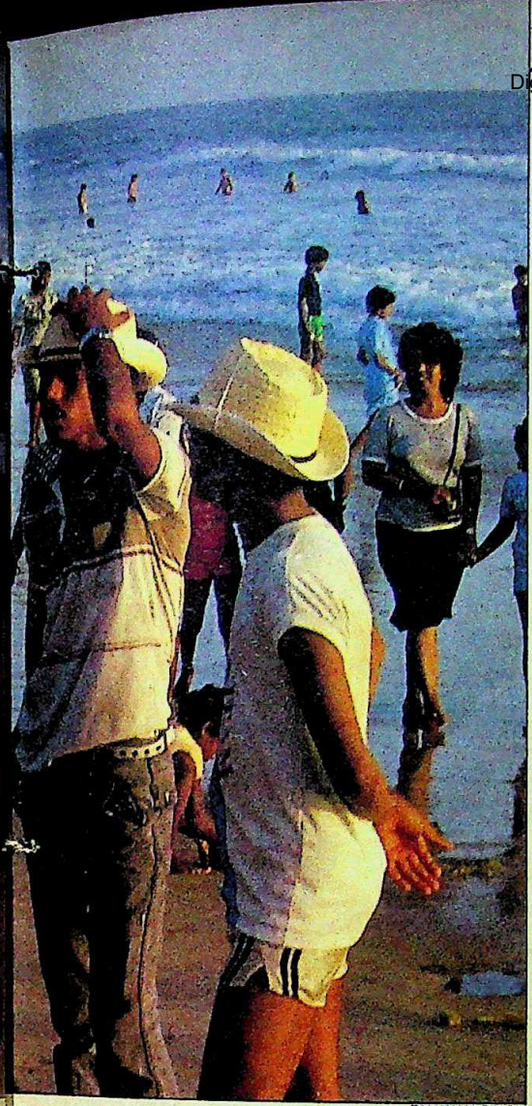

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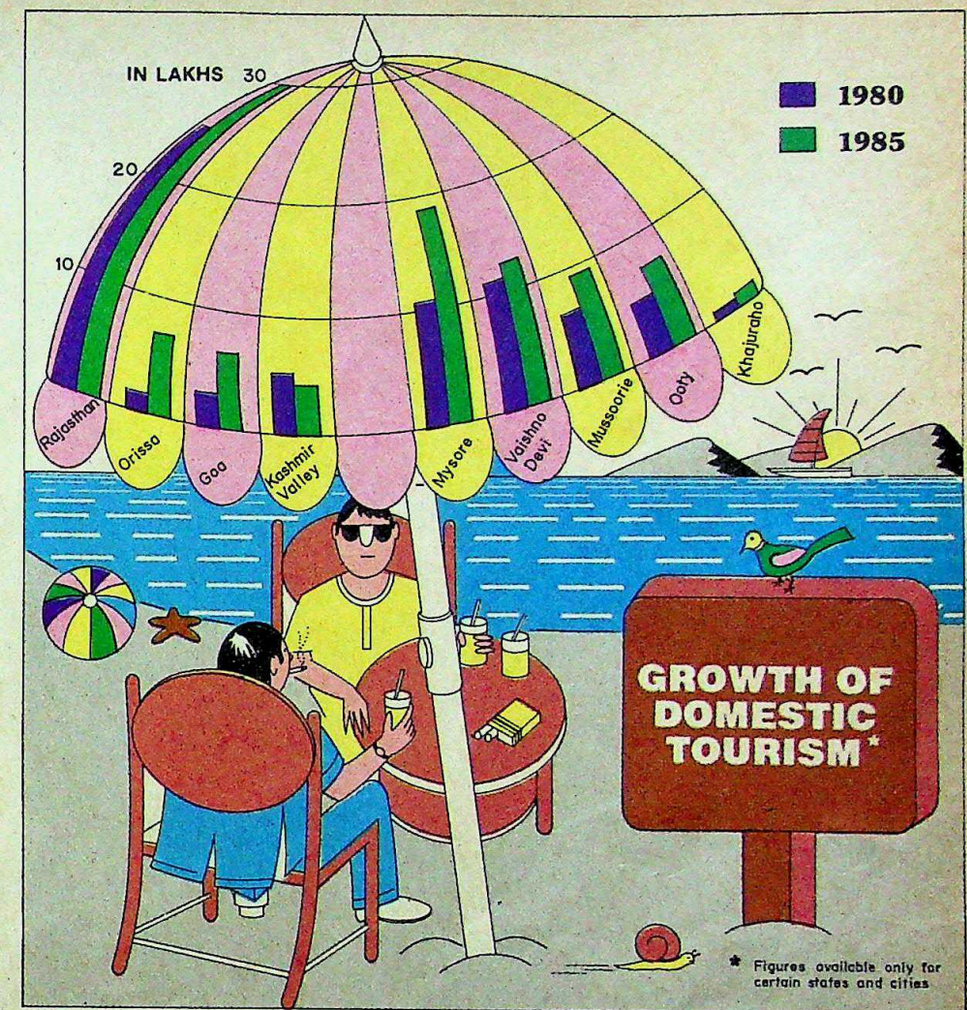


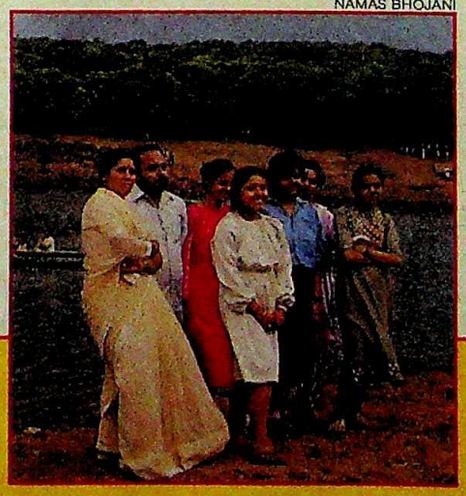
Chart by B.K. Sharma

such as the Pushkar and desert festivals at Jaisalmer have become major tourist attractions for Indians-turned-tourists.

But the new boom is best symbolised by the week-end trippers, especially after most states have switched to the five-day-week work schedule. In Tamil Nadu, Mahabalipuram or Mamallapuram as it is now called, is teeming with week-enders and T.K. Nandagopal, manager of the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation, says: "The five-day-week has increased tourist traffic by 10 per cent during week-ends." In Bombay, apart from Mahabaleshwar becoming a favourite week-end haunt for businessmen, a 60-room luxury hotel opened last February on the Aksa Beach in the Madh Islands, a still undeveloped part of Bombay's coastline—and has become an immediate success. Said its General Manager Rajan Mantri: "People are coming in groups of four or five families mainly from the suburbs to spend the week-end here." Rajasthan has gained the most in week-end tourism in the past two years and Delhiites now visit Bharatpur, Sariska and Jaipur as frequently as India Gate and Jantar Mantar.

Even tiny Haryana, mindful of its strategic geographical location in the context of the increasing tourist traffic, has made a resounding success of what it calls "highway tourism". It has developed 32 tourist complexes on the highways leading to Shimla, Kashmir and Agra that cut through the state, with the result that income from tourism has reached an estimated Rs 7 crore, with around 18 lakh tourists passing through the state every

NAMAS BHOJANI



By the Yenna Lake in Mahabaleshwar, fresh from a bout with the oars guiding a dinghy on placid waters, Mahendra Dikshit,36, was obviously enjoying himself. On a four-days-and-three nights package tour holiday with his wife Illa and daughter Heena 11, Dikshit said: "My parents never travelled but I hope to take my wife and daughter to a new place every year and one day may be even upto Kashmir." He got his friend in Bombay to do the booking. Dikshit, who is paying Rs 600 for the holiday, has only one grouse: the vegetarian food was not as good as Illa's cooking. Next year the Dikshit's are planning to go South.

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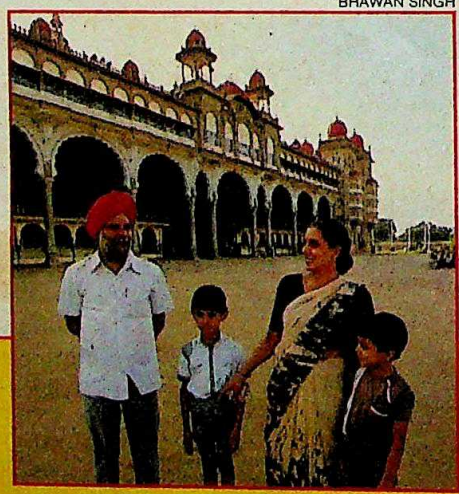
Brindavan Gardens: tourist boom

year. Many of these spots have become popular for week-end trippers and now Haryana is developing Kurukshetra into what one tourist officer ambitiously describes as the "Mecca for the Hindus". In Karnataka, the Government developed the Nandi hills and Pearl valley as week-end spots and daily ticket sales are up from Rs 100 to Rs 10,000 in just two years.

Hotel chains, hyper-sensitive to the tourist pulse, have started cashing in on the boom by introducing special discounts for week-end tourists. The public sector ITDC has offered some of the cheapest packages. They include a stay in many of its classy hotels for just Rs 50 a day for a double room and no extra charge for children. Other private chains like Welcomgroup, The Taj and Oberoi's have introduced week-end packages that give a tourist at least 50 per cent discount on room rates, making five star luxury now affordable to the not-so-rich. In Agra, Welcomgroup's Mumtaz Hotel, which was at one time dominated by foreign tourists, is now filled up with Indians and its Manager Inder Chandok says: "We are no more dependent on foreigners to give us business. In fact, we see so much of Indian potential that we prefer to have them stay with us."

Faced with what has been an unpredictable deluge, the country's transport services are groaning under the unexpected weight of holiday-makers. In New Delhi, I.P.Srivastava, chief commercial superintendent of Northern Railways, was last fortnight snowed under by the

BHAWAN SINGH



Darshan Singh, a machine fitter in Rajasthan's Jhunjunu district, believes in making full use of his leave travel allowance. So last fortnight, along with his wife Mahinder Kaur and sons Surinder,9, and Surjit,8, they set out on a Bharat Darshan by train. From Delhi they moved down south and covered in all a whopping 3,350 kms in two weeks. Each one liked a different place. Mahinder liked Trivandrum because it was clean, Surjit the sunset at Kanyakumari, Surinder a church in Mysore and Darshan the fabulous Mysore Palace. Said he: "If we had more money we would have travelled much more."

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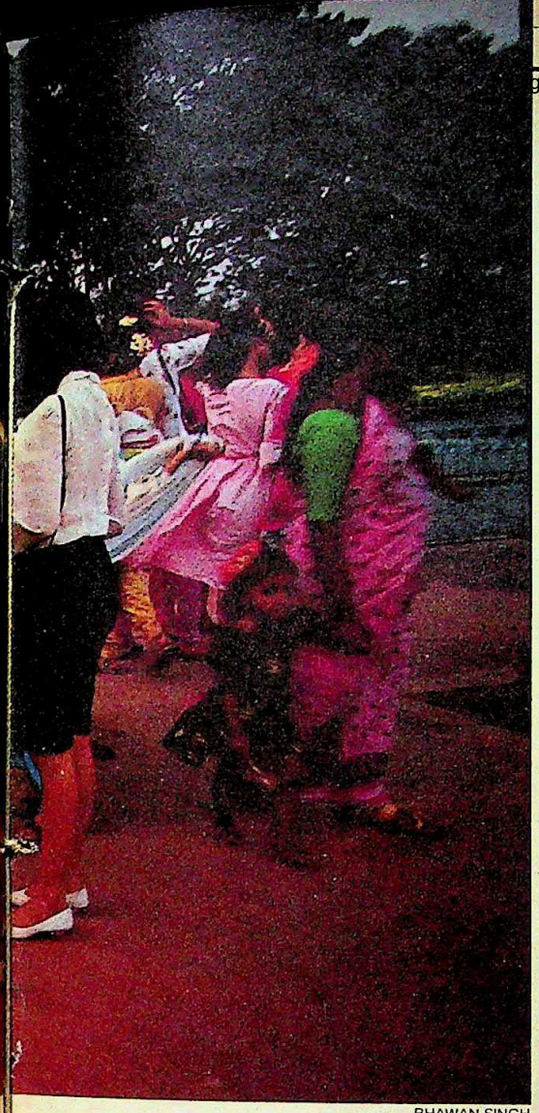

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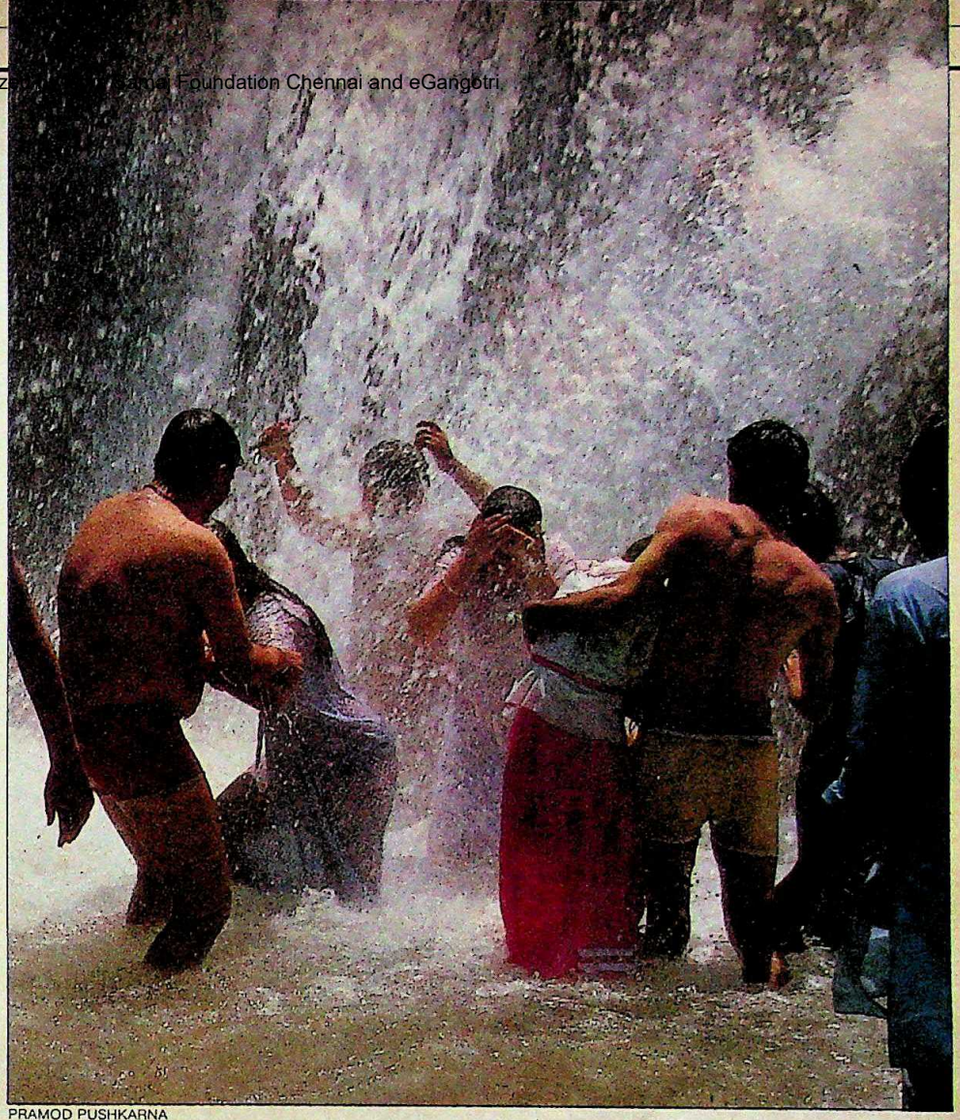


PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

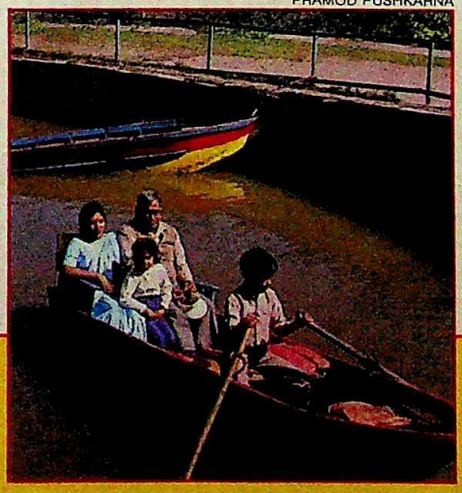
Mussoorie's Kempty falls: new spirit

flood of train bookings. Despite commissioning 81 summer specials for tourists to reduce the load by 1.2 lakh passengers, all trains were completely booked till the end of June and the beginning of July. The Jhelum Express from Pune to Jammu had such a long waiting list that the railways had stopped registering new names. And the Delhi-Dehradun train was booked up till the end of June. Last year, the Railways ran as many as 752 holiday specials—compared to 500 five years ago—and still, as M.P. Singh, member, (traffic) Railway Board, puts it: "If we put more trains, they would still run full."

An estimated 30,000 buses on contract are plying on the roads this year, disgorging tourists in destinations as far flung as Kanyakumari and Kashmir, Jaipur and Nainital. There were no seats available on buses to Shimla, Mussoorie, Srinagar and Nainital. Indian Airlines and Vayudoot services to Srinagar, Kulu, Dehradun and Goa, despite the higher cost, had lengthy waiting lists. Vayudoot, which initially started weekly flights to tourist-oriented destinations like Jaipur, Dehradun, Kulu and Mysore, has been forced to increase the services to thrice a week. Says Vayudoot General Manager Harsh Vardhan: "There is a massive new category of people, especially the rich traders, who can afford to pay for air travel while holidaying."

Energising the welcome wanderlust are such diverse factors as the introduction of leave travel concessions for both government and private companies that

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Nitin ,7,was up at five on a stuffy morning last fortnight and excitedly jumped into the taxi his father Arun Kumar, a civil contractor, had hired to take them up to Mussoorie. On the dizzying drive to Mussoorie Nitin told his papa:"Why don't they just build a road straight up."That night, looking at the twinkling lights of Doon valley far below, an awed Nitin said:" They look like pearls from here." Next day he was off to Kempty Falls where he found the water so cold that "God seemed to have put an ice tray on top of the falls."Then he went horse riding and said: "I felt like Amitabh Bachchan but only he rides faster."

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BHAWAN SINGH

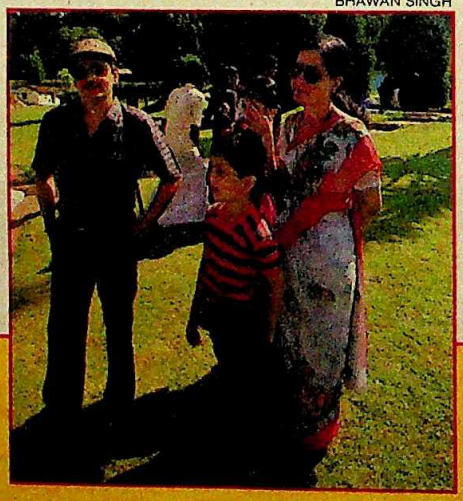
Tourists at Ooty: huge rush

make an estimated five million people and their families eligible for travel anywhere in the country every year; the five-day-week that has sent week-end tourism to dizzy heights; the large and increasing number of small but wealthy businessmen; and the growth of package tours that have made travel to distant places now affordable to most sections of Indian society. As West Bengal's Tourism Director A. Bhattacharya says: "The rise in domestic tourism is related to rising living standards and rising expectations of people." Adds M.A. Joshi, secretary of the Hotels and Restaurants Association of Bombay: "It is because of television that people have started looking beyond the city. Better transport and communication facilities have helped greatly too."

And the travel bug seems to have bitten all varieties of people. Traditionally, Bengalis were reputed to have the biggest wanderlust followed by Punjabis and Gujaratis. But now south Indians have begun to cross the Vindhyas more often than they did before with Tamilians and Keralites forming a huge chunk of new tourists. Rajasthanis are moving out in great flocks and so are Maharashtrians. I.K. Dave, former chairman of ITDC and now a hotel consultant, says that the urge to travel on pleasure "is a rapidly accelerating phenomenon that is being translated into a reality by almost every section of society".

But it isn't as if Indians have just begun travelling. In fact, way back in the ninth century when the Hindu seer

BHAWAN SINGH



Velankar and Sunanda of Bombay had been saving for this holiday for three years. Both work as stenographers in Bombay. He says: "We have hardly any time to relax." Or for that matter, spend time with their children Sampada, 12, and Amit, 7. But since it was their first holiday they wanted the best. So they flew into Bangalore from Bombay and then went sightseeing in Mysore before finally breathing the fresh air of Ooty. Their holiday is going to cost them a pile: Rs 2,700 for the air fare. Rs 300 for the bus to Ooty. Plus Rs 125 every day on hotel expenses and food. In all, Rs 5,000. But Velankar says: "We are having fun."

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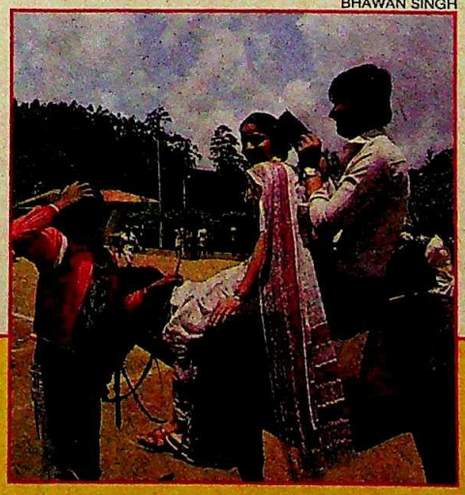
BHAWAN SINGH

Ooty's Doddabeta: peak traffic

Shankaracharya decreed that anyone could cleanse his sins if he made a pilgrimage to the four *dhams* (abodes of the gods): Jagannath Puri, Dwarka, Badrinath and Rameswaram, he really institutionalised domestic tourism. But the *ras*-carrying saffron-clad sadhus of yore have been replaced today by an army of camera-sporting tourists, who not only take their holy dip, but tack on a fair bit of sightseeing as well. The advantage is that most pilgrim centres have nearby hill resorts—Mussoorie near Hardwar, Puri which itself doubles as a beach resort and Kodaikanal near Madurai and Rameswaram. And most pilgrims to Vaishnodevi make the detour to Srinagar and Pahalgam. Says Cecil Samuel, ITDC's general manager, sales: "There is a definite shift from pilgrim tourism to leisure and sightseeing."

And unlike Shankaracharya's days, when only the truly pious would venture out on foot to make a hazardous pilgrimage, communication facilities have developed so much that an Indian could do the cleansing trip for as little as Rs 1,500 and within two weeks. Last month B.N. Narayanswamy, a *ragi* farmer from Karnataka's Bagepalli taluk and his wife, along with 10 other farmer families, set out in a bus that went through nine states and, apart from paying homage at Hardwar and Puri, they went sightseeing to Calcutta, Agra, Bhubaneshwar and a host of other places. The trip cost each person a mere Rs 1,500 and included stays at *dharmshalas*, where facilities to cook

BHAWAN SINGH



All the world smiles at lovers but R.R. Brahmankar ,25, and Pramila,20, of Nasik seemed oblivious of it as they held hands, hugged each other while posing for photographs and even went riding on the same horse around the lake in Ooty. Brahmankar and Pramila were on their rather belated honeymoon. Although they got married a month ago, Brahmankar, a bank officer, waited till he got his leave travel allowance and then decided to go to Ooty. Their honeymoon is not going to cost them too much: Rs 100 a day, including room rent. When last seen, they were heading to Doddabeta Peak hand in hand.

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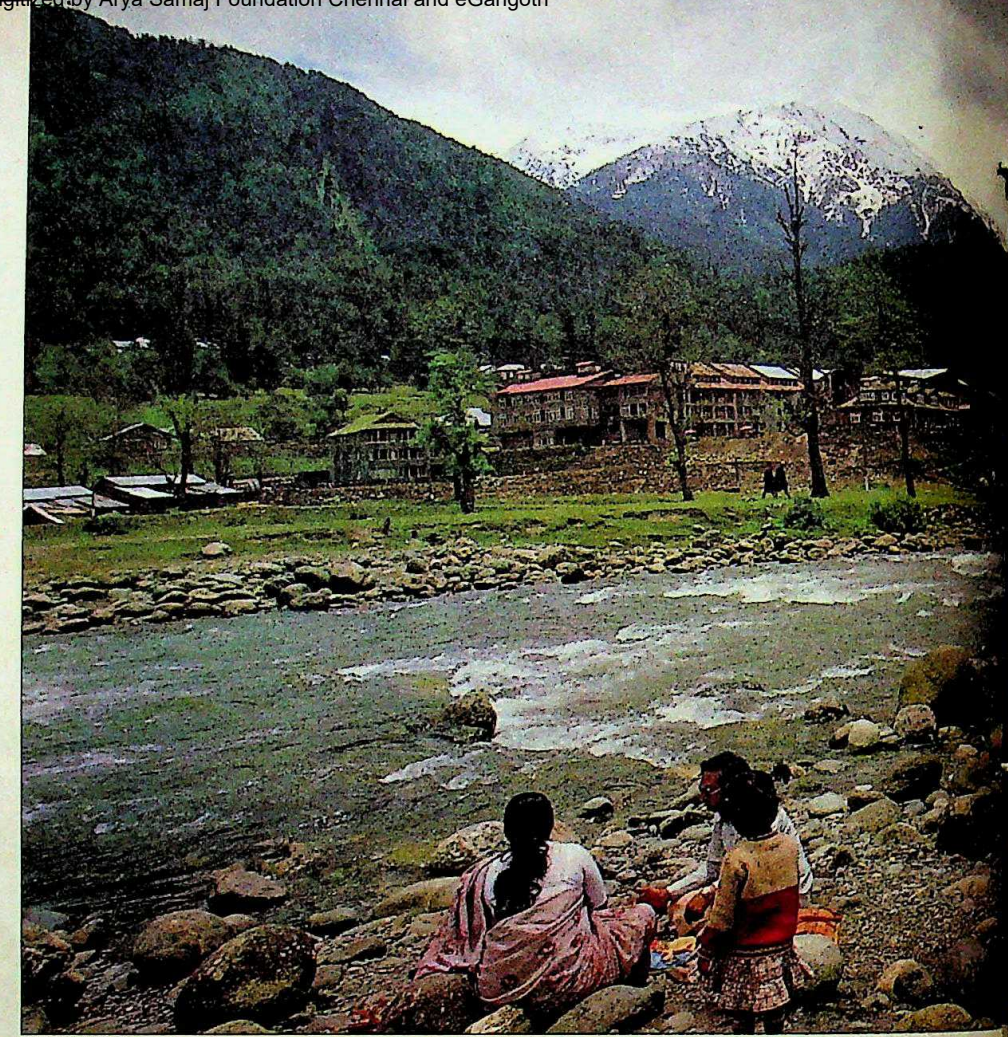
their own food were available.

The most visible sign of the new travel surge, apart from the flocks of bag-toting tourists, are the numerous "bucket shop" tour agents that have come up in most city street corners and are revolutionising the domestic tourism industry. In the past decade, an estimated 5,000 such tour operators have mushroomed all over the country offering such diverse packages as a week in Kashmir for Rs 750, five days in Mahabaleshwar for Rs 500, five days in Goa for Rs 400 and four days in Mahabaleshwar for Rs 600. Operating from little more than hole-in-the-wall offices, advertising through small billboards in railway and bus station toilets or through freelance touts, these agents have been doing phenomenal business, leaving the giant travel agents spluttering in disbelief—and disgust.

ONE SUCH is E.R.C. Pannicker, 56, who operates from a tiny room in Delhi's crowded Karol Bagh. Pannicker, a former hotel waiter and a lottery ticket seller, started operating a tour once a week to Agra in 1971. Soon he made it a daily service, then started tours to Hardwar and Rishikesh and now runs six types of tours, including week-long packages to Srinagar, Mussoorie and Jaipur. He now has eight luxury buses and currently has to hire additional buses every day to meet the demand. Says Pannicker: "There is a new generation that wants to see places and they now want to travel in comfort." He carries an average 400 tourists daily and reports an annual 30 per cent growth. Admits Inder Sharma, chairman of Sita Travels, among the big three in the business: "We just can't compete with the bucket shop travel agents. Their overheads are so low that we just can't afford to drop our prices to such low levels."

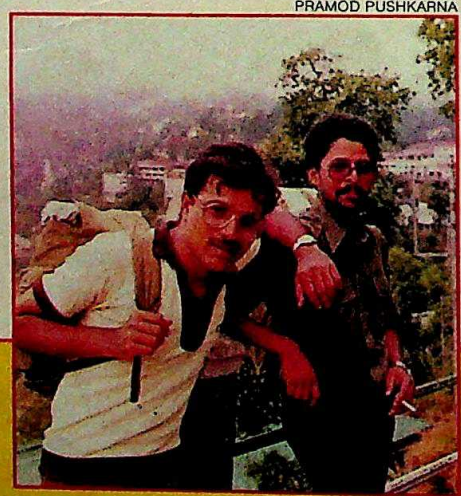
But many of the tour operators have fallen foul with tourists who complain that they do not really keep their promises. D. Ramesh, an advocate from Vishakhapatnam, who had booked what he thought was a luxury bus for a tour of Mysore, found that it was one of those old rattletraps which not only started an hour late but also skipped several of the key tourist spots. Apart from that, many of the tour operators had colluded with people having leave travel concession (LTC) facilities, giving them false receipts when no tour was made. To check this malpractice, all state governments have told their employees that they would have to hire a bus run by the state tourism corporations if they wanted to go on LTC tours.

But even as the boom transforms quiet little resorts into teeming towns it is not without a heavy price. Ooty is now a queen disrobed, with its once-verdant and lush downs now dotted with ugly concrete structures. Complains Ooty resident Piljain Wiedermann: "Ooty has become a big toilet and all the lovely cottages have gone. It is now a concrete jungle." Much the same thing is happening to other tourist resorts. In Mahabaleshwar, Major



BHAWAN SINGH

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Puffing up steep inclines, crossing hairline trails, freezing in the Himalayan snow, Rajendra Shukla and Kiran Kolhatkar were getting all the adventure they wanted plus more. Along with 23 others from the IIT Bombay, Shukla and Kolhatkar were on a 11-day trek in the Uttarkhand region organised by the institute's adventure club. The blistered faces and sore feet apart, the trekkers had a great time except when they had to trudge through bone chilling snow to go to the toilet every morning. The only useful technology they picked up was that thermal tents don't keep warm under extreme conditions. Brrr.

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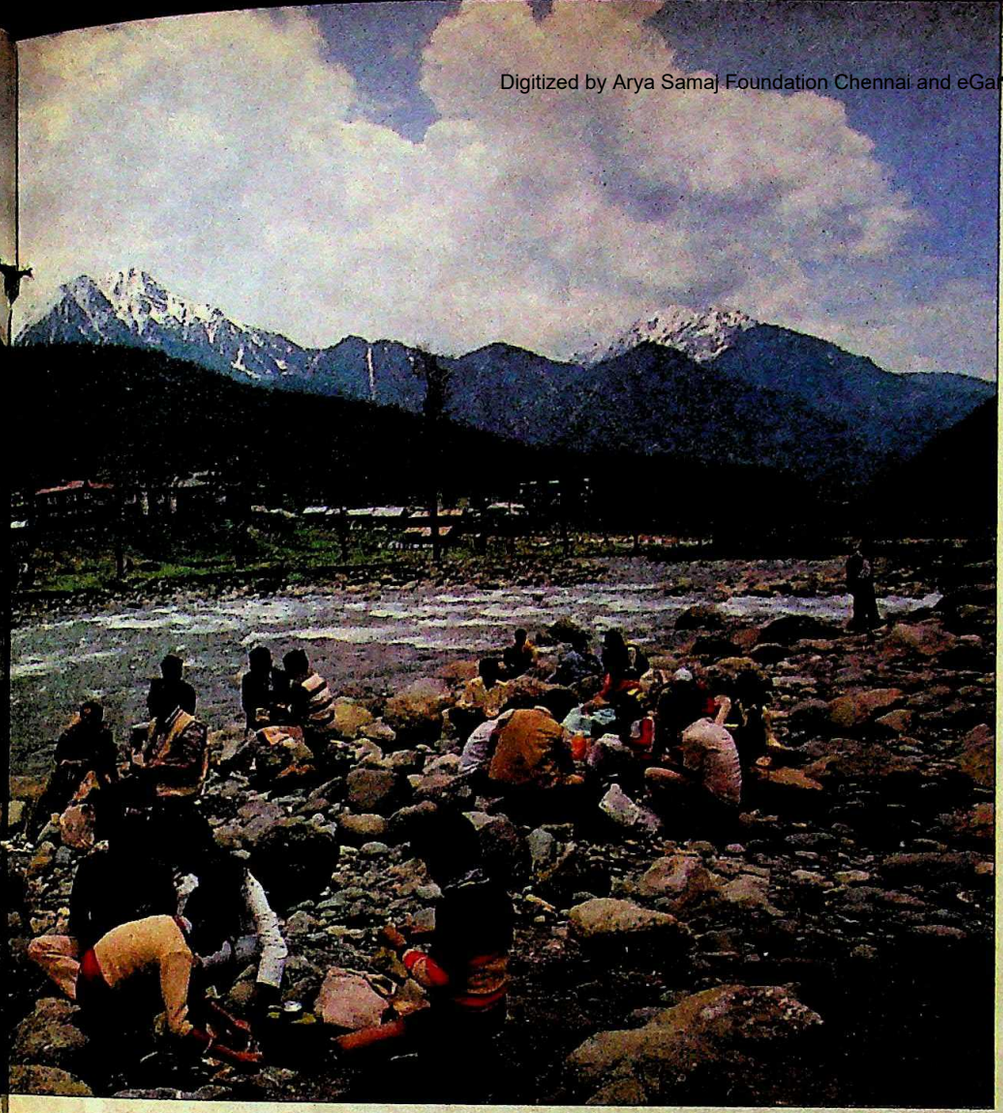


Picknicking at Pahalgam: wanderlust

J.H. Wadia, secretary of the Mahabaleshwar Club, points out that "cleanliness has gone down, there is an acute water shortage, the electricity supply keeps failing and deforestation is affecting the rainfall and temperatures".

IN SHIMLA, property prices have risen higher than the peaks that surround it. Prime sites are now going for Rs 1,000 a square yard—up from Rs 200 five years ago. Unscrupulous builders have been flagrantly violating bylaws and putting up multi-storied buildings that have forever changed Shimla's fabled skyline. And the dilemma is getting increasingly acute. As Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Vir Bhadra Singh says: "I concede the dangers of congestion but tourism is a great boon for us and thousands earn their livelihood. We have to develop new areas to stop the ecological balance from being upset."

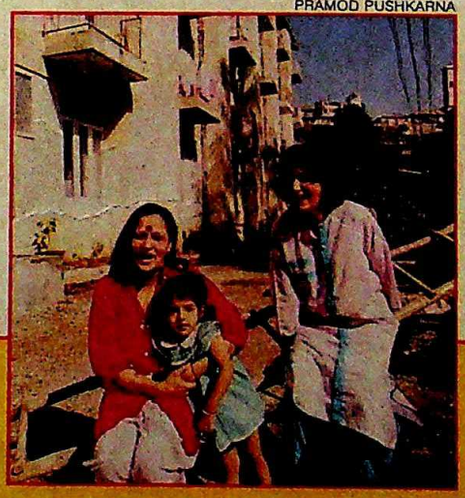
Even aesthetics are being blithely ignored. The Taj Mahal in Agra has suddenly acquired an additional, ugly-looking minaret—a TV transmission tower thoughtlessly put up by civic authorities in total ignorance of its jarring impact on the most famous monument in the country. In Jaipur, the famed Hawa Mahal and the Jantar Mantar are obvious victims of official negligence in maintainance and other historic monuments in the state are now being elbowed out of the picture by the construction of ugly modern constructions. In some tourist centres, the large influx of tourists have started to affect local culture. In Goa, the famed Goan hospitality is in unfortunate decline. Bemoans Gines Viegas, a hotelier: "If people sing songs in Goa, it is for money. Nobody wants to give anything for nothing anymore." And in Manali, the local youth are increasingly getting into the drug culture the tourists brought in.

But the accompanying dangers are being blithely ignored as domestic tourism continues to grow at a hectic pace and state governments rush in to fill the breaches. West Bengal has put up 44 tourist lodges in the state, compared to 18 eight years ago. Maharashtra's tourism corporation has set up 26 holiday resorts and in Himachal Pradesh the state tourism corporation now has 5,000 beds to offer as compared to 600 in 1973.

Last year, the Central Government Tourism Department, which has so far concentrated on developing facilities for foreign tourists, is now giving the indigenous variety its undivided attention. It now plans to construct more than 10 Yatri Niwas complexes which would offer cheap subsidised accommodation. All this is clear enough indication that when the sun next peeps over the peaks of the Himalayas or the endless watery expanse of the Indian Ocean, it will, more than anything else, symbolise the dawning of the age of the Indian tourist.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA with M. RAHMAN, GOBIND THUKRAL and bureau reports

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Having a second home in a holiday resort is a new trend and one of the first to do so in Mussoorie was Geeta Rohtagi, wife of a Delhi industrialist. Finding that holidaying every summer was not only expensive but that she also faced hassles of booking hotels and eating food they liked, Geeta bought a one-bedroom flat for Rs 70,000 and fitted it with a music system, television and a fully-stocked kitchen. Although she lives in a sprawling house in West Delhi, Geeta does not mind living in a comparatively smaller flat for two months every summer and says: "At least I don't have the problems of cleaning a big house."

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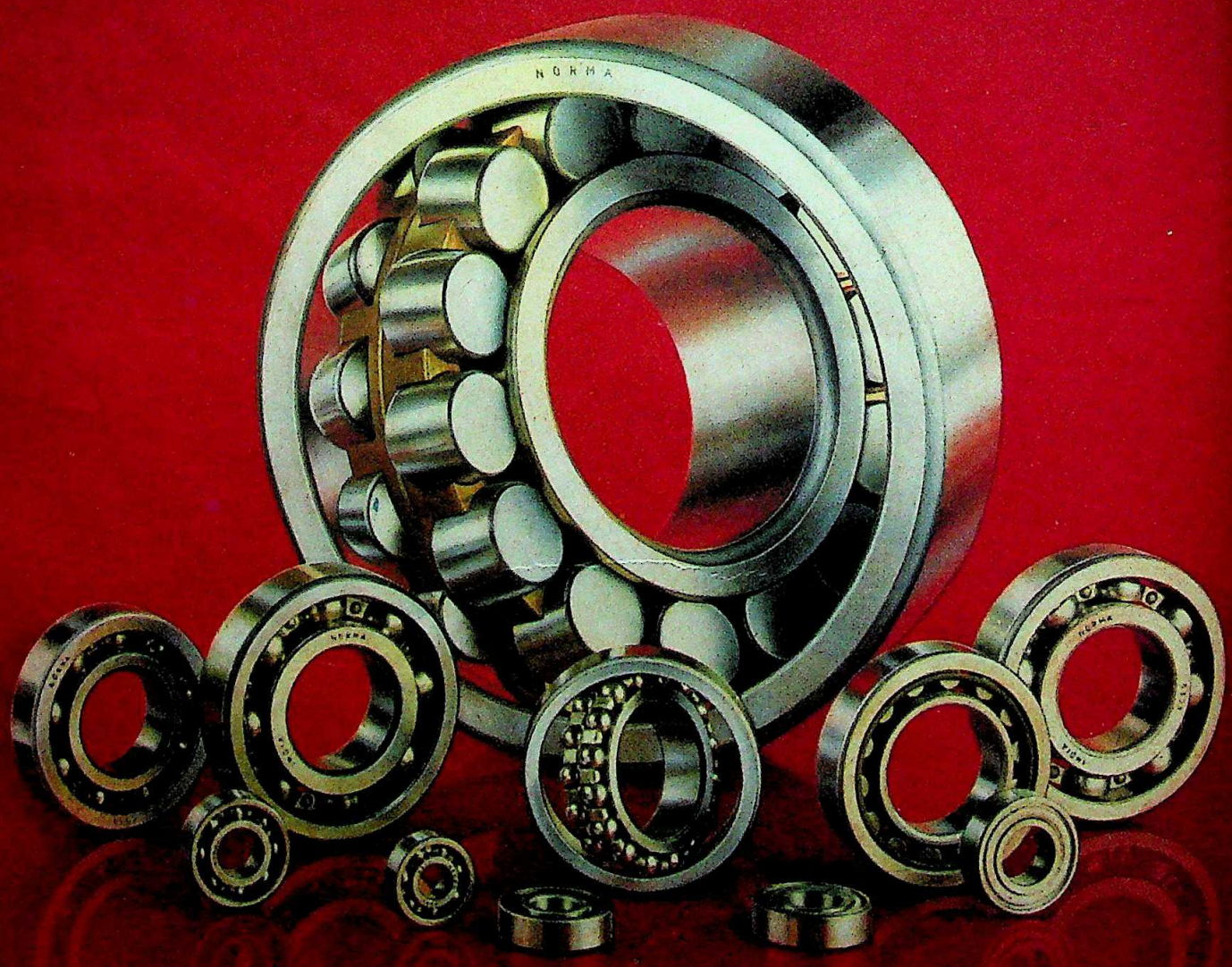

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TAXING DECISION

FINANCE Minister V.P. Singh may have slowed down his offensive against tax-offenders and violators of the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act, but matters may come to the boil once again if Singh's latest brainwave gets Cabinet clearance. The finance minister has suggested that 52 big industrial houses which owe large sums to the Government as tax—totalling about Rs 1,800 crore—should be denied any further letters of intent and industrial licences until their tax dues are paid up. The Industry Ministry is opposed to the idea, arguing that industrial growth should not be curbed on account of tax disputes. A final decision will now be taken by the Union Cabinet. Singh argues that he has already been able to speed up tax-collection by refusing to clear share and debenture issues of companies that are tax defaulters.

REVISED RIDE

THE NEW automobile policy will now be delayed by at least six months. After an official review, the Industry Ministry's initial draft on the subject has been rejected and the ministry has now been asked to submit a revised draft. Meanwhile, in anticipation of a more liberal policy, both Mahindra and Mahindra as well as the Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company (TELCO) have followed in the footsteps of Escorts and submitted revised proposals for their stalled car projects: Mahindra for the Citroen 505 and TELCO for the Honda Accord. Like Escorts (Trade Winds, June 30), both companies have now proposed a quicker rate of indigenisation, while TELCO has argued that its foreign exchange expenditure on the Accord project should be viewed in the context of its export earnings and that the imported content of the car in the first year will be only 36.7 per cent (against 50 per cent in the original proposal), with a correspondingly higher indigenous content in subsequent years.

WASHING UP

AFTER electronics, washing machines are quickly becoming the new business frontier. The public sector Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd has already announced its intention to start manufacturing washing machines. And now it is the turn of Kelvinator of India to join in. The Rs 140 crore-turnover refrigerator and two-wheeler firm has been talking to Japanese, Swedish and American companies for a foreign collaboration deal and plans to eventually turn out 50,000 automatic washing machines annually. According to company officials, the project will require little investment because most of the work will be done in-house.

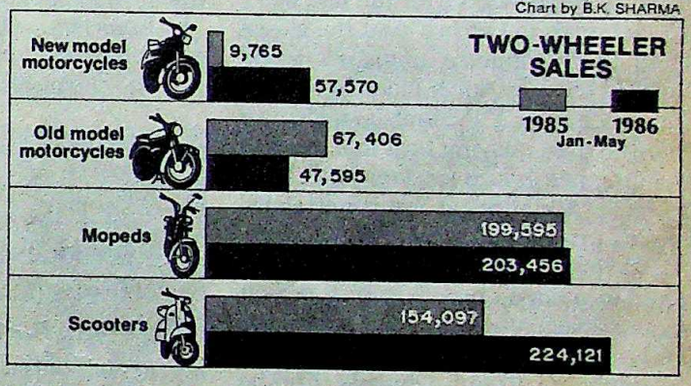
STEEL SHORTAGE

HAVING failed to construct the Daitari and Vijayanagar steel plants during the sixth plan, as had been promised, and having failed once again to provide the funds in the seventh plan for either of these two long-delayed projects, the Government is now turning to the private sector for help. The Steel Ministry has let it be known that entrepreneurs who are willing to put up mini-steel units at these two places will quickly get the Government's green signal. But this may not be a solution either as power is in short supply in both Orissa and Karnataka, and energy-intensive mini-steel units are unlikely to be smiled upon by state governments that already have a serious power problem.

WHEEL CHANGE

THE TWO-wheeler market is going through unexpected changes. The rapid growth in moped sales has peaked (sales in January-May 1986, at 2.03 lakh vehicles, are only 1.9 per cent higher than January-May 1985), while scooters have overtaken mopeds in sales, growing 45.4 per cent to 2.24 lakh in January-May this year. Motorcycles, which had failed to grow earlier, have similarly seen sales climb 36.5 per cent to 1.05 lakh in the first five months of this year. This growth has come entirely through the new 100 cc models, while all the old motorcycle models have lost ground. While some sections of the two-wheeler market have thus done better than others, the total market has grown more than 23 per cent, moving from 4.3 lakh vehicles in January-May 1985 to 5.3 lakh vehicles in January-May 1986.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



INNOVATIVE STRATEGY

THE RAILWAYS have hit upon several innovative strategies to meet the shortfall in seventh plan fund allocations. Apart from floating bonds, these include proposals to sell urban real estate, to take wagons on lease from leasing firms and to share the costs of running suburban rail systems with state governments. The plans to hawk some valuable real estate on an experimental basis and to take on lease 6,000 wagons and buy them at 20 per cent of their cost after five years are still on the drawing boards, but the consortium approach to suburban railway systems has got off the ground. The railways subsidise the suburban systems to the tune of Rs 85 crore annually and so have roped in Maharashtra's City Industrial Development Corporation to raise money from the market for a project in Maharashtra. Talks are also on with the Tamil Nadu and Karnataka governments in this connection.

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V.P. SINGH

The New Image

FOR MORE than a year, he was the terror of the corporate world. Vishwanath Pratap Singh, arguably the most dreaded finance minister India has ever had, had combined tax raids, grandstand arrests and tough talk to build for himself the image of a stern, no-nonsense guardian of the public exchequer. Entreaties for tax concessions were dismissed, and there was a stubborn refusal to meet the big noises in the business world, to the extent Singh became the focal point of much of the criticism against the Rajiv Gandhi Government.

Now the stick has been put quietly away, to be replaced with not one but a whole bunch of carrots. And the closed doors to the finance minister's wood panelled office in North Block have been flung wide open. V.P. Singh is suddenly a changed man, playing host to a series of friendly open house sessions with businessmen, announcing tax concessions, duty reductions and fiscal reform. Chuckled a Delhi-based industrialist: "We never expected a single penny from a person who had been after our blood for the last one year. But he seems to be very humane and conceded all our demands. And he was able to remove all the misgivings about his personal behaviour."

Industrialists have reason to be happy with the finance minister. In six weeks starting from mid-May, the new V.P. Singh has met more than 200 of them individually or collectively, and spent more than three to four hours with them daily, along with his senior-most officials. For good measure, Singh accepted dozens of invitations from business organisations and criss-crossed the country addressing gatherings of the business elite. Noticeably absent at these interfaces were his earlier diatribes and blunt threats. Instead, he was the personification of sweet reasonableness, asking his audiences to help speed up the country's development.

Finally, of course, it is money that talks, and Singh has been handing it out in generous dollops. At Open House sessions, he has so far doled out customs and excise reliefs worth Rs 170 crore, over the Rs 82 crore tax reliefs that he announced while replying to the Lok Sabha debate on his 1986 budget. Taken together, he has handed back more than half the Rs 489 crore fresh taxes that he originally levied through the budget; and still more may be given out in the near future.

This new generosity with the purse is being followed up with generosity of the spirit. For Singh has promised to come out with a scheme for voluntary disclosure of evaded excise duty; he has also assured businessmen that his officials will not publicise raids on them, and will refrain from launching raids or ordering arrests unless armed with irrefutable evidence.

The tax reliefs have benefited a host of industries:

▶ Electronics, which gets lower customs duty on the import of components. Revenue loss: Rs 60 crore.

▶ Exporters of leather goods, handloom fabrics, carpets and chemicals get bigger duty drawbacks that total Rs 40 crore.

▶ Manufacturers of air-conditioning and refrigeration equipment get excise duty cut from 60 per cent to 40 per cent. Revenue loss: Rs 20 crore.

▶ Consumers of polyester filament yarn, who can import the yarn cheaper because of the withdrawal of the anti-dumping duty of Rs 15 per kg. Revenue loss: over Rs 3 crore.

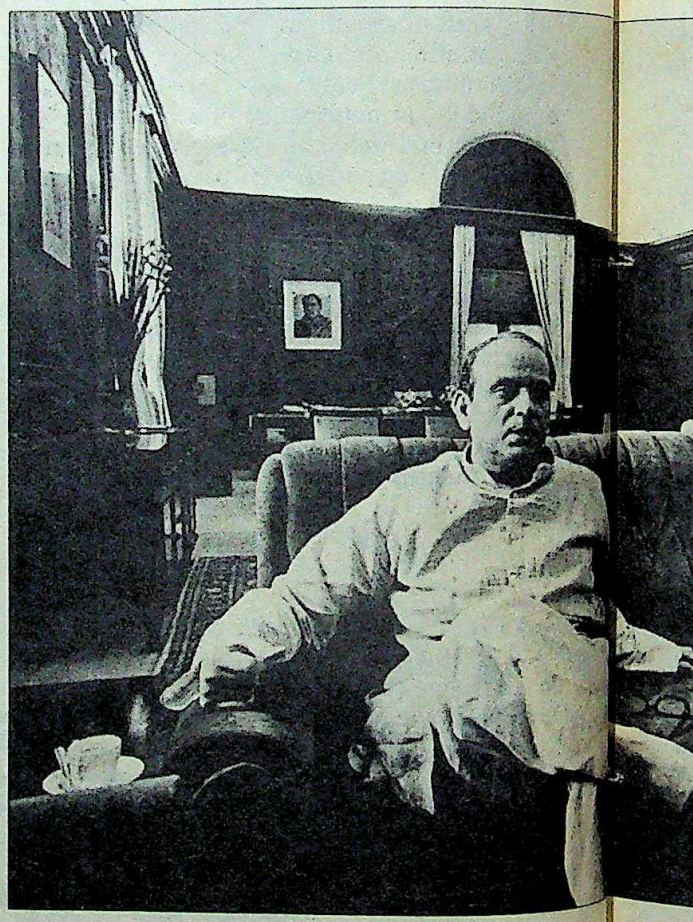
▶ Small-scale units, since turnover limit for excise exemption has been raised from Rs 7.5 lakh to Rs 15 lakh. Revenue loss: Rs 10 crore.

▶ Steel units, which can now import sponge iron at a lower customs duty. Revenue loss: Rs 27.6 crore.

▶ Consumers of soda ash, on which the import duty has been reduced to 25 per cent. Revenue loss: over Rs 13 crore.

Singh's munificence has not been limited to the large industrial houses or to big industry, and covers such unsung sections of society as cricket and hockey players. He conceded the demand of sports goods manufacturers to treat the cork wood and cork waste imported for these balls at par with other cork products, with a concessional duty of 50 per cent against over 140 per cent for the balls. And in the educational field, a press note last fortnight said: "In the interest of visual and practical education in astronomy etc, for students in particular and members of the public in general, equipment to be imported for setting up planetaria...is being exempted from customs duties." The Department of Revenue was still to finalise the list of equipment required for four planetaria to come up in Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Gujarat. And a major concession came in the form of a notification which said that any supplies made to Indian companies in response to a global tender would be treated as deemed exports. This was done to make indigenous manufacturers competitive with foreign companies and to help import

V.P. Singh is suddenly a changed man, playing host at a series of friendly open house sessions with businessmen, announcing tax concessions, duty reductions and fiscal reform.



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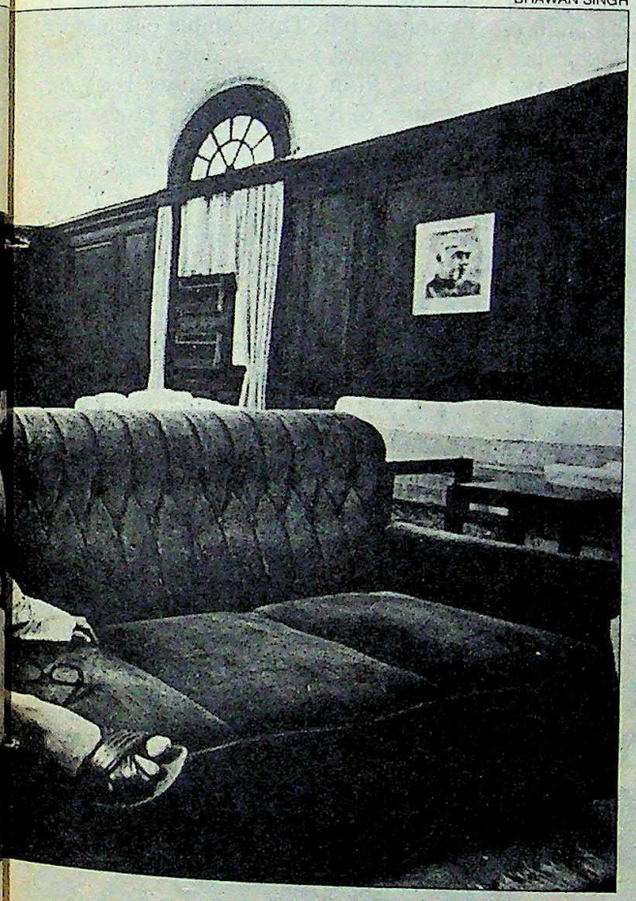
substitution.

Some of the concessions went directly contrary to what Singh had done in his budget. In the case of the air-conditioning industry, for example, the budget had witnessed a hefty increase in the duties applicable to the industry. But now, Singh announced substantial duty concessions even though two of the industry's stalwarts—Fedders Lloyd and Voltas—had been charged in recent months with major excise violations. Fedders Lloyd has been served with a show cause notice for over Rs 21 crore, while Voltas offices were raided by taxmen. Clearly, Singh now bears no animus against even those businessmen and companies which were in the thick of the battle that he was waging as recently as a couple of months ago for bringing errant companies to book.

BHAWAN SINGH



Inevitably, the business world was abuzz with talk of who had gained and who lost, and who had walked away with the biggest slice of the cake that the finance minister was cutting and distributing. And by common consent, the man to emerge from the Open House sessions with the broadest smile was V.P. Punj of Fedders Lloyd. Under one guise or another, Punj was present at almost half of all the meetings that Singh had with businessmen, and his group emerged as one the biggest beneficiaries. Officials in the Finance Ministry were heard to remark that a man who heads a group with a dozen companies was spending half his day in the Open House sessions, pleading for a variety of duty concessions.

Equally interesting was the case of the withdrawal of the anti-dumping duty on polyester filament yarn. Bombay Dyeing Chairman Nusli Wadia and Reliance Industries Executive Director Anil Ambani were among the industry representatives present at the Open House session for the textile industry. Wadia and others asked for, and got, the anti-dumping duty abolished. While this might help Ambani immediately (he is one of the largest importers of yarn), it is against Reliance's long-term interest. But V.P. Singh was sufficiently persuaded by those who argued against the anti-dumping duty, and off it went.

The business world as well as several leading Congressmen believe that Singh's new approach is in response to the growing criticism that he was treating businessmen and industrialists at par with common criminals. Earlier, Singh had withstood pressures from within his own party to meet businessmen, and gone to the extent of refusing appointments to his own party MPs who had approached him with the cases of 'aggrieved industrialists'. Some important MPs had, after failing to get an audience with Singh, met the prime minister and convinced him that Singh's touch-me-not attitude was annoying the most powerful lobby in the country. Even some friendly industrialists advised Rajiv Gandhi to convince the finance minister that he should not avoid genuine representations and should try to get a first-hand account of the problems faced by industry and trade. This was indirectly conveyed to Singh, but it was also made clear that no mercy was to be shown to any economic offender, irrespective of his connections.

> **"There is buoyancy in the tax collections; and if I get more by giving less, then why not? Is it bad economics to give tax relief to generate more production and finally more revenue?"**

But Singh and his advisers maintain that no special mercies are being shown in the new drive and that the tax concessions have been given after careful scrutiny. Said Singh: "It is a figment of the imagination to believe that my ministry can be pressurised by any lobbies or individuals. All the decisions have been taken after being examined by not only the Finance Ministry but also by other concerned ministries. I have given reliefs to those who really deserved it." Singh disclosed that the decision to withdraw the duty on polyester filament yarn was taken only on the specific recommendations of the Industry Ministry. Similarly, the tax concessions for the electronics industry were based on the recommendations of the inter-ministerial committee in which the Department of Electronics played a major role. "I have not given anything which the country can't afford," Singh insisted. "There is buoyancy in the tax collections; and if I get more by giving less, then why not? Is it bad economics to give tax relief to generate more production and finally more revenue?" The finance minister promised to exceed budget revenue targets yet again. The revenue target for the year was fixed in the budget at Rs 20,393 crore, but Singh has directed his officials to collect at least Rs 22,432 crore.

Finally, decrying any suggestion that he had become soft on economic offenders and errant businessmen, Singh argued: "It is not correct that the Government has softened its drive against tax evasion and the unearthing of black money. The drive is still on and will soon be accelerated if they don't behave as honest tax-payers." And he instructed his officials to speed up action on some outstanding cases even as tax sleuths scoured London, Switzerland and the United States for evidence of fresh wrongdoing. Said Singh: "Whatever others may say, we still believe that a combination of the carrot and stick is the best policy. At times the carrot may be more visible than the hidden stick." Right now, at least, that is certainly the case and Indian businessmen have enjoyed a summer of unexpected contentment after a winter of conflict.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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FOREIGN TRADE

Temporary Reprieve

RARELY had the country's foreign trade situation seemed so bleak: an unprecedented trade deficit of Rs 8,300 crore or more in 1985-86 (up by a staggering 50 per cent from the previous year), declining exports, the uniform failure of the Government's numerous export-promotion schemes and a seemingly endless upward import spiral even as the growing repayment of the $3.9 billion loan taken from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loomed large.

But providence has come to India's rescue once again: oil. Once earlier, oil had provided a bonanza, when domestic petroleum production shot up from 12 million to 29 million tonnes between 1980 and 1985. This time, salvation has come from imported oil, whose prices have crashed to their lowest level in close to a decade.

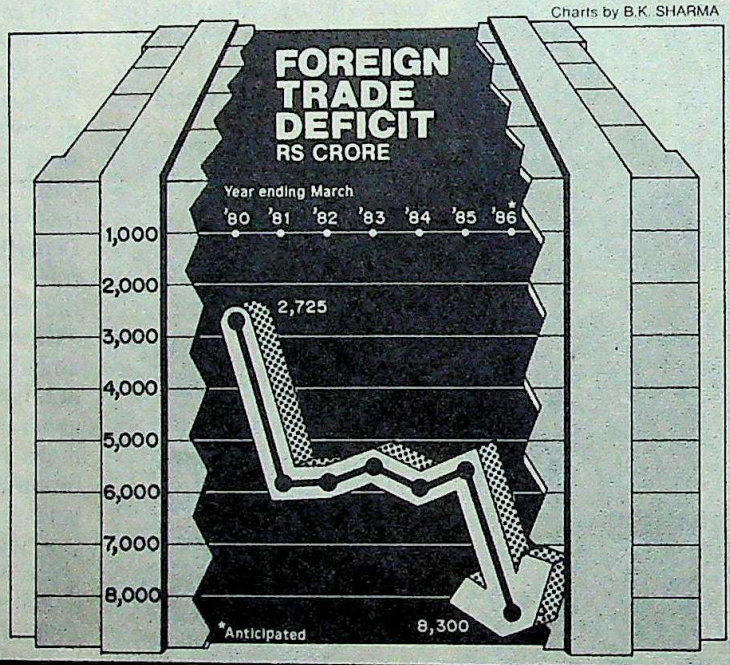
The fall in international petroleum prices is expected to give India a windfall import saving of Rs 2,000 crore this year—more than thrice the Rs 610 crore that the country will be repatriating to the IMF against its loan. The unexpected bonanza has smoothened many a creased forehead in the Finance Ministry. Said a vastly relieved Bimal Jalan, chief economic adviser: "Now the balance of payments position looks much, much better."

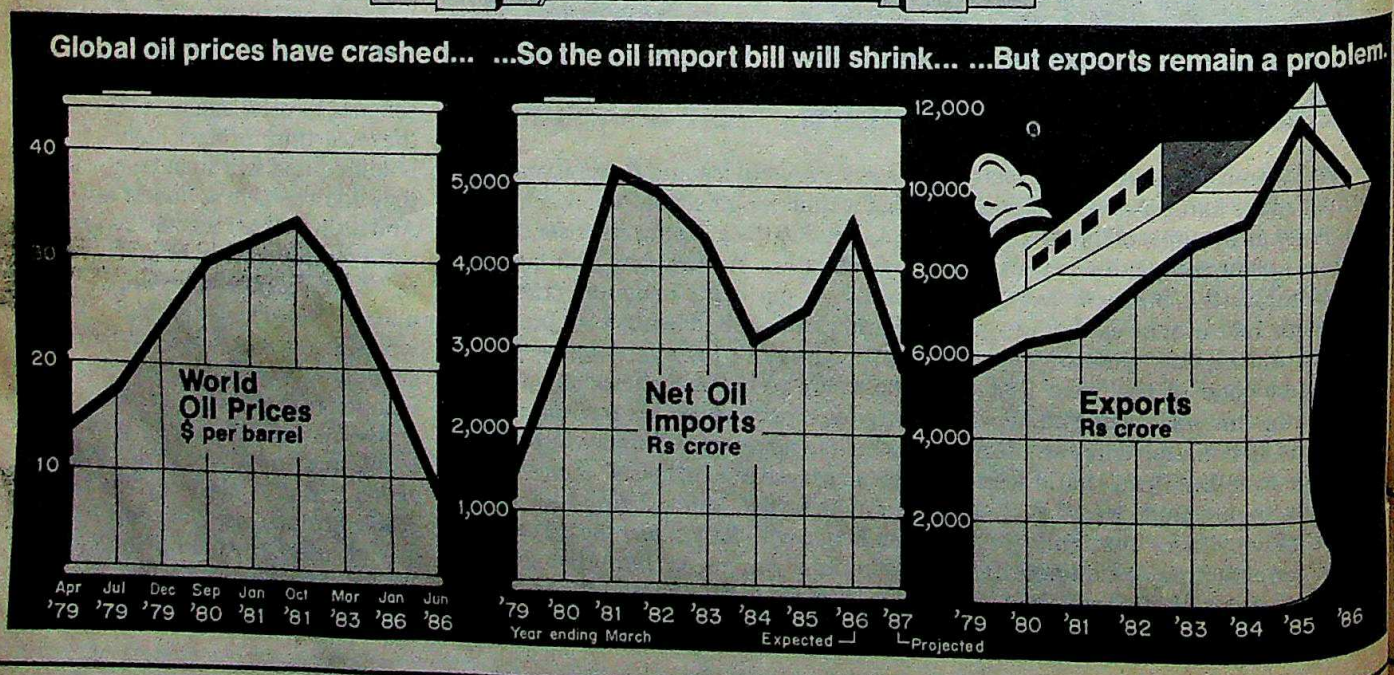
The scenario, just a few months ago, was truly dismal. Exports had actually dropped by over 10 per cent, from Rs 11,855 crore in 1984-85 to an estimated Rs 10,200 crore last year (the final figures aren't yet in). But the lower international oil prices have come like manna from heaven. Even the World Bank in its latest report on India's economic situation felt that, after the fall in the oil prices, India's balance of payments position "changes significantly". The balance of payments deficit on the current account is now expected to decline from 1.1 per cent of the gross domestic product in 1984-85 to a miniscule 0.1 per cent in 1989-90. And according to the Geneva-based secretariat of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), India is one of four countries expected to reap the maximum benefit from lower petroleum prices.

But the new scenario of a lower trade deficit takes factors other than cheap oil also into account. There is, for instance, the simultaneous fall in the global prices of edible oils, another bulk item in the country's import basket. And this year, the Government is focusing on reducing the imports of such bulk items since they account for most of the total foreign exchange bill. Thus, edible oils imports are expected to come down to 11 lakh tonnes, from 14 lakh tonnes last year. Because of higher domestic production, sugar imports will drop sharply from 15 lakh tonnes to 6 lakh tonnes. And fertiliser imports too will be substantially lower this year because of stockpiling last year, when international prices were depressed. It is too early in the day to forecast just how much smaller the trade deficit will be this year as a result of all this, but there is little doubt that the gains will be substantial.

Yet, these gains cannot be expected to be repeated year after year, and the Government knows it. Says Jalan: "We are not counting on this phenomenon while planning our balance of payments

Charts by B.K. SHARMA





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strategy." And given the limits to import substitution, exports will necessarily have to rise dramatically if the balance of payments problem is to be licked. As Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Manmohan Singh pointed out last month, the savings in the petroleum import bill will only "give us breathing space to...bring about greater dynamism in our export sector."

Officials argue that the drop in exports last year was essentially because of a drop of Rs 1,500 crore in the export of domestic oil. If that were the full story, it would be comforting. But the statistics show that there is genuine cause for worry in other export sectors as well. Engineering exports, for instance, were supposed to be the success story of the 1980s, comprising nearly 14 per cent of the export basket. Yet these declined last year, netting only Rs 935 crore in the first 11 months of 1985-86, against Rs 1,020 crore over the same period in 1984-85. Electronic items, motor vehicles, automobile parts, transmission line towers, sugar machinery—all saw a dip in their exports. And these are all areas which had been listed as 'thrust areas" in the much-heralded D.V. Kapur report on the strategies to be adopted for pushing engineering exports. With tea and tobacco exports also dipping, even the export of traditional items failed to cheer.

More worrying, however, is that nothing seems to be succeeding in giving exports a lift-off—neither the various export subsidies (like the cash compensatory support and the duty drawback facility) nor the plethora of schemes to boost exports launched by the Government over the years: the 100 per cent export-oriented unit (EOU) scheme, the green card system, the import-export passbook, the advanced licensing and supplementary licensing schemes and the free trade zones. Thanks primarily to bureaucratic bungling, all these schemes have come a cropper.

The 100 per cent EOU scheme has failed because no state government is willing to grant the concessions and facilities that the Central Government has promised on paper. K.G. Khosla, who heads the K.G. Khosla industrial empire, cites the classic case of Prashant Khosla Pneumatic, a 100 per cent EOU in Nasik which, with all its concessions, took over three years to come on line while a domestic unit of the same company situated nearby started production within 10 months of the foundation-stone being laid.

THE GREEN card, issued to 100 per cent EOUs and ostensibly meant as a passport to the priority allotment of a host of inputs, has become irrelevant because no government department recognises it. Khosla's company, like many others, had no success in obtaining priority allotment for power connections, telephones, cement or steel.

The advanced licensing and the supplementary licensing schemes are archetypal examples of good schemes going to waste purely because of the time taken to procure these licenses. Industrialists cite numerous examples of "advance" licenses taking six months to materialise.

"Now the balance of payments position looks much, much better."

BIMAL JALAN
chief economic adviser, Ministry of Finance

"The smaller oil bill gives us breathing space to make exports more dynamic."

MANMOHAN SINGH
deputy chairman, Planning Commission

Though the Government has decided on four more free trade zones, opinion on their utility continues to be divided.

The latest scheme announced by the Government, the import-export passbook, is a non-starter, as is admitted even by officials of the ministries of commerce and industry. More than 13 months after the scheme was announced not a single passbook has been issued by the offices of the chief controller of imports and exports in Delhi. Said an industrialist: "The greatest non-tariff barrier to exports is the Ministry of Commerce."

Perhaps nobody would agree more than Triveni Engineering's Dhruv Sawhney, who was simultaneously awarded the export shield of the year by the Engineering Export Promotion Council and blacklisted as a defaulting exporter by the chief controller of imports and exports. Sawhney's crime: after successfully setting up a Rs 28 crore sugar plant in Indonesia, Triveni Engineering could not re-export a Rs 12 lakh consignment to Nigeria because that Government defaulted in opening the letter of credit.

A mood for change in official policy has been set with what have come to be known as "Saturday meetings" at Udyog Bhavan, where an inter-ministerial group of officials meets individual exporters every Saturday to thrash out their problems. The Saturday meetings are a welcome change from a macro-level approach to a micro-level identification of not just "thrust industries and markets" but individual "thrust companies and thrust products". Meanwhile, the Government is also roping in the entire diplomatic corps into devoting a "special effort" to increase exports. A letter from the Ministry of External Affairs to all the heads of Indian missions abroad last fortnight stressed that "political and economic diplomacy must go together".

In the ultimate analysis, however, it is the exporters who have to deliver the goods. And as things stand, nothing could be more reflective of the present state of affairs than former commerce secretary Abid Hussain's quip when told by the then commerce minister Pranab Mukherjee that industry should be given the slogan "export or perish". Replied Hussain: "Given a choice Indian industry would rather perish than export!"

—TANIA MIRIA

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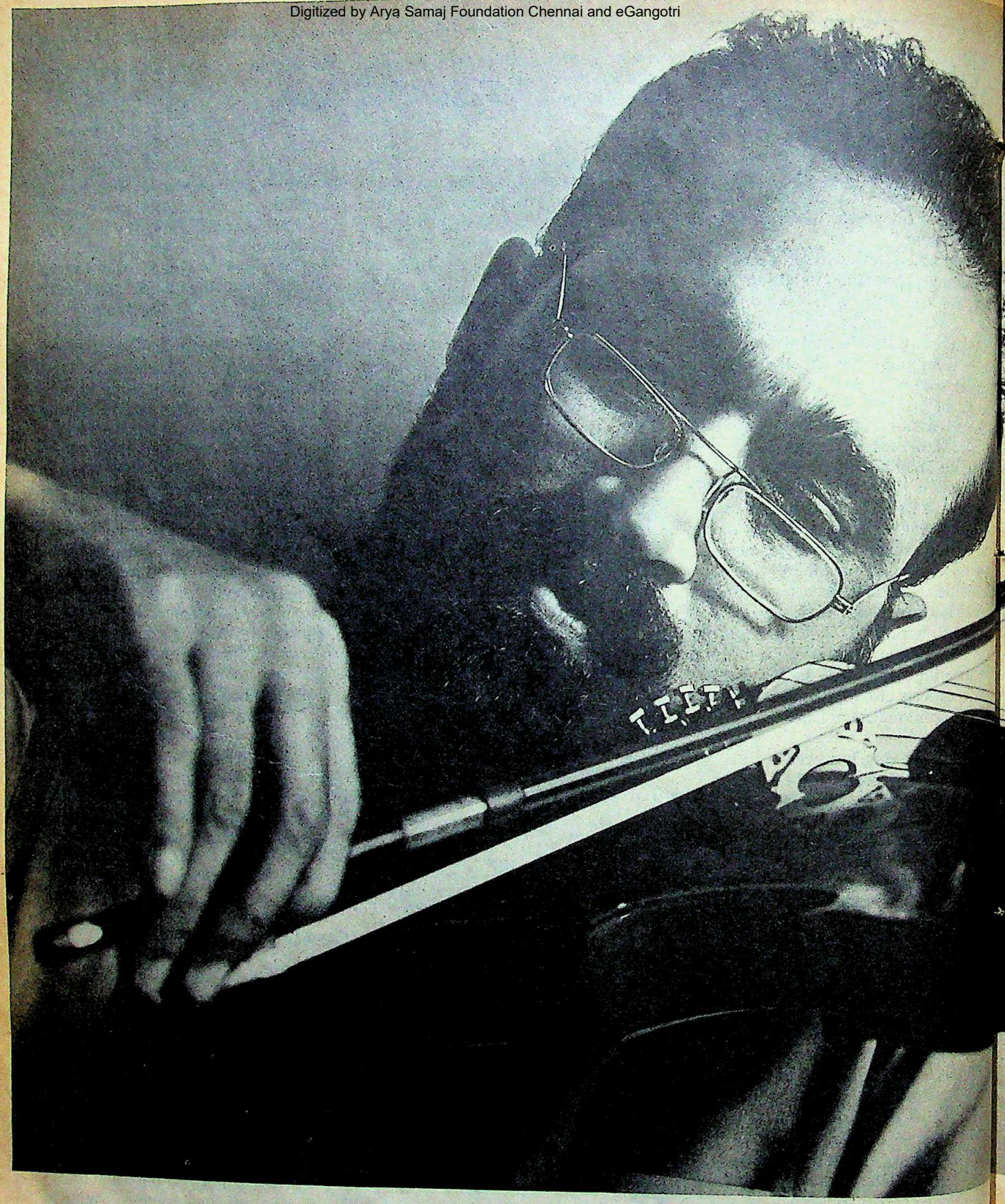

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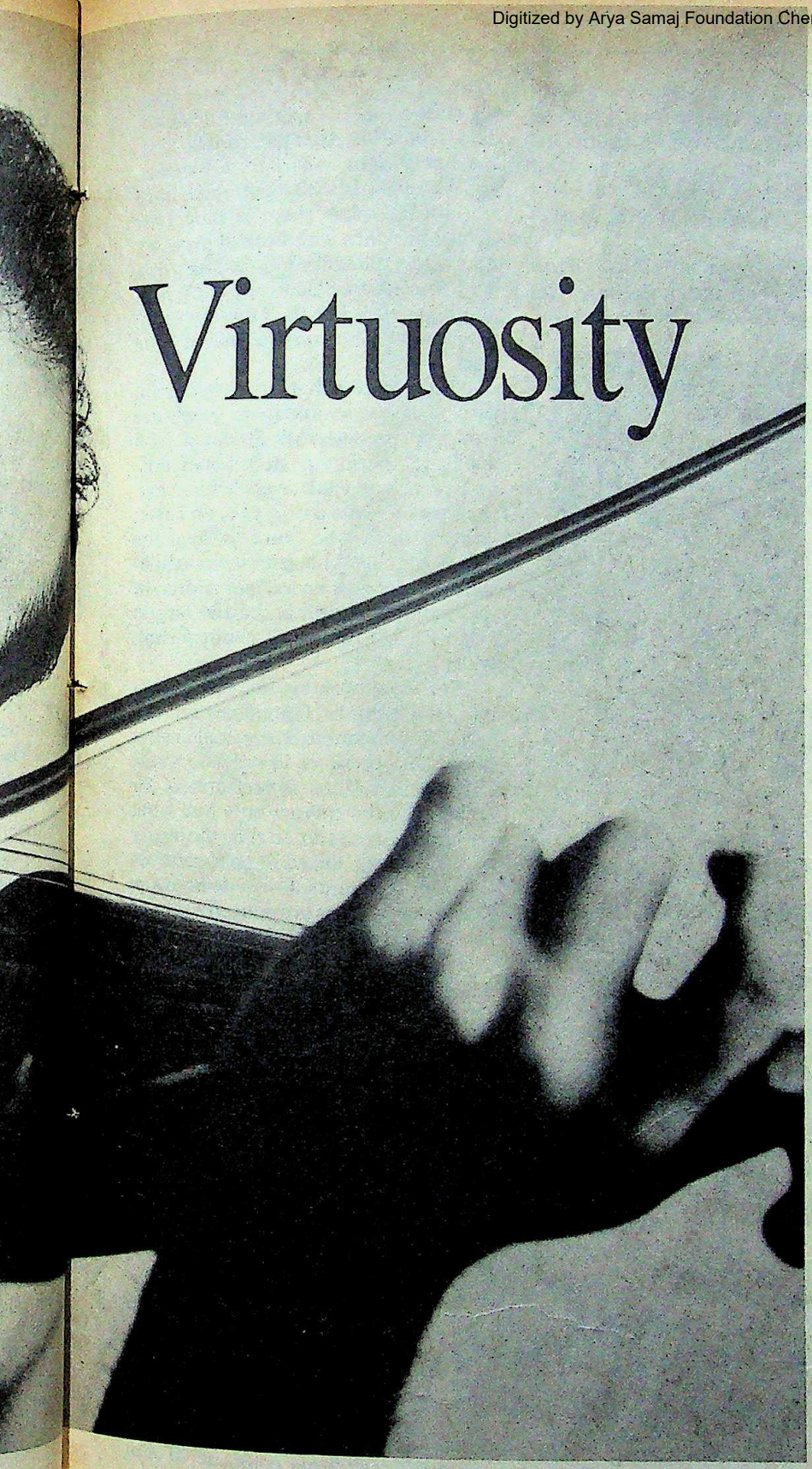

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COURIER SERVICES

Going Places

SEVEN years ago, air courier companies didn't exist. Suddenly, they are everywhere and custom has been growing 60 per cent annually. At present, the business of speeding time-sensitive documents and parcels to commercial destinations is already worth Rs 40 crore, and getting set for take-off into the really big time.

But the take-off is proving turbulent. TNT-Skypack, one of the industry's leading outfits, set the dovecotes aflutter last month by announcing with an advertising splash that it was chartering Vayudoot aircraft to carry its packages across the country. That single deal would probably help treble Skypack's courier business, to Rs 15 crore, but it also had the rest of the pack screaming foul even as a surprised Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jagdish Tytler asked Vayudoot how it had given a virtual monopoly to just one company.

Vayudoot quickly made amends by offering similar services to other courier companies at the same rates. But Skypack has already sewn up 1,000 kg on each of the four nightly Vayudoot flights, more than half the total capacity available. So none of the others stands a chance of getting as much cargo space.

Included in the original deal is the Posts and Telegraphs Department, which gets almost as much space as Skypack on the special night flights. But the department was informed of the arrangement only at the eleventh hour, the Vayudoot timings are not the most convenient from the department's point of view, and one concerned official heard the news only on television. A telegram informing the department of the deal with Vayudoot arrived after the new service had already been launched. And the department says the courier services are violating the law by carrying not just parcels but also mail which, under the Postal Act, is supposed to be a government monopoly.

Skypack pulled off its Vayudoot coup when its main rival, Airfreight-DHL, was already negotiating with the airline for charter arrangements. And Airfreight Managing Director Cyrus Guzder claimed that "this service cannot be economical at the price that is being paid". But Skypack has little doubt that it will pay for itself and more. "I haven't gone into this with my eyes shut," said Skypack President Dilip Kulkarni. "Our tie-up with Vayudoot has only just started but we have seen a big spurt of inquiries already."

So, despite the to-do over the controversial deal, courier services are getting into top gear. "The number of courier companies is growing even faster than the business itself," said Ajit Ramchandani, proprietor, Arco Enterprises. He is absolutely right. Apart from Skypack and Airfreight-DHL (both of which have world-wide links), there is Blue Dart (which has links with Federal Express), Air Linkers, Blazeflash, Uniexpress, Trident, Superman, Spiderman and a host of others. "It is like the California gold rush," said Khusroo Dabash of Blue Dart.

"More and more people are realising the potential of courier companies, even grandmothers who want to send the occasional gift."

CYRUS GUZDER
managing director, Airfreight-DHL

Guzder agrees that business is about to explode: "More and more people are realising the potential. Students with applications to foreign universities, doctors requiring vital drugs which lose their potency in a day or two, and even grandmothers who want to send the occasional gift." Kulkarni claims a thousand regular customers, and Airfreight said that 80 per cent of the 101 largest companies in the whole country dealt with them.

But more business has also meant more competition. Companies are undercutting one another, the smaller ones saving on overheads in order to quote cheaper rates. Thus, Prem Gupta of Air Linkers says he charges only half what the big companies do. So even the bigger outfits are now forced to offer contract rates and discounts. Elwin de Souza of Trident says he has introduced a second day service that is considerably cheaper, and Arco has stopped refusing to accept odd-shaped packages.

For all that, there seems to be room for everyone. Blazeflash joined the fray only last April and claims to be growing 40 per cent every week. Uniexpress flagged off its operations only a year ago, but is already doing Rs 1 lakh a month, and Executive Director M. Nath says: "Business is growing day by day." Lemuir Express, which gave up the regular service to concentrate on its diamond courier business, resumed regular operations recently. "We had to start again from scratch," explains Director Snehal Parikh, "but there is no dearth of clients."

With chartered flights, radio-controlled vans and a demand explosion, courier companies are getting into top gear.

The bigger firms continue to aim higher. Kulkarni of Skypack, for instance, talks of having his own radio-control vans and other innovations. Clearly, the courier business is set to go places. And with more than 70 major domestic destinations claimed to be within 24-hour reach, it surely should.

—PARTHASARATHI SWAMI with bureau reports

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SANCHAITA INVESTMENTS

The Loan Mela

IT WAS a money machine with few parallels. With its astonishing 48 per cent rate of interest, it offered its 2 lakh-odd depositors the hope of making a quick buck. It also garnered its promoters anywhere between Rs 100 crore and Rs 600 crore, pitchforking them into undreamt of wealth.

But five years after Sanchaita Investments crashed, the detritus is still being looked at. Presiding over the process are a retired district court judge appointed by the Supreme Court three years ago to help depositors recover their money, the 2,500-strong Sanchaita Depositors' Forum (SDF), and the West Bengal Government's bureau of investigations. The trio have joined forces to unearth the huge sums of money some of the company's promoters and agents are believed to have squirrelled away.

The Supreme Court armed Sanchaita Commissioner N.C. Datta with powers to seize Sanchaita property even if it was held in *benami* names. Tipped off by the government agency and the depositors' forum, the 68-year-old Datta has seized and auctioned over 200 items: 20 flats and other real estate in Bombay plus a few in Calcutta, cinema halls in West Bengal, and ornaments and bank accounts from all over the country.

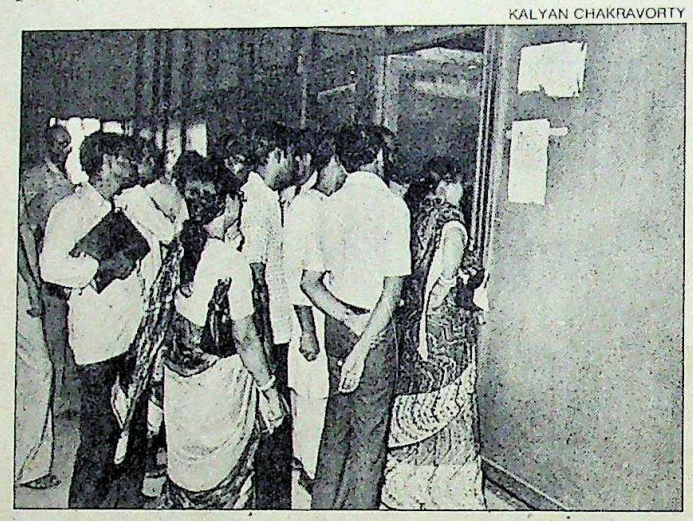
Apart from landing the commissioner in over 100 court cases, most of which he won, the furious spree of seizures has had another fall-out. P.K. Goswami, president of the SDF, reports that he receives phone calls warning him off the Sanchaita money trail. Adds Datta: "Everyone's your enemy if you attach property. I feel that our lives are not very safe."

The bright side of the picture: Datta's haul has snared nearly Rs 6 crore for the company's depositors and may eventually net them another Rs 3 crore. That will certainly be hurrahed by the thousands of poor people who put their last paise into the firm.

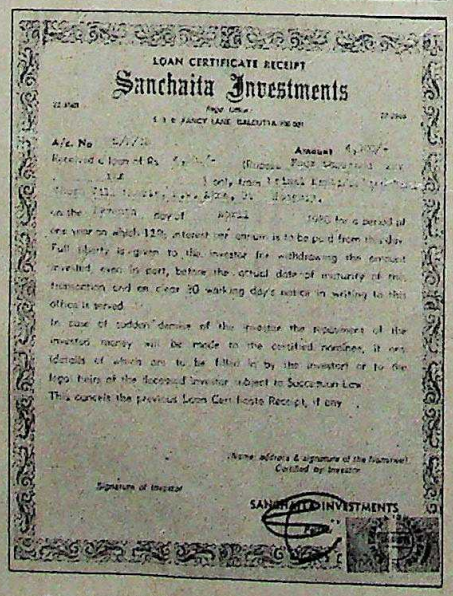
Farmer Mrinal Kanti Ghosh, for example, sold paddy and potatoes, pooled in his savings and deposited Rs 4,000 with a local Sanchaita sub-agent six years ago. For over a year, the agent handed over Rs 120 in monthly interest—a hefty 36 per cent annual rate of return on his investment, a welcome addition to his niggardly monthly income of Rs 150. But one not-so-fine day, unhappily for Ghosh, the money finally stopped coming in.

Queues at Sanchaita office

KALYAN CHAKRAVORTY



The Sanchaita commissioner has seized and auctioned real estate from all over the country, raising nearly Rs 6 crore for Sanchaita's depositors. The money is now being disbursed.



LOAN CERTIFICATE RECEIPT

Sanchaita Investments

Loan certificates: breach of trust

Last month, Ghosh journeyed from his home at Meria village to central Calcutta. At a tacky building, he joined people from all walks of life who had been informed that they could collect 15 per cent of the sums they had deposited with Sanchaita—and walked out with a cheque for Rs 600.

The daily queues at the cooperative bank building are a familiar sight by now. They mirror a crumbling of hopes, the denouement of a drama that feverishly gripped West Bengal. For the six years that it flourished, Sanchaita was an El Dorado to its depositors. With tentacles that spread far beyond the state, it initially offered a whopping 48 per cent interest of which only 12 per cent was on paper. Obviously, a company that offered such fantastic rates could remain in business only so long as it attracted large enough deposits to pay the old depositors their dues.

Still, the firm had an impeccable record of paying interest on time, come rain or shine, and the credulous flocked in droves. Depositors who invested early reaped rich rewards, quickly recovering their principal in interest alone. Seeing this, thousands pulled out their savings and followed suit, only to be ruined when the bubble burst five years ago, helped along by the state Government cracking down on the firm. By then, however, Sanchaita's promoters and agents had stashed away crores. Adding mystery to high drama, Sanchaita promoter Sambu Prasad Mukherjee leaped or was pushed to his death from a multi-storeyed building in Calcutta (the murder theory still holds sway in Calcutta although the police claim that he committed suicide), while Bihari Lal Murarka, the second promoter, went underground and has not been traced since.

Right now, however, the focus of attention is the depositor. Some 1.70 lakh investors have filed claims for refund of their principals, but not all will get them. For one, the commissioner's office has prescribed a cut-off date (December 13, 1980, when the bureau of investigations raided the firm and its agents) and those who don't qualify will receive a pittance, if anything. Then, under the terms of a Supreme Court order, only claims relating to deposits of up to Rs 25,000 can be entertained;

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Cream Crunch

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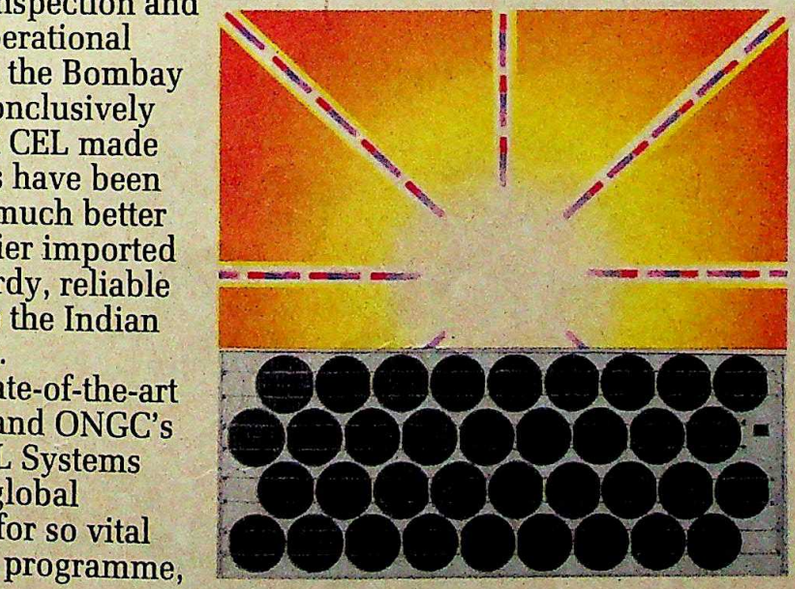

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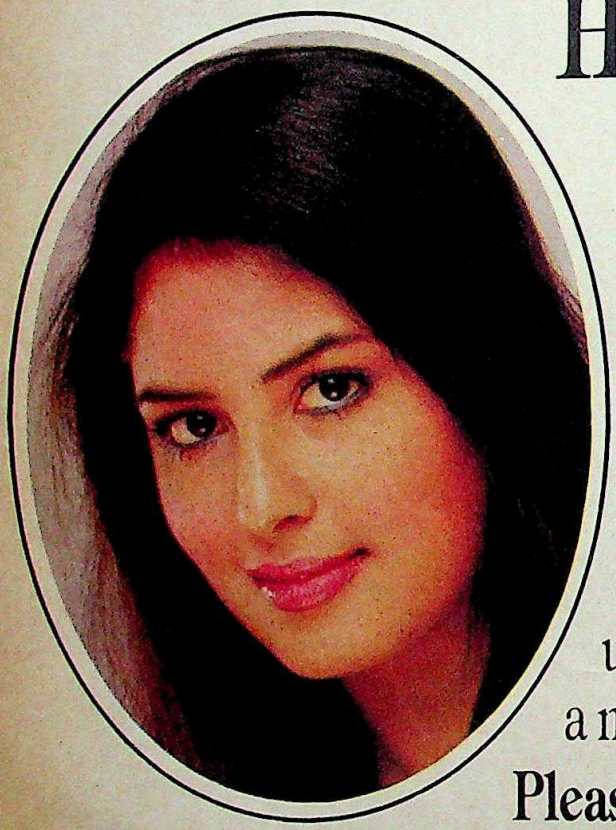

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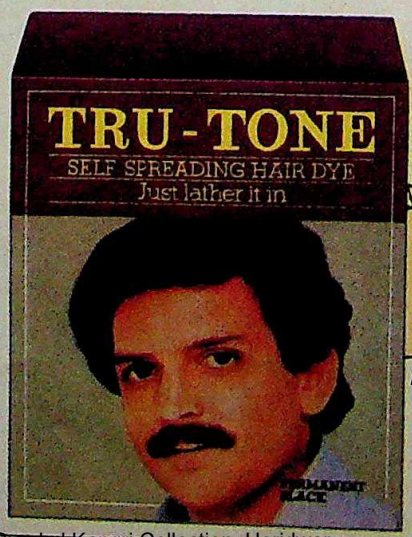

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bigger depositors will have to queue up for the leftovers.

Few would question these norms. The 1980 cutoff date makes sense because depositors who invested before then would have recovered much of their principal in the form of interest. And the commissioner's office quite rightly has taken up the cases of smaller (Rs 1,000 to Rs 4,000) depositors first and has disbursed cash to the needy. Explains Datta: "Many widows have been ruined. We have been paying up to Rs 1,000 as relief to those suffering from serious diseases." By last month, Rs 1.12 crore had been handed over to some 33,500 depositors. At least an equal number may ultimately gain some cash, and Datta hopes to wind up his show by the middle of next year.

Even so, many believe that Sanchaita agents and others siphoned off much more money than has been unearthed, and that Datta's deadline is therefore over-optimistic. The SDF claimed in court that the company had collected deposits to the tune of Rs 600 crore, while the West Bengal Government in an affidavit put the figure at around Rs 500 crore. Top police sources, however, argue that not more than Rs 100 crore would have been left in the company's coffers after paying depositors their interest and agents their commission. Says a senior police official: "Sanchaita's annual rate of interest before October 1979 was 48 per cent. Another 12 per cent was paid as commission to agents. So 60 per cent of the collections would have gone straightaway."

The police official also claims that the only surviving Sanchaita partner Swapan Guha and his brother Tapan, a company agent who is believed to have masterminded the Sanchaita show in its later years, are no longer as well off as they were. The Guhas were not available for comment, but Goswami remains unconvinced. The retired pharmaceuticals company doctor believes that some of Sanchaita's kingpins stashed cash in Nepal and elsewhere.

Even as the debate continues, major cases are scheduled to come up in court. A host of Sanchaita agents and sub-agents have already been charged with criminal breach of trust and cheating in seven cases, but many are out on bail. Six more cases and 30 more arrests are in the offing. But before Sanchaita's loose ends are finally tied up, years of sparring in court clearly lie ahead.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI in Calcutta

HPC

Deep Trouble

MAKING paper was discovered by the Chinese a few years before the birth of Christ. Making money has an even more ancient history. But the public sector Hindustan Paper Corporation (HPC) still seems in urgent need of a crash course in both.

The company's inventory is largely a bunch of white elephants. And, just as the beleaguered company thought it would be dealt an ace by the Government, it has been left grasping thin air: a prized newsprint project in Uttar Pradesh will go to Nepa Mill instead of HPC.

"It does not make sense," says bemused Managing Director Major-General V.P. Yadav. "We had worked very hard and had submitted papers for the initial clearance when the project was taken off our hands." He has reason to be worried: without the project, HPC faces a bleak financial future. None of its units is profit-making, not even the Nowgong paper mill commissioned last year; and total losses have increased from Rs 16.9 crore in 1982-'83 to Rs 46.16 crore in 1985-'86. With a total investment of Rs 845 crore, the turnover last year was only Rs 81 crore, and accumulated losses Rs 126.23 crore.

With the Government deciding that a prized newsprint project in Uttar Pradesh should go to Nepa Mill, Hindustan Paper Corporation faces a bleak financial future.

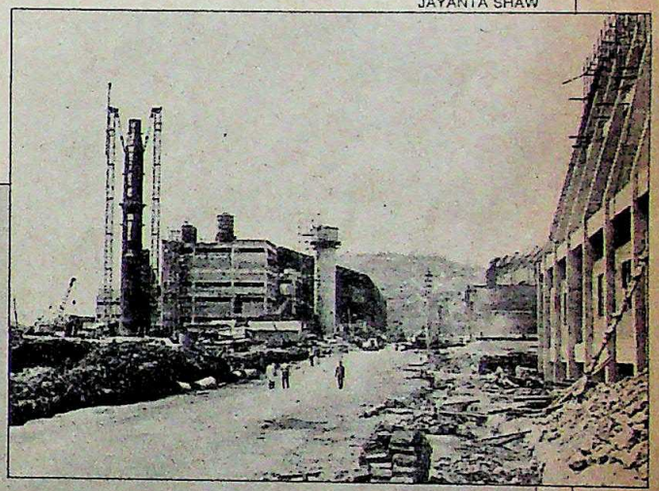
Yadav fired off a letter to Industry Minister N.D. Tiwari protesting against the "illogical" decision of denying HPC the project, but this cut no ice—perhaps because of its dismal record in project implementation and because its own top management seems divided on the subject. While Yadav has been pushing the project, HPC's Delhi-based chairman Subramaniam feels that it has enough on its plate: "My own first priority would be the stabilisation of existing units."

HPC's units could do with a lot of stabilising. The corporation has staked some 70 per cent of its 3.3 lakh tonnes annual production capacity and about 80 per cent of its investment in three north-eastern mills—all potential leeches on its coffers. The Rs 84-crore Nagaland unit, commissioned in 1982, has already piled up losses of over Rs 67.5 crore, and has often worked in fits and starts. The Nowgong and Cachar units, delayed by over three years by the Assam agitation, have cost double the original estimates and made losses from the start. Total production last year was 97,000 tonnes, less than 30 per cent of capacity.

Yadav does not deny that HPC is in trouble. But it never did have much of a chance. Its first unit, a sick private sector mill in Karnataka, was wished on it by the Government. And, though the Kerala unit is contributing its mite, the north-eastern Waterloo has stalled all hopes of emergence from the sick bay.

Cachar plant: losing proposition

JAYANTA SHAW



So, the Uttar Pradesh project was crucial. Says Yadav: "As a potentially profitable proposition, it would have been a great balancing factor in our overall viability equation." Now the only prospect is more years in the red.

Caught in a vicious circle, HPC, with its poor track record, is unlikely to find itself entrusted with more projects. As the chairman admits: "The Government has taken the overall view." And, with only losers on its hands, HPC's performance is not likely to improve.

"I knew what I was getting into when I joined HPC in September 1984," says Yadav. "My idea was to take measures to bring the corporation on an even keel in as few years as possible." But those years seem destined to stretch far beyond what the sanguine general had ever reckoned.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

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HOLIDAY RESORTS

A Share of the Sun

TO SATYA Jain, the advantages seemed overwhelming. By acquiring a stake in a comfortable apartment at a fraction of its cost, she could holiday in Goa at carnival time, and without having to foot hefty hotel bills. Jain vacations almost every year with her husband and children. So last month, egged on by a friend who had taken the plunge, she wrote out a cheque for a week's time in a two-bedroom flat at a proposed holiday home complex in the balmy beach resort.

The Delhi-based housewife is among a small but mushrooming body of holiday-makers who are buying time in holiday resorts. Property- or time-sharing, as the concept is called, offers those who chip in the right to stay for a week or weeks every year at the chosen resort. The right can be willed to one's heirs, sold, rented out or even exchanged for similar time slots at other locations. Imitating similar ventures abroad, six companies including the state-owned Punjab Tourism Development Corporation are offering time-sharing schemes. And a major hotel chain could soon join the fray. Prospective holiday-makers like Satya Jain have already chipped in with over Rs 3.5 crore, which is modest considering the massive media blitz launched by the companies, but pickings are expected to burgeon.

Explains B.V.S.A.N Murthy, general manager of Dalmia Resorts International, which has launched a Rs 1-crore media campaign: "The buyer is assigned an apartment at a resort in perpetuity for a particular week. Obviously, no one wants to go to the same place all his life. Time-sharing gives people the opportunity to exchange with other people." Argues Dattaray Vedak, a director of the Bombay-based Ornate Club, which is hawking a variant of the time-sharing scheme: "With the stresses and strains of modern life people have realised that holidays have become important. Till recently they went to their home towns. Now they are trying to find a place to relax." Adds Gurmeet Singh, managing director of the Palace Holiday Resorts: "This industry's potential is in thousands of crores. The boom will start next year when the first few resorts come up."

The plans on the anvil are ambitious enough. Palace Holiday Resorts intends to launch 35 resorts and hotels nationwide, Dalmia Resorts says it is working on a Rs 300-crore project involving 32 resorts, and even the one-location Shikar Holiday Resorts will eventually spread its wings to cover eight or 10 spots. The profits are expected to match these plans: Deepak Shivpuri of Shikar Holiday Resorts reckons that even in the most adverse conditions his 18-apartment complex at Shimla will fetch him Rs 70,000 a year. The big boys can, of course, expect to rake in fancier sums.

Time-sharing ads: media blitz

The schemes being hawked vary in quality and price. While most offer the comforts of home—linen, kitchenware, television—the upmarket companies also trumpet video channels and other trimmings. Costs range from the down market Rs 5,500 to Rs 28,500, depending, of course, on the number of rooms and the time of the year. Most of the firms in the business are plugging year-round schemes even though the holiday season runs only from April to October. Some will throw in week-end packages for Rs 300 to 400. Says architect V.K. Mago, who heads M.S. Resorts International: "Our income from week-end packages will be pure profit".

If company brochures are anything to go by, the rates are bound to escalate as real estate prices keep spiralling. And promoters argue that the investor will reap fat returns if he wants to sell his week's time-share. Even as that remains to be seen, some companies are bracing to offer clients added attractions: computerised brokerage services to help customers sell or rent their stake.

The final sweetener: facilities to exchange weeks with members of similar ventures abroad. Both Palace Resorts and Dalmia are vying to tie up with foreign firms that offer exchange facilities, and even hold letters of intent from the US-based Resort Condominiums International. What this means is that those who have stakes in the property-sharing schemes can apply for a week's stay at any of the 1,000 sites world-wide—provided they give up their own week at a similar resort in the country, with a fee of under $50. But it isn't clear whether foreign resorts will be keen on exchanging habitation rights when domestic resorts are not even ready.

As a holiday concept, time-sharing still has to take off. But there seems little doubt that it eventually will. And when that happens, it might end up as the biggest vacation industry boom to hit the country.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI

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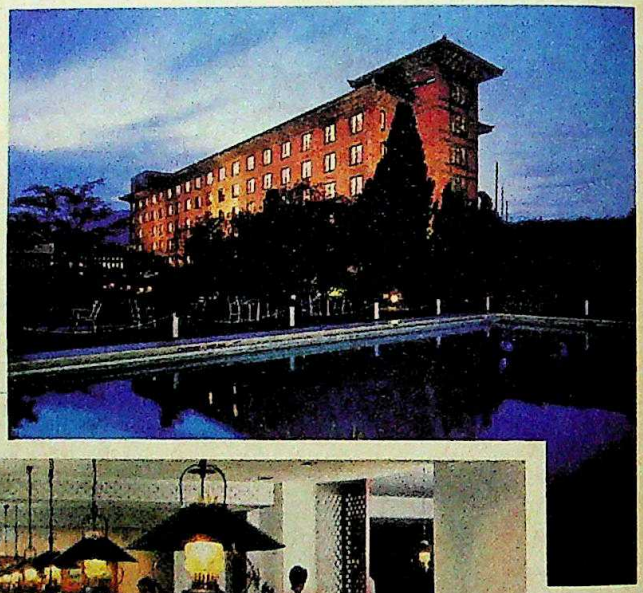

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COMPUTER SHOPS

Byte Boom

BYTE by byte, they are making their presence felt. Two years ago there was not a single computer retail outlet in India; today they are blossoming like umbrellas in a nonsoon shower. First came Computer Point in Bombay, which soon spread its wings to Delhi, Bangalore and Madras. Then, the avalanche in the making—Computer City and The Abacus, Computer Hotline, Computer Shack and even a computer stationery outfit, Bombay Stationery Mart (BSM).

They are growing not just in numbers but in size too. "We aim to add six outlets next year," says R. Ramaraj, the Bangalore-based chief executive of Computer Point. His company, which made a successful public issue of shares last December, is not alone in trying to make it to the big time. Computer Shack, which set up shop in Bombay barely five months ago, has gone on a major drive to collar personnel for its planned extension to seven other cities. With many others raring to go, the next two years could well see at least half a dozen such retail chains straddling the country.

The figures reveal why everyone is so keen on getting into the business of, as the BSM slogan puts it, providing "everything you ever wanted for your computer". Computer Point's Bombay outlet, set up 18 months ago, is grossing Rs 2.83 lakh a day, Computer Shack is close to hitting Rs 1 lakh and BSM, still in its infancy, is raking in Rs 1 lakh. Those with more shops can, of course, expect bigger pickings. Computer Point, for example, hopes to notch up a turnover of Rs 18 crore this year from its four outlets. And those in the business are convinced that hardware and software worth Rs 500 crore will be retailed in five years' time.

Several forces have converged to make this possible. Retail computer outlets offer a wide range of systems of software, peripherals and other paraphernalia, all under one roof. So they can match the customer's needs much better than any individual manufacturer, and offer credible advice without a manufacturer's bias. "We are not pushing any system," says Farath Kapur, director of Computer Shack. "Our margins being the same, we are bound to suggest the most appropriate make." Adds Shiv Parthasarthy, general manager of the Delhi-based Computer City: "Computer prices have fallen, and with margins low and overheads high, manufacturers are refusing to hold clients' hands. Sorting out the day-to-day hassles that customers face costs money." In steps the retail outlet once again.

And Ramaraj of Computer Point feels that the informal atmosphere of computer shops has also contributed to their growing popularity: "You can come in here and display a certain level of ignorance. Most manufacturers are likely to bowl you over with a lot of jargon. Nobody likes to look like a fool."

BSM's clients evidently didn't. The stationery concern's computer venture was inspired not so much by the realisation of a business opportunity as by the demands of its regular customers for such a service. "We still do not have sufficient hardware," admits a marketing executive of the computer division, "but we have the business."

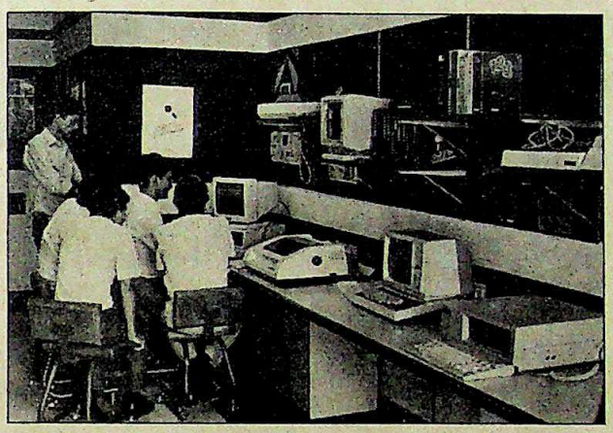
What is crucial in peddling computerware retail is location, and space is at a premium in big cities. A prime spot in Bombay comes for nothing less than Rs 80 lakh. "Of course," says Ramaraj, "the investment is less elsewhere but so too is the turnover." Kapur also estimates that of Computer Shack's planned investment of Rs 5 crore, the lion's share will be grabbed by Delhi, where property is equally dear. The company is going public soon to raise funds for its expansion.

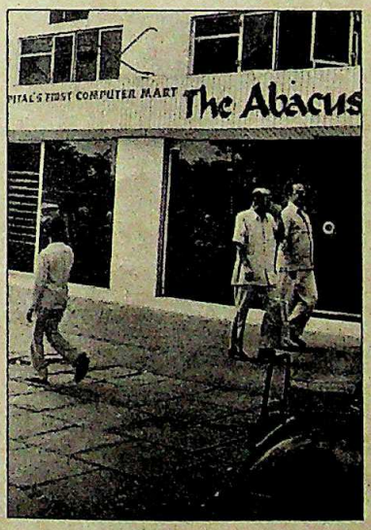
These proliferating retail outlets are basically removing much of the awe in which the average urbanite holds computers. "People can just walk in and take a look," says Ramaraj. They do: some 85 per cent of the company's custom comes this way. And the pattern of clientele—individuals, small companies, trading houses and entrepreneurs—only proves that the computer shops are the small man's licence to the fast lane. The retail outlets, as Ramaraj puts it, "don't just sell, they have an inbuilt consultancy too".

With all these going for them, the time may not be far off when computer retail outlets are as familiar a feature of the urban landscape as the neighbourhood fast food parlour or video shop.

—PARTHASARATHI SWAMI

Computer City (below); The Abacus (bottom left); and Computer Shack





The time may not be far off when computer retail are as familiar a feature of the urban landscape as the neighbourhood fast food parlour or video shop.

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JAI KISAAN

STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN SHRI K. K. BIRLA AT THE EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON JUNE 5, 1986

Shri K. K. Birla

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I have great pleasure in welcoming you to the Eighteenth Annual General Meeting of the Company. You have already received the Annual Report with the audited accounts and the Directors' Report for the year ending December 31, 1985. I seek your permission to take them as read.

I think it would be appropriate to briefly review the performance of the country's economy as a whole before I come to the affairs of your Company.
The country's economy has achieved a durable agricultural and industrial base, with sizeable infrastructural facilities. It is a proud achievement that our economy has, over the years since independence, attained remarkable maturity and potential for growth.

Both the agricultural and industrial sectors have put in a good performance during the last year. The first year of the Seventh Five Year Plan has started on an optimistic note. With good buffer stocks of foodgrains and adequate production and supply of manufactured goods, the economy is geared for sustained growth during the Seventh Plan period. However, the increasing the trade deficit is a matter for concern with rising imports and the slow growth in exports.

In spite of another capricious monsoon, we have had good harvests for the third successive year. The production of foodgrains during 1985-86 is estimated at about 151 million tonnes, which underlines the resilence that Indian agriculture has attained. According to reports, the buffer stocks of foodgrains stand at around 35 million tonnes. Food imports are a thing of the past, and we may emerge, within a few years, as exporters of foodgrains. There are, of course, areas where further effort is needed. There has been insufficient improvement in the production of oilseeds and pulses, and the production of sugarcane also has not been in step with the growing demand for sugar. During the current plan period, corrective measures, I understand, are being taken to overcome these weaknesses in the agricultural sector.

In the industrial sector the performance of the major industries was better compared to the previous year.

Production was stepped up in steel, aluminium, fertilisers, cement, automobile and electronics and other industries. The power situation improved substantially. The buoyancy of the economy was reflected in the capital market which witnessed an unprecedented mobilisation of resources.

These favourable changes in the economic climate have been caused mainly by the pragmatic policies initiated by the Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, and the dynamism and the enthusiasm with which the industrial and business community of the country have responded to these policies.

Coming to the fertiliser industry, I would say that although we have done well we cannot be complacent.
The output of nitrogenous fertilisers is estimated at 4.3 million tonnes in 1985-86, an increase of 8.8% over the previous year and of phosphatic fertilisers 1.4 million tonnes, an increase of 4.4%. Capacity utilisation in the fertiliser industry touched an all-time high – 75% for nitrogenous and 90% for phosphatic fertilisers. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the country has been importing substantial quantities of fertilisers in the last few years. In 1984-85 imports aggregated 3.6 million tonnes of nutrients at a cost exceeding Rs. 1400 crores in foreign exchange. Obviously, one of the significant challenges before the industry is to step up production and complete new projects in time to minimise imports and stem the heavy drain on the country's foreign exchange resources.

The import of fertilisers does have a bright side as it reflects the sustained increase in consumption. According to the consumption projections of the Seventh Plan period, the annual growth rate is expected to be 11%. At the end of the Plan, the consumption would reach 14 million tonnes of nutrients compared to the current level of around nine million tonnes.

I have no doubt that our fertiliser industry, the fourth largest in the world, will courageously meet the challenges that lie ahead both in boosting production and in increasing consumption, particularly in the dryland areas and for crops like oilseeds and pulses.

Coming to the operations of your Company, I am happy to state that in the year under review the overall

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performance of the Company continued to be highly satisfactory. The financial results of the Company during 1985 showed the gross profit increasing to Rs. 22.08 crores compared to Rs. 21.90 crores in the previous year. The profit before taxation was Rs. 17.27 crores as against Rs. 14.85 crores in 1984.

Similarly, the net profit was higher at Rs. 11.14 crores compared to Rs. 10.48 crores in the previous year.

The plant performance, as you must have seen in the Director's Report, was the best ever achieved by the Company. The capacity utilisation of the Ammonia plant was 95.8 per cent as against 90 per cent in the preceeding year. The NPK plant also registered a higher capacity utilisation at 116 per cent, compared to 106 per cent in the previous year. The Urea plant, however, operated at 86.4 per cent mainly because of the diversion of ammonia to the DAP plant. You will be happy to know that our DAP plant, which was commissioned last year, is operating extremely well. It was creditable that the plant achieved a capacity utilisation of 103.8 per cent during the very first year of operation. During the year we manufactured 210,752 tonnes of Ammonia, 293,783 tonnes of Urea, 174,182 tonnes of NPK and 155,657 tonnes of DAP. These figures bear testimony to the hard and dedicated work put in by our people.

As mentioned in the Directors' Report, our sales scaled a new peak at 584,245 tonnes compared to last year's sales of 528,245 tonnes. However, we were saddled with larger inventories. This was the result of the general glut in fertiliser availability experienced throughout the country due to large scale imports, higher indigenous production and the drought which affected demand. It is hoped that the situation would stabilise with the cutting down of imports by Government and expectations of a good monsoon.

New Projects

Last year I had referred to a number of new projects that are on the anvil. These projects are at various stages of development. Aravali Fertilisers Limited, a company promoted by your Company, was incorporated during the year under review. This company will be responsible for setting up the gas-based fertiliser complex at Sawai Madhopur in Rajasthan. A great deal of spade work has already been done, and I am confident that the project will soon gain momentum.

As regards our Cement project at Mandalgarh in Rajasthan, the Government has issued the Letter of Intent in our favour. This plant will have an annual capacity of one million tonnes. Preliminary work including prospecting has already been initiated. Other areas for diversification include a proposal to acquire a Phosphoric acid carrier which is awaiting Government approval. Also, in the field of high technology, we are pursuing our proposal to set up facilities for the manufacture of Electronic Transmission Equipment in technical collaboration with leaders in this field.

Let me now refer to the Company's successful efforts in environmental conservation. Here, we have set the highest standards of performance. As one of the most efficiently run fertiliser plants in the country, our plant has one of the most effective facilities for pollution control. I would like to assure you that we will continue to maintain a sincere concern for preserving and improving the environment.

We have continued to maintain an excellent safety record in our operations, thanks to the co-operation of the employees and the stringent safety standards followed by the Company. During the last year we won two first prizes awarded by the Goa Government as well as an international award by the National Safety Council, U.S.A.

I would also like to touch briefly on our philosophy of being a socially responsible organisation which is concerned about the well-being of the people in the neighbourhood and mindful of the larger national goals. We have taken up a number of programmes to meet our social responsibilities. These programmes include scholarships to deserving students, aid to educational and cultural organisations, farmers' visits to agricultural Universities and training of farmers in modern methods of agriculture. Last year, we introduced an Award for the most outstanding farmer — "The Krishi Samrat". The first outstanding farmer to be honoured under the scheme was Shri N.M. Chamankar of Sindhudurg district in Maharashtra, who is renowned for his pioneering efforts and contribution to mango cultivation.

As in the last year, I would like to touch on the present pricing system for the fertiliser industry. Whilst the industry is awaiting the announcement of the revised fair retention price, I would like to reiterate the need for the pricing policies to ensure that the industry receives a fair and equitable return on investment provided it works efficiently. It is hoped therefore that GOI's pricing policies will keep as their goal the need to encourage modernisation and growth along with high productivity so that the ambitious targets set for the industry by the Government in the Seventh Five Year Plan will be attainable.

Our industrial relations during the year continued to be cordial. I take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the valued contribution of our employees at all levels. I am grateful for their whole-hearted co-operation and unstinted support. I have no doubt that they will continue to work with the same dedication and spirit of fellowship.

I would also like to express our gratitude to the Government of India and the Government of Goa, Daman and Diu, for their guidance and support. I would like to conclude with an expression of thanks to our technical collaborators, United States Steel Corporation, for their continued co-operation which has been a source of strength to us.

Thank you.

Note: This does not purport to be a report of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

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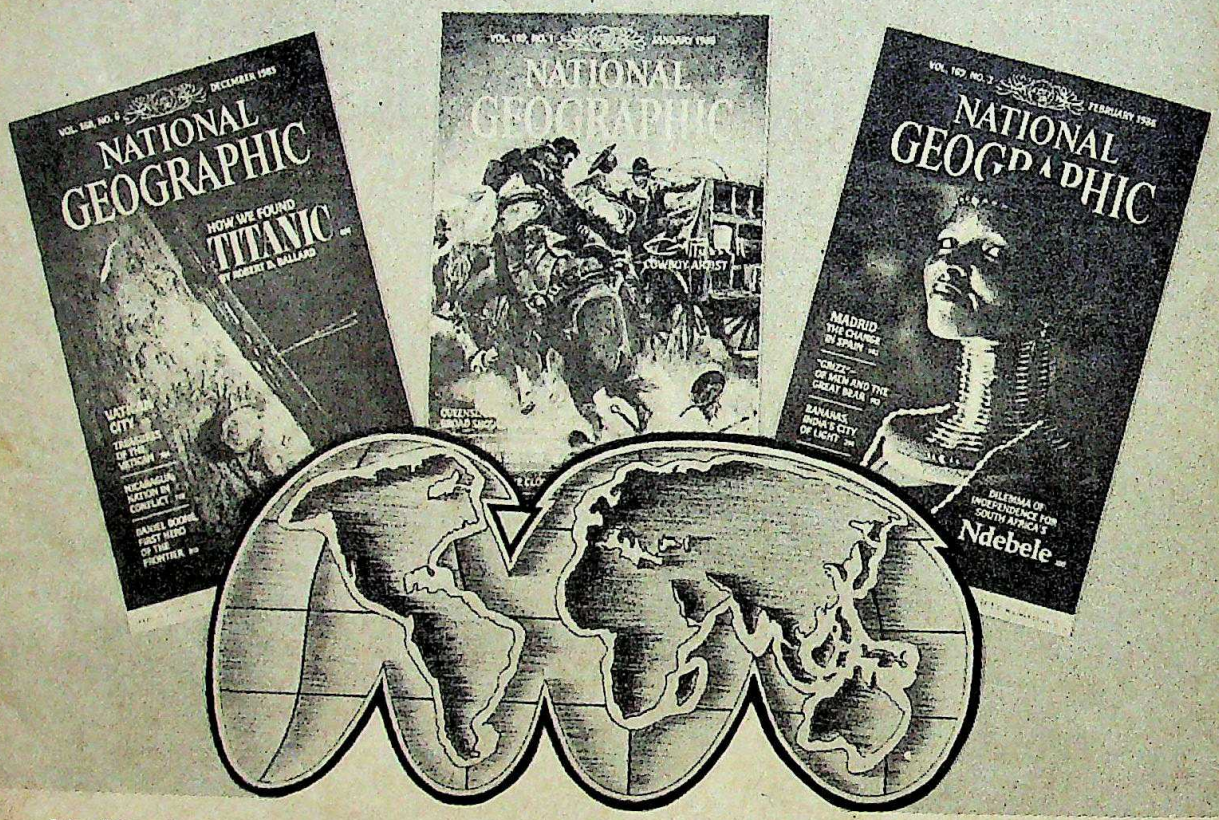

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THE MARKETS

Small Cheer

THE RAINS should have brought fresh life to the stock-markets last fortnight. Instead, they seem to have dampened what enthusiasm there was, for share prices tumbled last fortnight on a wide front. But this may have had less to do with the monsoons than with the Government, which had earlier given a boost to equity prices by announcing fresh incentives for industry, lower bank lending rates and some form of amnesty to tax defaulters. This time, its announcements did little to cheer the stock-market, one case being the decision to ban the conversion of non-convertible debentures into shares.

Many shares lost ground because investors who had notched up some gains decided to book their profits by unloading shares. So the lower prices did not really indicate a new bearish phase, despite a sprinkling of unfavourable corporate reports. Hindustan Motors, for instance, reported much lower gross profits and only marginally higher sales,

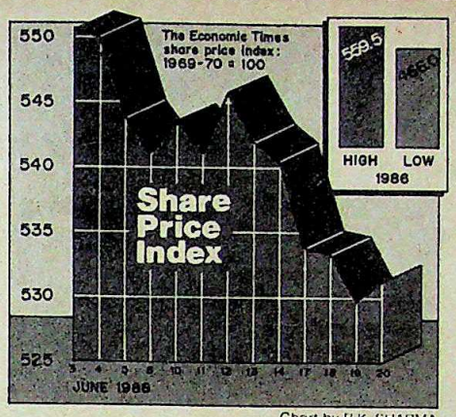

Chart by B.K. SHAHMA

and the company's share dropped by Rs 12 to Rs 40.60 during the fortnight.

Attention last fortnight, was focused on TISCO, which after some suspense, announced that it would be coming out with a bonus issue as well as a rights issue. The company's shares had first gone up to Rs 1,562.50 in excited anticipation of the news, and then slumped to Rs 1,400 because of the delay in the announcement before finally beginning to climb again in frenzied trading after what was in effect a double bonus.

But the upswing in TISCO did not extend to the majority of trading counters. Although a few companies gained higher perches over the fortnight (including both DCM and Escorts, following the final settlement with Swraj Paul), many more reached for lower ground. Among the counters where selling pressure pushed prices down were Bajaj Auto, Brooke Bond, Century Spinning, Colgate, Gujarat State Fertiliser, Indian Organic, ITC, Larsen and Toubro, TELCO and Reliance Industries (which dropped by Rs 33 to Rs 355).

Nevertheless, the medium-term future should logically see share prices wending their way back up the slopes. The monsoons, being better this year, promise plentiful supplies of raw materials for agro-based industries. Following the good performance by the power sector and the railways, the economy is now freer from infrastructural bottlenecks. Coal and steel shortages are now mostly forgotten problems. With substantial fresh investments, facilitated partly by liberalised government policies and stable prices, the economy should permit corporate growth. If this materialises, the stock-markets must eventually reflect this. In short, after six months of indeterminate movements, there is now room for an upswing.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1986 HIGH	1986 LOW	CLOSE 20.6.86	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	45.00	26.00	28.25	1.00 –
Associated Cement	389.00	228.00	274.00	2.00 –
Atlas Copco	92.50	64.00	80.00	nil
Asian Paints	280.00	130.00	245.00	30.00 +
Avery India	146.00	100.00	112.00	6.50 –
Bajaj Auto	3450.00	1950.00	3175.00	175.00 –
Baroda Rayon	490.00	315.00	360.00	nil
Bata India	82.50	54.00	60.00	2.75 –
Bayer	680.00	445.00	530.00	10.00 –
Bharat Forge	86.00	48.00	69.00	1.00 –
Birla Jute	97.00	42.90	48.00	3.25 –
Blow Plast	160.00	98.00	105.00	3.00 –
Blue Star	110.00	75.00	95.00	nil
Bombay Dyeing	123.00	77.00	98.00	4.00 –
Brooke Bond	96.75	74.00	86.50	2.50 +
Ceat Tyres	520.00	240.00	420.00	10.00 +
Century Spinning	1690.00	790.00	830.00	20.00 –
Chloride India	132.00	86.00	126.00	6.00 +
Citurgia	65.00	42.00	44.50	9.50 –
Colgate	307.50	200.00	270.00	20.00 –
DCM	58.50	32.62	44.50	4.50 +
Dunlop	74.50	49.75	66.50	1.75 –
Elecon	117.50	80.00	112.00	12.00 +
Escorts	111.00	69.00	110.00	7.00 +
Finolex Cables	81.00	36.00	80.00	17.00 +
Food Specialities	327.50	215.00	307.00	3.00 –
Garware Nylon	61.50	36.00	45.00	2.00 –
Glaxo	87.00	62.00	65.00	3.50 –
G.E. Shipping	36.00	21.25	24.50	2.00 –
Gujarat St. Fertilisers	182.00	92.50	173.50	3.00 –
Gwalior Rayon	88.00	59.00	77.00	2.00 –
Hindustan Lever	166.00	124.00	163.00	8.00 +
Hindustan Motors	128.50	40.60	40.60	12.15 –
Hind. Dorr	560.00	380.00	560.00	75.00 +
IEL	84.50	61.50	68.50	0.25 +
Indian Hotels	157.00	115.00	135.00	10.00 –
Indian Organic	97.00	63.00	75.00	11.00 –
Indian Rayon	151.00	100.00	135.00	2.00 –
Indrol	390.00	200.00	350.00	40.00 +
Ingersoll-Rand	505.00	360.00	457.50	22.50 +
ITC	76.50	53.00	62.20	4.80 –
J.K. Synthetics	132.00	90.00	118.00	2.00 –
Kinetic Engineering	345.00	220.00	330.00	nil
Lakme	195.00	120.00	142.50	2.50 –
Larson & Toubro	204.00	133.00	134.00	2.00 –
Lipton	69.00	46.50	58.50	4.50 –
Lohia Machines	70.00	41.00	43.00	9.00 –
Madura Coats	92.00	53.00	57.50	1.50 +
Mahindra & Mahindra	86.00	51.00	57.00	2.00 +
Motor Industries	1000.00	605.00	935.00	15.00 +
National Organic	840.00	530.00	790.00	5.00 –
Nirlon	77.00	39.50	42.00	1.50 –
Orkay Silk Mills	192.00	111.00	178.00	5.00 +
Peico Electronics	104.50	48.00	57.00	0.15 +
Pfizer	125.00	78.00	95.00	7.00 –
Ponds	315.00	200.00	300.00	5.00 +
Premier Auto	870.00	555.00	817.50	5.00 +
Ranbaxy	160.00	105.00	138.00	1.00 –
Raymond	97.00	72.00	86.00	2.00 +
Reliance Industries	392.00	226.00	355.00	33.00 –
Shriram Fibres	88.00	49.00	56.00	3.00 –
SPIC	184.00	129.50	158.50	4.50 –
Tata Steel	1562.50	1090.00	1480.00	10.00 –
Telco	910.00	575.00	685.00	65.00 –
Vulcan Laval	162.50	85.00	110.00	2.50 –
Wimco	98.00	54.00	64.00	nil

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	8.7410	8.6610
Austria	Schilling	100	80.2610	79.5916
Bahrain	Dinar	1	33.7530	33.7080
Bangladesh	Taka	100	42.5030	42.3315
Canada	Dollar	1	9.1109	9.0399
Denmark	Kroner	1	1.5187	1.5062
Egypt	Pound	1	15.2330	15.2010
France	Franc	1	1.7685	1.7539
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	1.6153	1.6628
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	1.6530	1.6030
Iran	Rial	100	15.9220	15.8330
Italy	Lira	100	0.8190	0.8099
Japan	Yen	100	7.5414	7.4738
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7780	0.7700
Kuwait	Dinar	1	42.9330	42.9010
Malaysia	Dollar	1	4.8038	4.7646
Mauritius	Rupee	1	0.9330	0.9118
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6110	0.6093
Netherlands	Guilder	1	6.8034	6.7477
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7430	0.7339
Singapore	Dollar	1	5.6722	5.6249
Spain	Peseta	1	0.0883	0.0870
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4432	0.4330
Sweden	Kroner	1	1.7481	1.7351
Switzerland	Franc	1	6:8551	6.8013
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.4669	0.4530
Thailand	Baht	100	48.3330	48.2180
UK	Pound	1	18.9681	18.8465
USA	Dollar	1	12.7390	12.6356
UAE	Dirham	1	3.4880	3.4779
USSR	Rouble	1	17.6830	17.6080
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	5.6116	5.5648

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 23.6.86.

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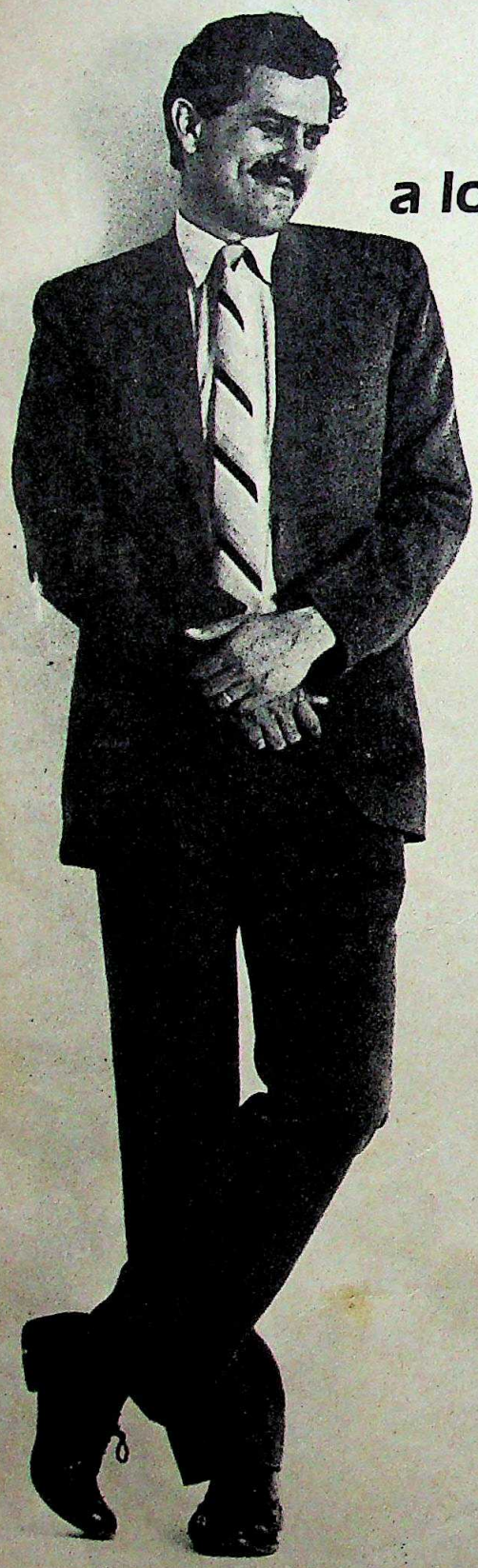

It takes
a lot of growing up to reach
the HCL Busybee.

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In just one year, the Busybee has single handedly installed over 1550 PCs/PC XTs. In one big company after another. That's more PCs than anyone else.

While everyone has been shouting themselves hoarse about their little geniuses, the HCL Busybee in a short span of 365 days, has quietly managed to instal over 1550 IBM compatible PCs/PC XTs. On the desks of some of the top executives and scientists working in some of the biggest companies and research and educational institutes in the country.

In companies like TELCO, Thermax, BATA, Blowplast, English Electric, Reader's Digest, JCT Mills Ltd., IFFCO, ECIL, GMMCo , Paradeep Phosphates, Indian Railways, HAL, Fenner, Jenson and Nicholson, BHEL, NGEF, The Shriram Group, MICO, Reckitt and Colman, Hindustan Motors, U.S. Aid... to name just a few.

In premier educational and research institutions like IIMs Ahmedabad, Bangalore and Calcutta, Jamna Lal Bajaj Institute, IITs Kharagpur and Madras, CEERI Pilani, ISRO, NAL, Indian Institute of Science, VSSC, BARC and many more. Who have whole heartedly opted for the Busybee.

As much as 40% repeat orders.

What has been so gratifying about the Busybee's success is the extent of repeat orders.

TELCO, starting off with just one trial machine, soon placed repeat orders totalling 28 Busybees in succeeding months. Sundaram Clayton placed repeat orders worth 24 machines. Blowplast repeat orders of 17 machines. HAL wanted 18 more after its initial order. The Department of Space till now has 52 machines and Indian Institute of Science 32. The story was the same with the Shriram Group... and the list goes on.

Repeat orders that account for almost 40% of the total Busybees booked. A fact which shows the trust enjoyed by the Busybee within just one year of its launch.

An amazing 98.9% national uptime.

The reliability of the HCL Busybee is borne out by its maintaining a 98.9% national uptime! Across the country. Setting something of a record for PCs.

A record which is made possible because of HCL's wide network of support infrastructure. With 34 support offices across the length and breadth of the country. And with every second one of its over 800 workforce an engineer, engaged in support functions.

The hard facts about the Busybee.

The HCL Busybee is probably the most powerful and versatile IBM PC compatible available today.

It is the only **Bi-lingual** PC/PC XT to date. Supporting Devnagri as well as English for word processing. So you can create documents in Devnagri. Or use Devnagri characters with English in the same report or even in the same line!

In a large organisation with multiple departments, the Busybees link in a **Local Area Network** of upto 64 machines over a distance of 1.2 Kms. Sharing expensive peripherals, communicating and sharing information. Yet maintaining confidentiality with a 2-level password system.

And if your requirement is **Multi-terminal,** you can add on two additional terminals. Through the industry standard MP/M Operating System—ideal for a data processing environment and with the most powerful COBOL capability, used on the HCL Workhorse II.

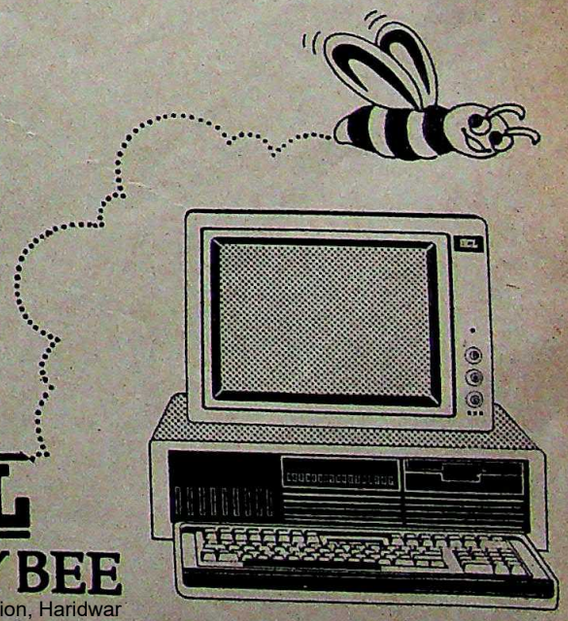
Then the Busybee talks to the giants too. Through **Mainframe Linkage** to systems like Data General, Burroughs, Sperry Univac, or the HCL Workhorse II and Horizon.

Hardware Add-ons like the Mouse, Digitizer and X-Y Plotter make the Busybee the most versatile PC for your Computer Aided Design and Graphic Presentation.

The 8 MHz optional CPU clock time is one of the fastest of all IBM PC compatibles. Its Hard Disk Drive add-on enables the processing of much larger volumes of information. While the Cartridge Tape back-up safeguards against corruption of important data.

The 8" Floppy Drive of the Busybee makes it compatible to earlier generation systems.

The HCL Busybee. Setting the standard for PCs and PCXTs in the country within just one year of its launch. The beginning of the biggest success story of the year.



HCL
BUSYBEE

Arms Communication 210

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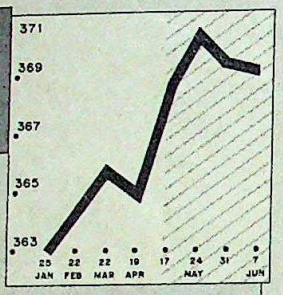
CONSUMER prices are on the upswing. Money supply is still tight. The foreign trade situation has improved with exports and foreign exchange reserves picking up. The stock exchange is less bullish than before, but gold prices continue to rise.

There have been changes in The Economy Monitor. For areas where data are given monthly, we are now computing deseasonalised growth rates over the last twelve months. For weekly data, the period continues to be six months. All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of the last six or twelve months data to which a regression is fitted.

Wholesale Price Index

1970-71 = 100

Current Trend
4.6% p.a.

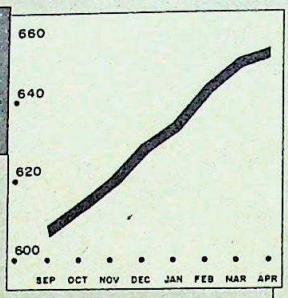


Wholesale prices are well under control, with the trend growth rate under 4.6 per cent. Prices dropped marginally in the last fortnight.

Consumer Price Index

1960 = 100

Current Trend
9.1% p.a.

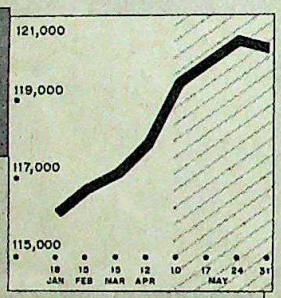


As usual, consumer prices have risen more than wholesale prices, and the index has in fact shot up by 3 per cent in the last three months.

Money Supply

Rs Crore

Current Trend
12.4% p.a.

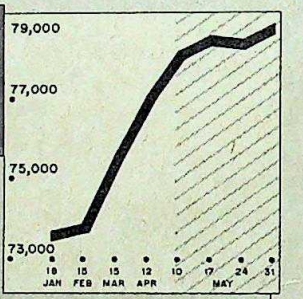


Money supply continues to be tight, the trend growth rate having dropped from 13.5 per cent to 12.4 per cent.

Commercial Bank Credit

Rs Crore

Current Trend
17.8% p.a.

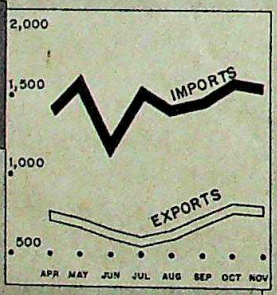


In contrast, commercial bank credit continues to rise at a faster rate and the trend rate is accelerating.

Foreign Trade

Rs Crore

Current Trend
–28.8% p.a.
EXPORTS
20.1% p.a.
IMPORTS

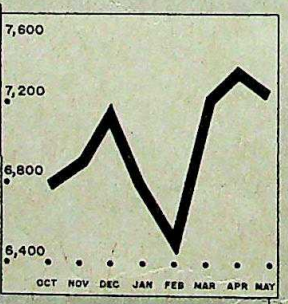


Over the year, exports declined by almost 29 per cent while imports rose by 20 per cent. However, after July 1985, exports have picked up.

Foreign Exchange Reserves

Rs Crore

Current Trend
13.8% p.a.

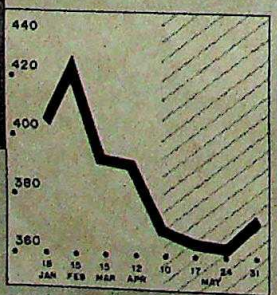


Though foreign reserves declined from April to May by 1.6 per cent the overall growth trend at 13.8 per cent is very satisfactory.

Share Price Index

1970-71 = 100

Current Trend
9.4% p.a.

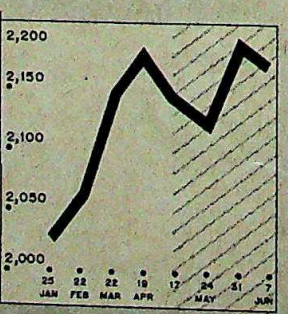


A 2% rise in share prices in end-May pulled the trend rate up to 9.4 per cent. But this was far from the high achieved in February.

Closing Gold Price

Rs per 10 gm

Current Trend
9.8% p.a.



Gold is again back in demand. Prices were up by 2% in the first week of June and even higher prices are expected.

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

Growth of Items in May, 1986

	% Growth
Country Liquor	61.26
Silk Raw	19.12
Ragi	18.04
Bananas	16.56
Mustard Oil	15.93
Coconut Oil	13.2
Copra	11.94
Art Silk & Artificial Yarn	11.36
Jute Textiles	11.27
Solvent Extracted Oil	10.72
Rape & Mustard Seed	9.12
Tea	8.4
Betel-Nuts	8.03
Linseed Oil	5.76
Butter	5.03
Groundnut Seeds	4.3
Arhar	3.67
Gingelly Oil	3.54
Maida	3.21
Meat	3.19
Logs Timber Bamboo	2.87
Ghee	2.75
Groundnut Oilcake	2.3
Dairy Products	2.18
Electricity	2.16
Petroleum Crude & Natural Gas	1.64
Furnace Oil	1.59
Vanaspati	1.54
Rails	1.26
Soda Ash	1.25
Dry Cells	1.2
Diesel Oil	1.2
Bars & Rods	1.15
Aviation Spirit	1.09
Pig Iron	1.08
Semis Billets	1.06
Cashew Nuts	1.04
Petrol	1.03
Tin Containers	1.01
Mining Machinery	0.98
Lubricating Oil	0.97
Skelp	0.96
Steal Structurals	0.94
Woollen Cloth & Woollen Khadi	0.9
Plates & Sheets	0.88
Coal	0.86

Of the 139 series considered, 88 of them with a total weight of 51.672 had a positive growth and 51 of them with a total weight of 34.95 had a negative growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1986	1985
Coal		
Thousand Tonnes, May	11774	10964
Saleable Steel		
Thousand Tonnes, May	541.9	480.3
Cement		
Thousand Tonnes, May	2702	2608
Fertiliser		
Thousand Tonnes, May	448.9	403.6
Plant Load Factor		
Per cent, May	55.2	53.6

Compiled by THE POLICY GROUP/ICIM

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And suddenly colours begin to sing

Warm, pleasing yellows. Soft, soothing greens. Deep, mystic purples. Colours you've never heard before.

At Colour-Chem we make them sing. In the widest repertoire of shades and hues in the world of pigments and dyes.

In that subtle refinement of tone called quality control.

That constant striving to excel, which is R & D.

And that intimate empathy with the audience which you know as customer service.

You'll recognize Colour-Chem colours. And they'll sing for you. Whether you're in the textile, paints, printing inks, rubber, plastics or leather industry.

Just stay tuned in to Colour-Chem. You can't go wrong.

Colour-Chem

Colour-Chem Limited
194, Churchgate Reclamation,
Bombay 400 020.

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This monster lives underground and eats through 30 metres of solid rock per day.

SKF technology helps provide the bite.

Associated Bearing Co Ltd
Hoechst House, Nariman Point,
Bombay 400 021

Skefko India Bearing Co Ltd
Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Bldg
Netaji Subhash Rd, Bombay 400 002

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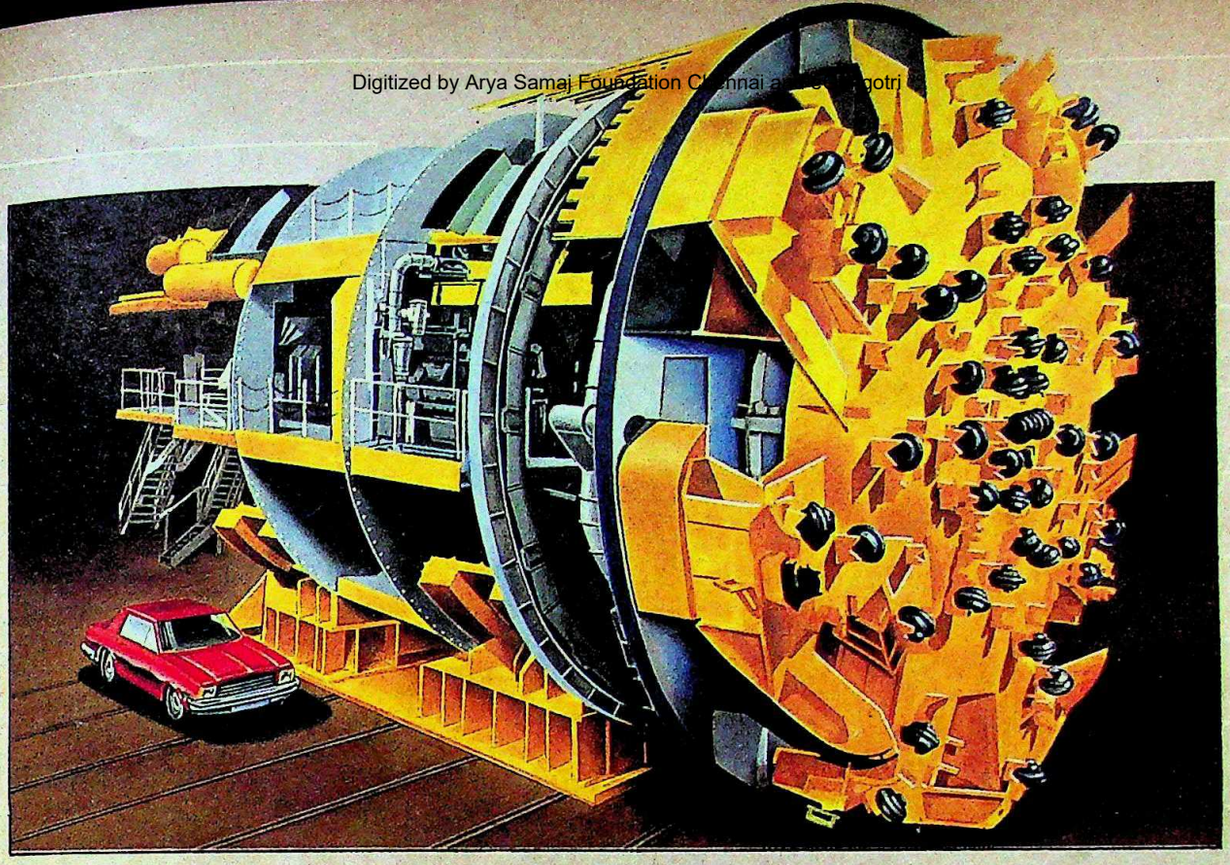


This 'monster' measures upto 1/5th of a kilometre in length and weighs upto 200 tonnes.

It is, in fact, a revolutionary new type of laser-guided mining machine, developed in West Germany and the USA . . . to operate at depths of more than one kilometre below the earth's surface in search of coal.

Naturally, equipment of such gigantic dimensions requires proportionately large components — yet components that can live up to the high-precision needs of laser-guidance technology.

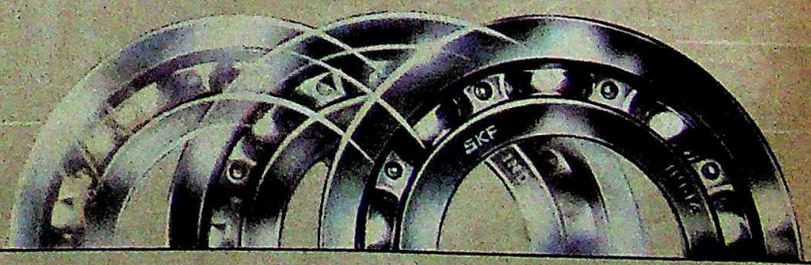
To meet this challenge, the manufacturers called in SKF.

And the result was the largest double-row taper roller bearings we have ever created — with an outer diameter of 2.5 metres, and weighing over 2 tonnes!

It's this kind of technology that has given us the reputation of being the world leaders in bearings.

And it's this same technology that goes into everything we do — whether it's a bearing for an electrical motor or a truck, for a sugar mill or a nuclear power plant.

SKF. Behind every bearing, a world of technology.



SKF

The World's No. 1 Choice

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Nothing comes between your feet and comfort

POWER JOGGER

If you've so long regarded jogging to be a chore, now forget it. Power Jogger is comfortable enough to turn jogging into sheer pleasure. And lightweight enough not to tire you when you're jogging.

The twin density sole, effectively absorbs 'road shock' with soft EVA inner layer, while the outer layer is made of special rubber compound for extra grip and ruggedness. The nylon and suede upper, with padded tongue and collar completes the comfort features.

Power Jogger. Born for fitness. Designed for comfort.

POWER®

makes the DIFFERENCE...

CLARION C-BATA J-2

MEXICO86

The Official shoe of World Cup Football 1986 Mexico

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Wheels of Fortune

WHEN officials of the Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation (RTDC) totted up their accounts for 1985-86, they got a pleasant surprise. After four years, *The Palace on Wheels*—the luxury train that had almost been given up as a bad joke—had finally chugged to a reasonable profit.

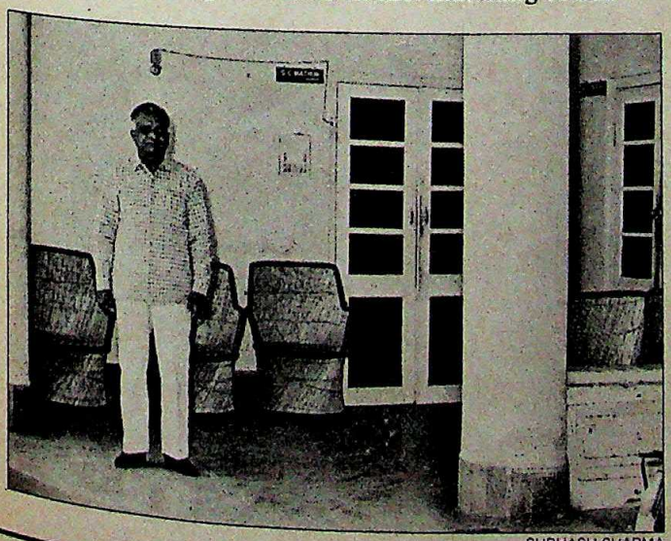
The Palace on Wheels: chugging to profits

After disappointing profits of Rs 1.97 lakh in 1982-83 and Rs 2.68 lakh the next year and then a nominal loss, it has now netted Rs 10 lakh. Jointly run by the Railways and the RTDC, it was flagged off in 1982 after rusting saloons of princely states were revamped in a Maharaja version of the *Orient Express*—to give a week-long replay of Rajasthan's royal past to such as could afford it. At Rs 1,300 per day, few could. Bookings fell until the crash in the wake of the 1984 riots. But the RTDC then did a bit of reorganising and the figure crossed 1,100. Increasingly optimistic, the RTDC has again hiked the fare to Rs 1,500 and the going promises to be smooth now.

House Hunting

WHY ONLY me?" was the agitated response that came from former Rajasthan chief minister Shiv Charan Mathur when he was served notice last fortnight to vacate his government bungalow forthwith. That it was no routine notice was borne out by the letter-head of Deputy Minister Bina Kak, providing silent testimony that yet another punch had been traded in the ongoing political sparring between Mathur and Chief Minister Harideo Joshi. "This is most unexpected," sputtered Mathur. "Apart from the fact that I am entitled to a furnished house as a legislator, the chief minister could at least have spoken to me." Not one to sit quietly, Mathur promptly shot off a pointed rejoinder stating that among the others still occupying official lodgings were former chief minister Jagannath Pahadia, state Lok Dal chief Nathuram Mirdha, state Janata Party chief Kalyan Singh Kalvi and former cabinet minister Narendra Singh Bhatti.

Mathur in his government house: marching orders



SUBHASH SHARMA

Ad Libbing

A FEW years ago, readers in Tamil Nadu had been suprised by an advertisement given by Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran dissociating himself from anything that his nephews—elder brother M.G. Chakrapani's sons—may be doing in his name. They had apparently been accused of taking bribes against a promise of securing arrack licences for someone. The case was referred to an inquiry commission and MGR was duly exonerated. Last fortnight, it was uncannily like history repeating itself when readers opened their papers to find an advertisement from MGR saying that he wasn't amused by the interference of his relatives, including his wife, in government administration. Though MGR's wife, V.N. Janaki, makes no secret of her support of and opposition to Information Minister R.M. Veerappan and AIADMK Propaganda Secretary Jayalalitha, respectively, this was not what had prompted the declaration. It was something as innocuous as the appointment of a police constable on Janaki's recommendation that had triggered off the tantrum—something that his aides say has become a habit after his illness.

MGR: not amused

Mexican Shuffle

ONLY in soccer-crazy West Bengal could it have been allowed to happen without a single cry of 'foul play'. The state's Marxist Government took the highly unusual step last fortnight of ensuring its "participation" in the World Cup soccer festival in Mexico. Under the goal of "gathering experience", a 20-man team was despatched to Mexico as spectators—all, of course, at state expense. But Sports Minister Subhash Chakraborty justified the Rs 4.8-lakh expense on the trip saying that the team members would gather valuable experience and the feel of "participating in a big event". What did not justify the exercise was the motley composition of the team. Of the 20 members, only three—Chunni Goswami, Sailen Manna and Subhas Bhowmick—were former football stars and of them only two, Goswami and Manna, were coaches. The others included three politicians from the CPI(M) and one each from the RSP and the Forward Bloc, apart from Joint Commissioner of Calcutta Police Swarup Mukherjee. Perhaps the Left Front Government wanted to study alternate means of controlling soccer riots other than lathi charges or mounted police assaults.

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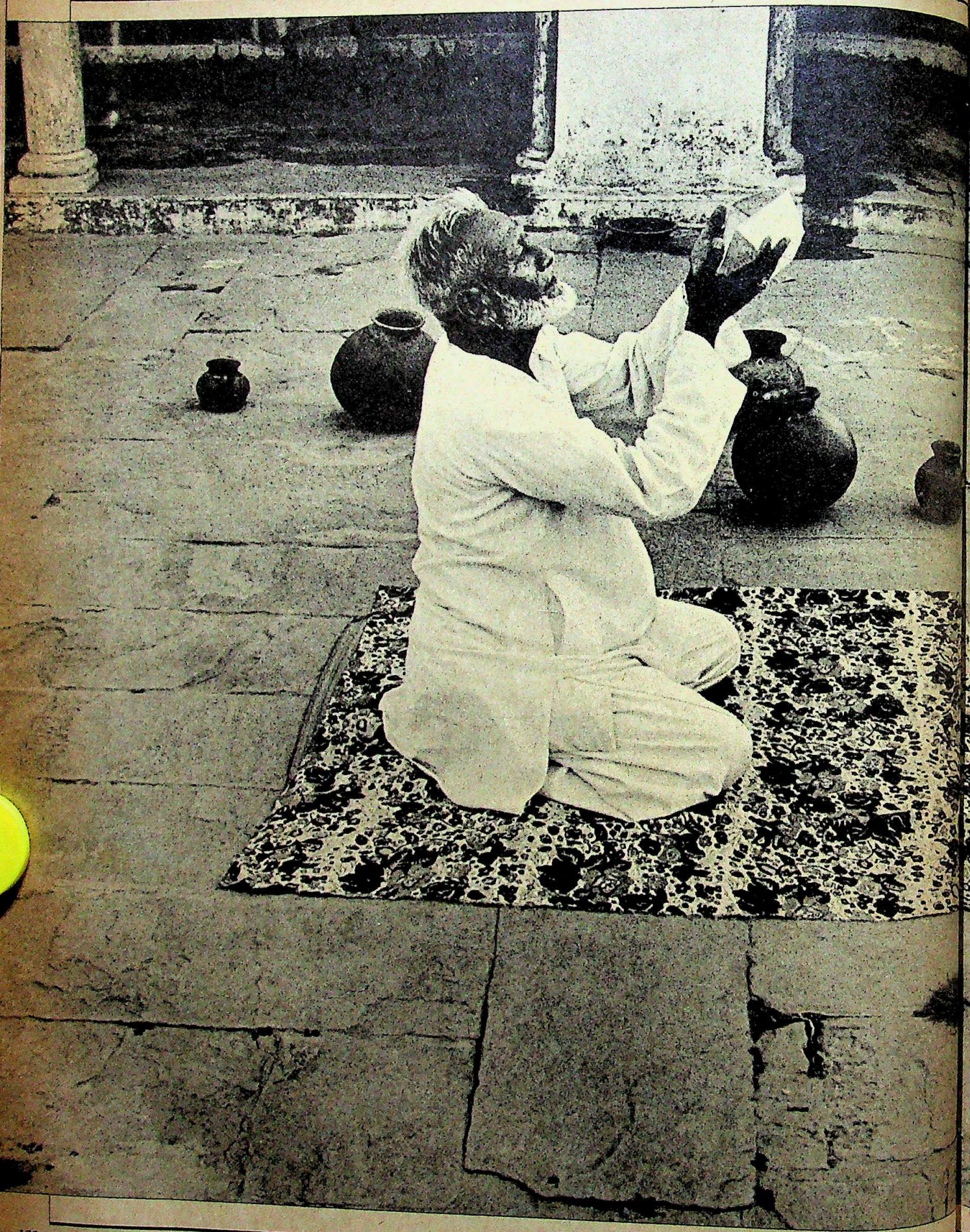

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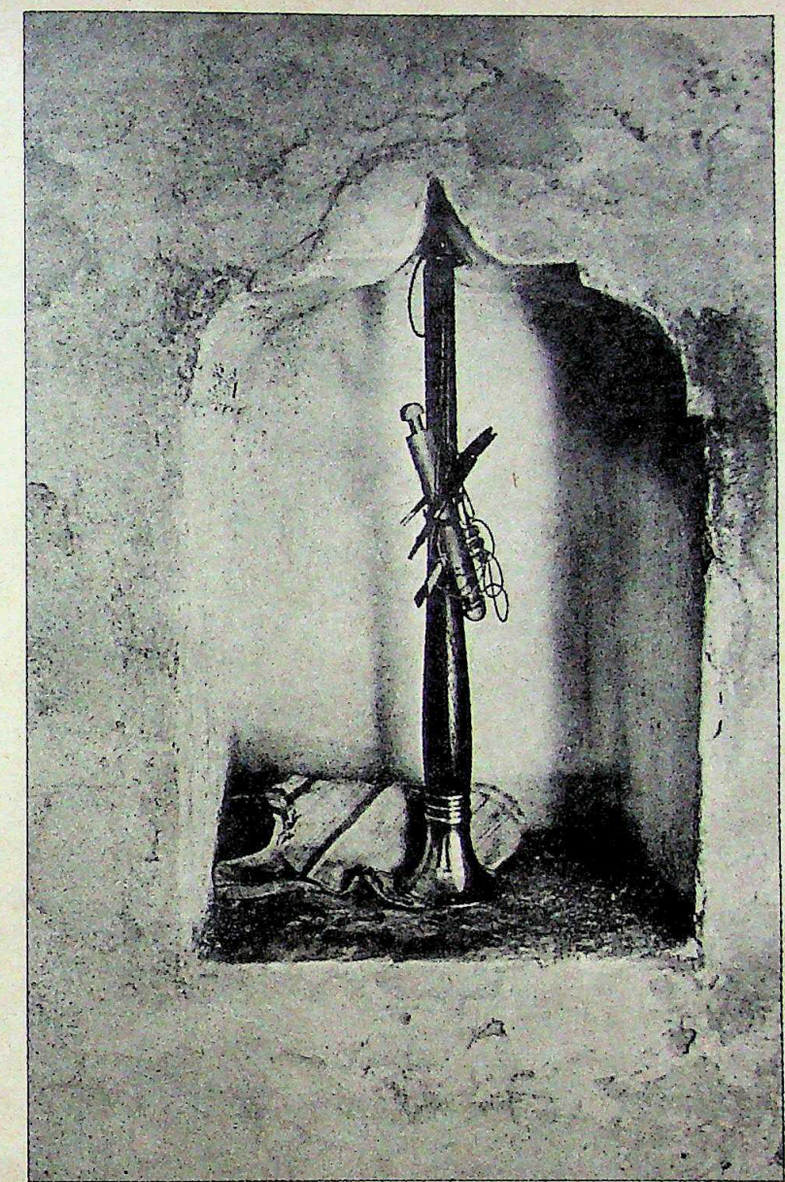

BISMILLAH KHAN

A MYSTIC UNION

In continuation of the recently-introduced series featuring living legends of Indian art and music, the photo essay this issue focusses on Bismillah Khan, the legendary shehnai maestro.

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A STEADY, rhythmic thudding fills the air as hundreds of young Shias who have marched in procession to the *ziyarat* of the martyred Imam Hussain in Varanasi—a replica of his shrine in Karbala, Iraq—beat their chests and sing a dirge. Bismillah Khan, who is part of this "alam ka juloos", stands at the entrance to the tomb, holding aloft the *alam* (Hussain's standard) in memory of the slain grandson of Prophet Muhammad. He tries to join in the song but his mouth quivers and he starts to sob openly, wiping his tears with corners of the flag. Veiled women in black weep as the lengthening shadow of a neem tree brings in the evening. "*Aya hai karbala mein gharib-ul watan koi,*" the mourners sing, "*sub kuchh ho is jahan mein lekin mere karim, bhai ko zibah hote na dekhe bahen koi* (let no sister ever suffer the fate of having to watch her brother slaughtered)."

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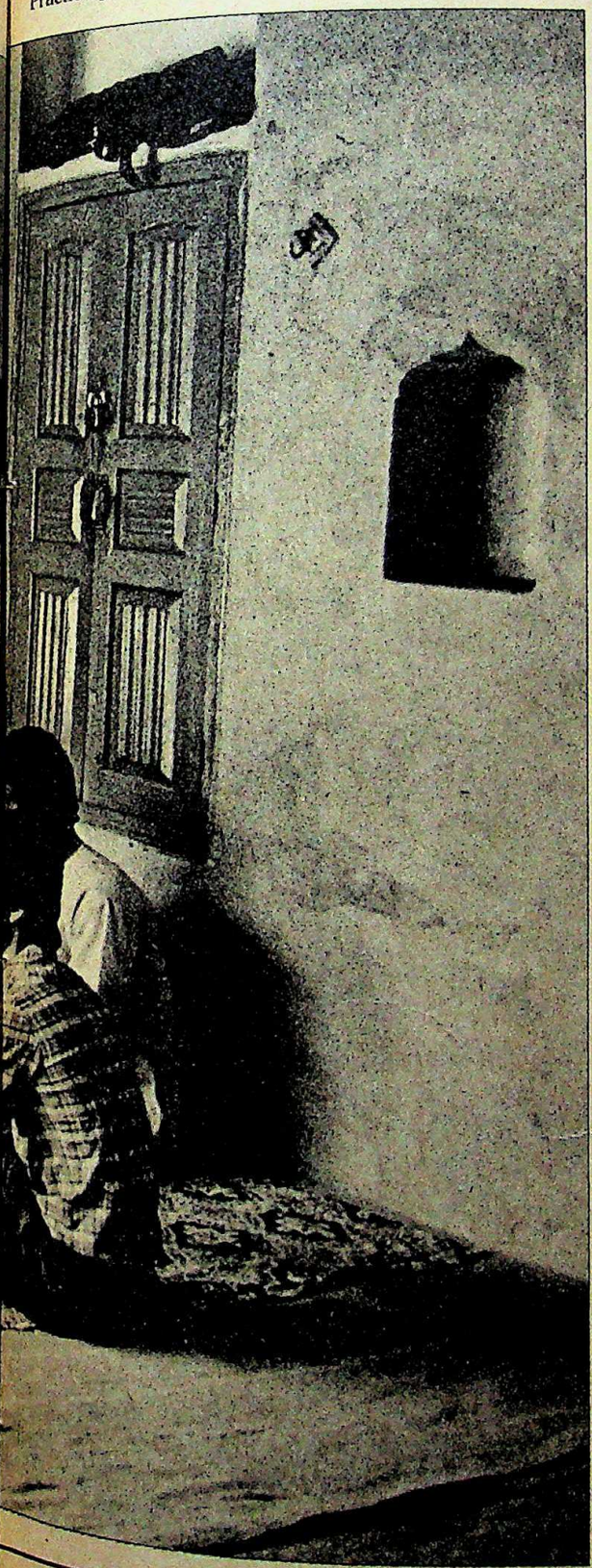
On this special day of prayer and mourning, Khan Sahib has already spent two hours at the shrine which includes replicas of the *rauzaas* (tombs) of Fatima Zehra, the Prophet's daughter, and Hazrat Abbas, Hussain's younger brother. He has visited each site, dressed in a white kurta and pyjama, offered incense and prostrated himself in adulation. As he completes his rounds, stopping finally at the *rauzaa* of Imam Hussain, he reads out the names of the 72 *shaheeds* (martyrs) of Karbala, who were butchered in the 7th century A.D. when Hussain refused assent to Yezid's Caliphate. His head bowed, arms stretched out in supplication, Khan Sahib mutters a prayer: "You gave me everything. You gave me your life. *Ya Khuda, Ya Rahmatkaar*. My tears are the tears of gratitude." When finally, the long evening turns to dusk, he washes his feet and settles down on arthritic knees, swathed in heavy bandages, to two hours of namaaz—a lonely, beatific figure doubled over in pain and ecstasy.

Practicing with *chelas* in Varanasi; (right) singing Bhairav



"*Music, sur*, namaaz. It is the same thing. We reach Allah in different ways. A musician can learn. He can play beautifully. But unless he can mix his music with religion, unless he strives to meet God, he will only have *kalaa* (art) but no *assar* (mystical union). He will always stand at the edge of the ocean and never reach the heights of purity."

Khan Sahib is soaked in religion. It is his sustaining life-force. But it is this same religion that damns music, condemns it as an act of rape. For the Shias, music is *haraam* (taboo). But for the man who took the shehnai out of wedding processions and *naubatkhaanaas*—the shehnai player, traditionally was to be heard and not seen—and who was able to weave patterns of dazzling intricacy into its music as he brought it to the centre-stage of classical respectability, his instrument is also his Quran. Where others see conflict and contradiction between his music and his religion, he sees only a divine unity.

"When the maulvis and maulanas ask me about this, I tell them, sometimes with irritation, that I can't explain it. I feel it. I feel it. If music is *haraam*, then why has it reached such heights? Why does it make me soar towards heaven? The religion of music is one. All others are different. I tell the maulanas, this is the only *haqeeqat* (reality). This is the world. My namaaz is the seven *shuddh* and five *komal surs*. And if this is *haraam*, then I say: *aur haraam karo, aur haraam karo* (if music be a thing of sin, sin on)."

"I was once in an argument with some Shia maulvis in Iraq. They were well versed in their subject and were making several effective arguments about the reasons why music ought to be damned. At first I was left speechless. Then I closed my eyes and began to sing in Raga Bhairav: Allah-hee.... *Allah-hee... Allah-hee*.... I continued to raise the pitch. I opened my eyes and I asked

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At his daily morning prayers

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them: 'Is this *haraam*? I'm calling God, I'm thinking of Him, I'm searching for Him. Isn't this namaaz? Why do you call my search *haraam*?' They fell silent."

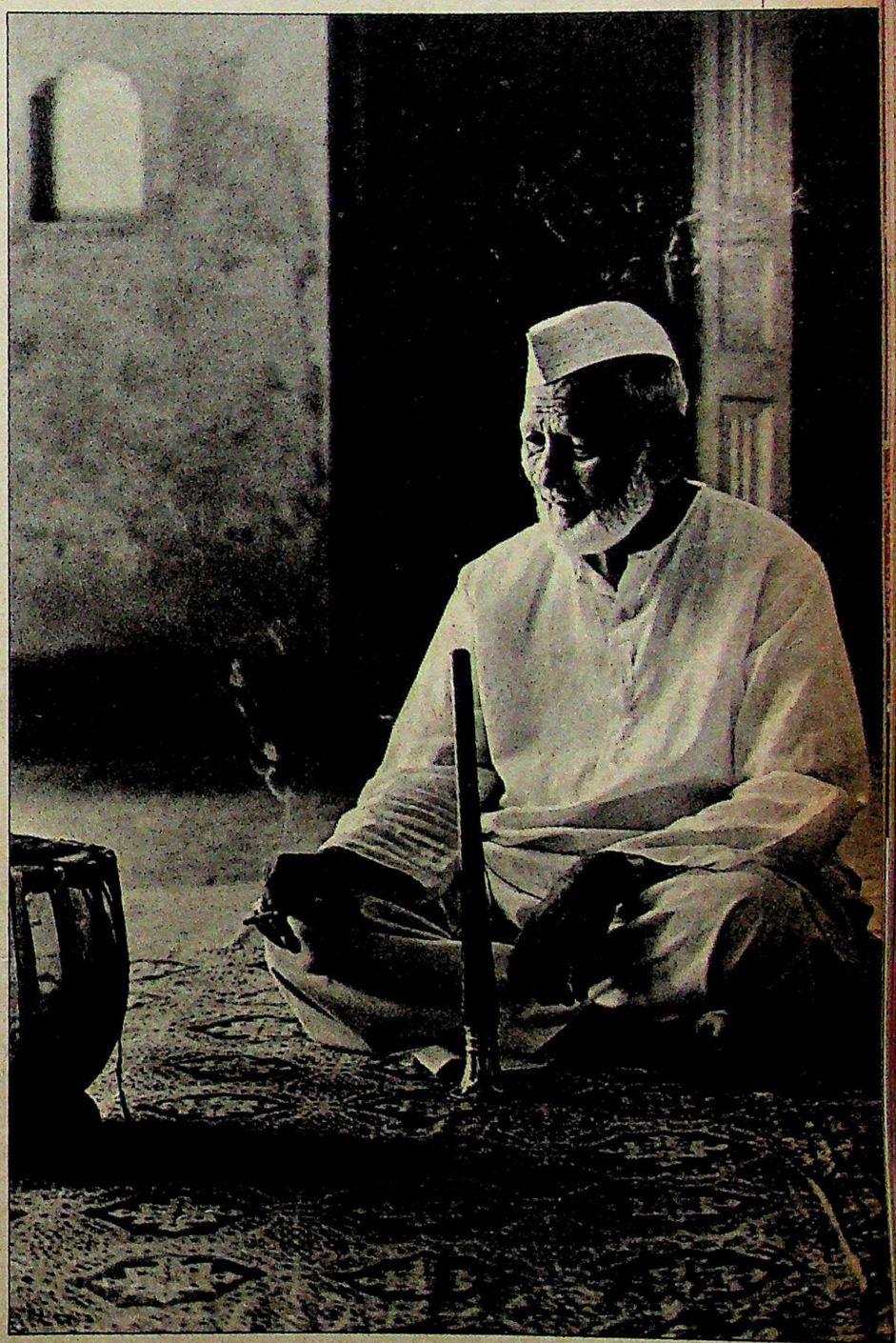
Each year, on the eighth day of Muharram, this devotee of the Shia faith who refuses to touch the reed of his shehnai with his lips unless he has offered his namaaz before sunrise, engages himself in his own private drama of religious apostasy. Dressed simply in white, he leads a procession, like a mischievous Pied Piper of rebellion, playing a silver shehnai reserved specially for the occasion. The procession winds its way through Varanasi's Byzantine lanes to the *rauzaa* of Imam Hussain. Here, just inside the gate, he sits cross-legged on the dusty ground in the fashion of a mendicant street minstrel and plays for hours, weeping copiously all the time, while the audience pitches coins into his lap.

THIS is a simple man. A man of tenderness, a gentle, private man, yet given to unbridled display of emotion. When he laughs, the ground shakes. At 70, he is an immensely handsome man with a princely beard and eyes which glint with boyish mischief, his only "bad habit", he apologises, is smoking Wills cigarettes which he puffs with obvious relish. There is nothing about him that bespeaks his fame—his honorary doctorates, his Padma Vibhushan, his concerts in almost every capital around the world, his dozens of best-selling record albums. On India's first Republic Day ceremony it was Khan Sahib who poured his heart out in Raga Kaafi from Red Fort. On a more pop level, it was Khan Sahib who composed that magic film number 'Dil ka khilauna hai toot gaya' for the film *Goonj Uthi Shehnai*. He has made money but has spent it just as fast. He supports nearly 100 relatives, including 10 children.

His house in Varanasi, in Sarai Harha, is an ample but decrepit structure. His living-room, which also serves as a guest-room, is sparsely furnished with creaky wooden benches and a large *takht* on which, at given times of the day, his children perform namaaz, oblivious of guests and visitors. Still in incessant demand as a player he travels by train regularly with his troupe, often by second class. He hates to fly. And when travel arrangements are being made, the house buzzes with activity as instruments are laid out, ancient steel trunks and torn British Airways flight-bags are packed with clothes and lunch-boxes stuffed with rice and samosas. The shehnai-player, whose name is as familiar even to the international jet set as that of Ravi Shanker, travels by cycle-rickshaw. And as he wheels down the city's streets at the head of a caravan of rickshaws, smiling at well-wishers, he looks as happy as a British lord in a Rolls Royce.

Until Bismillah Khan burst upon the centre-stage of Indian music with his strange little instrument at the All-India Music Conference in Calcutta in 1937 at the age of 20, the shehnai was considered an instrument reserved for wedding processions or Hindu religious rituals. His ancestors were court musicians in the princely state of Dumraon in Bihar. His uncle, the late Ali Bux 'Vilayatu', was a shehnai-player attached to Varanasi's Vishwanath Temple. Khan Sahib remembers him as a hard task-master, "who may not have been able to conjure up the rain with his playing but could bring you to tears in a minute. I was never interested in studies. While others were at their books, I used to sneak out and play marbles or blow on Mamu's (uncle's) shehnai. He always knew I would be a shehnai-player".

Even as a devout Shia, Khan Sahib is also a devotee of Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of music. And at the age of 12, he recalls, he received a signal—a peculiarly Hindu signal—that his *sadhana* (devotion) had been rewarded. He recalls: "Mamu used to do his *riyaaz* (practice) at the temple of Balaji (an avatar of Vishnu) for 18 years. He told



Relaxing with a cigarette after a Shehnai session

me to do the same thing. I would begin my *riyaaz* at the mandir at 7 p.m. and end at 11 p.m., during which time I usually played four ragas. After a year-and-a-half, Mamu told me, 'if you see anything, just don't talk about it'. One night as I was playing, deep in meditation, I smelled

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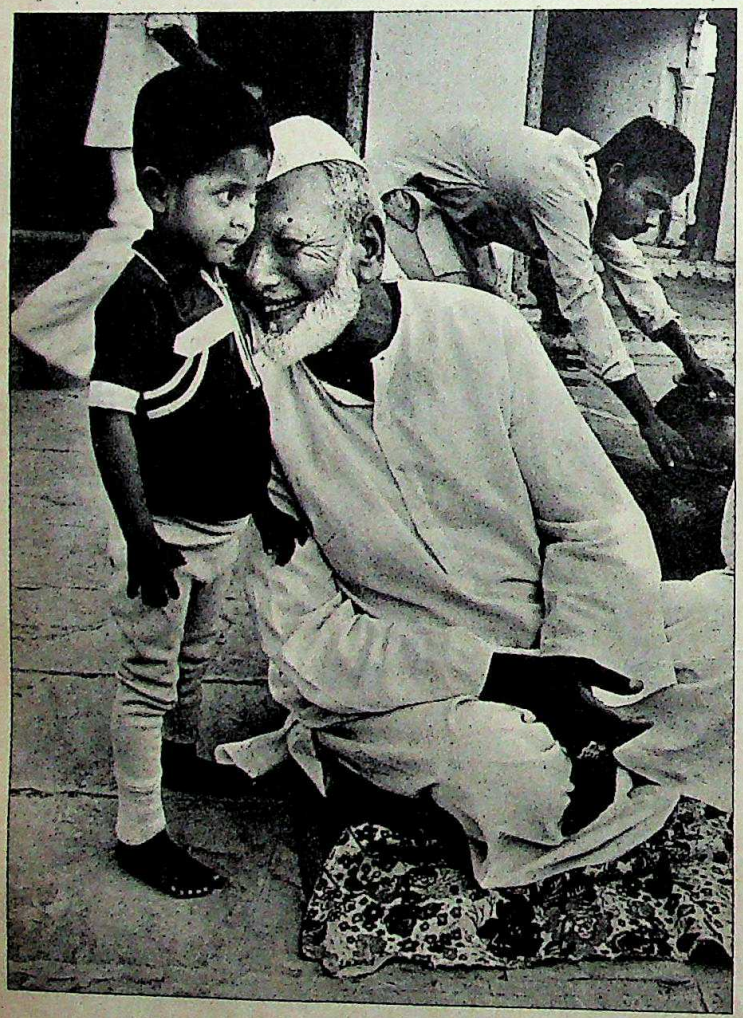
something. It was an indescribable scent, something like sandalwood and jasmine and incense. I thought it was the aroma of the Ganges. But the scent got more powerful. I opened my eyes—and when I speak about it I still get goose-flesh—when I opened my eyes, there was Balaji standing right next to me, *kamandal* in hand, exactly as he is pictured. My door was locked from inside. Nobody was allowed to enter when I did my *riyaaz*. He said, 'play, son'. But I was in a cold sweat. I stopped playing.

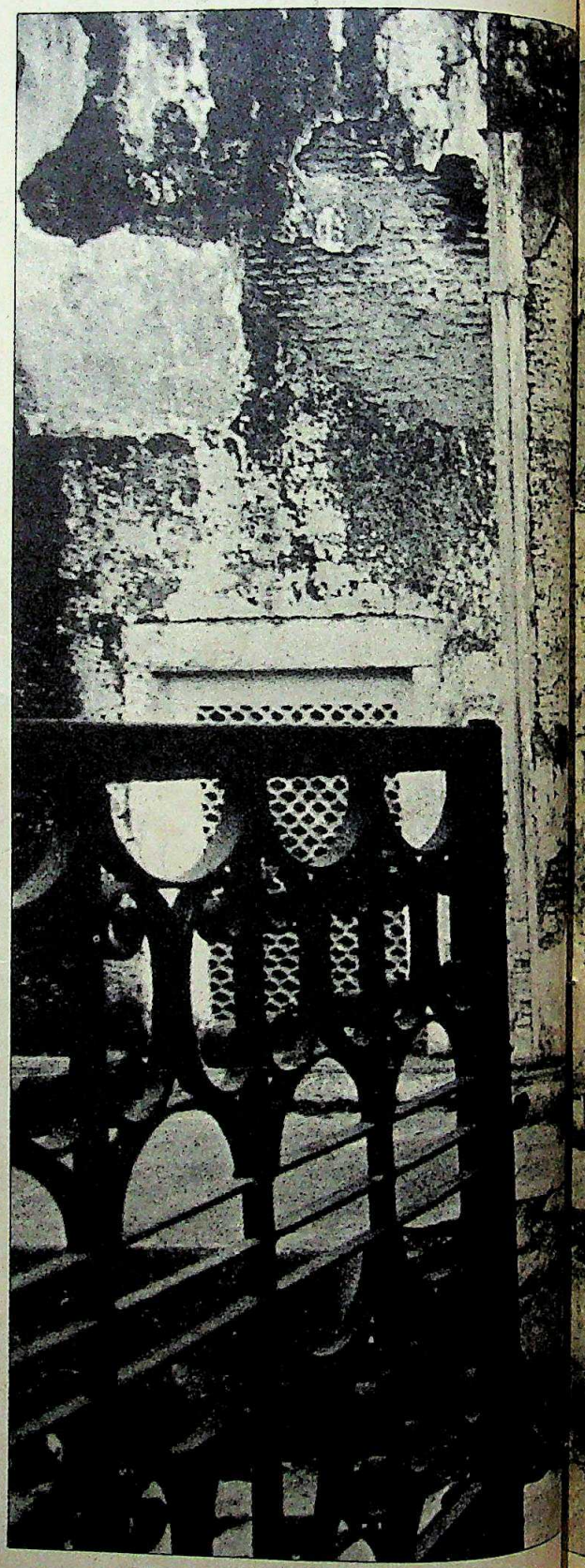
"He smiled, and disappeared. I unlocked the door. I thought a *faqir* may have come in. I took a lantern and searched all the streets. They were empty. I ran home, ate quickly and slept. Mamu had understood what had happened. But he teased me, pretending he knew nothing. But as I blurted out the experience, Mamu slapped me, because he had asked me earlier not to talk about anything that might happen to me. Then he kissed me and asked me to go buy vegetables. Mamu always told me, 'never look back, keep going forward'. Even now I go to Balaji's mandir alone, at night and play all by myself. When I play



With grandson in Varanasi home

before others, in my heart I'm still listening to my gurus. In my heart, they clap for me at the appropriate time.

"In music, the *sur* is a clean thing, it is a pure thing. It cannot be deceived and it cannot deceive anybody. It is like a mirror in which you see the world and in which I can see my own face when I play. When I start playing, the mind wanders here and there and takes me with it. But all the time I am striving for the *assar*. But when that comes, when the *sur* clicks, it is like I am unconscious and the heart has taken over. Sometimes I don't understand who is playing. Or I feel that I am playing at a *mazaar*, or in front of ancient sages. And all I can think of is, '*he mere maalik tu mujhe lele* (God, take me away), *tu hee nirankaar, tu hee*



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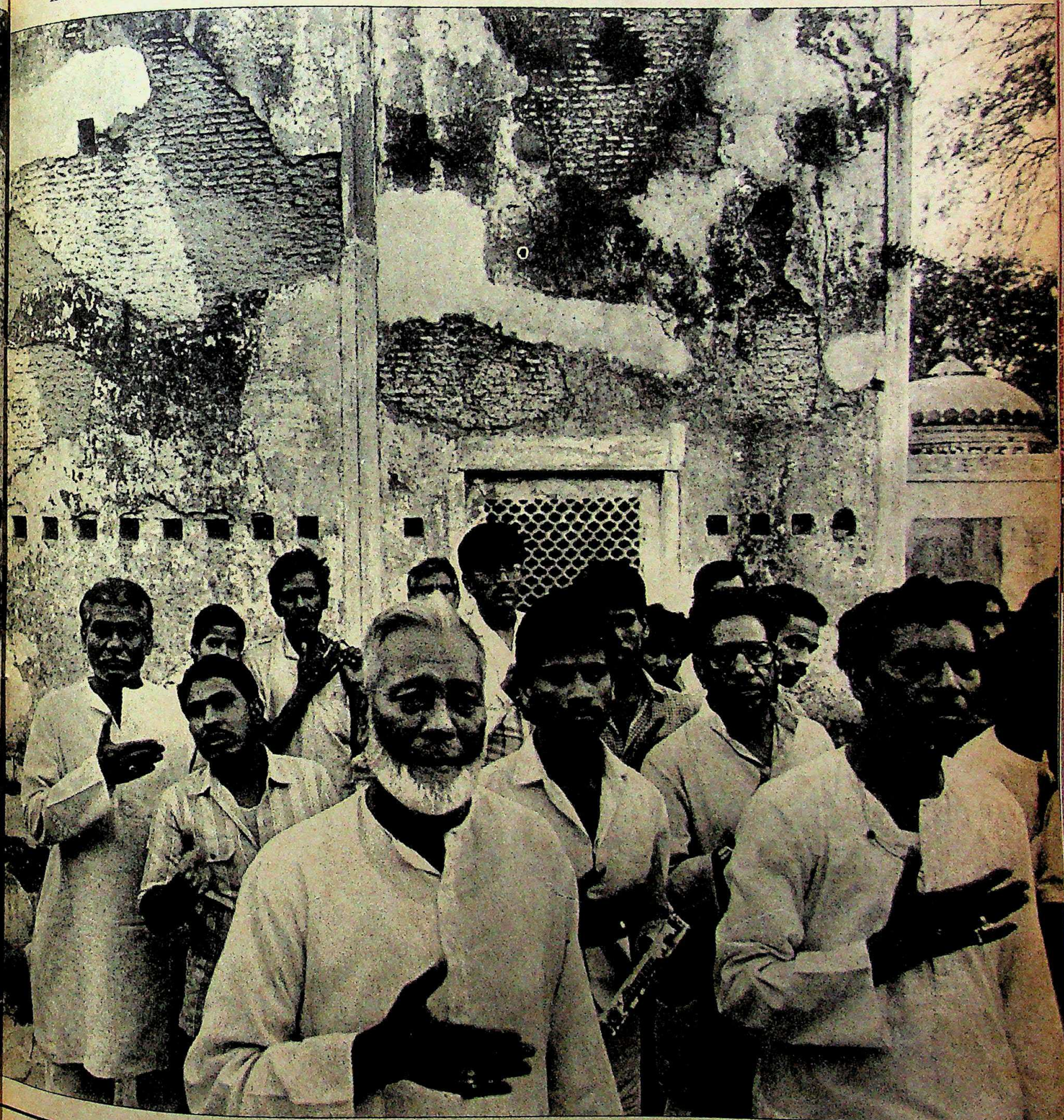
phool aur phal mein (God, You alone are formless, You alone in flower and fruit)'.

"I am getting old now. Not in my heart. But in my body. The heart yearns to go on and on but this body sometimes tires and these wretched knees start aching after four hours of playing. And I now have that all-too-human worry. Thirty years ago, I used to think I had conquered or was about to conquer the world. What foolishness! Now I say, Bismillah, you haven't reached anywhere. The world may know and listen to your ragas, but Bismillah, life will soon finish and your yearnings will still remain. This music is still an ocean. I want to cross it.

In mourning in a procession of Shia muslims



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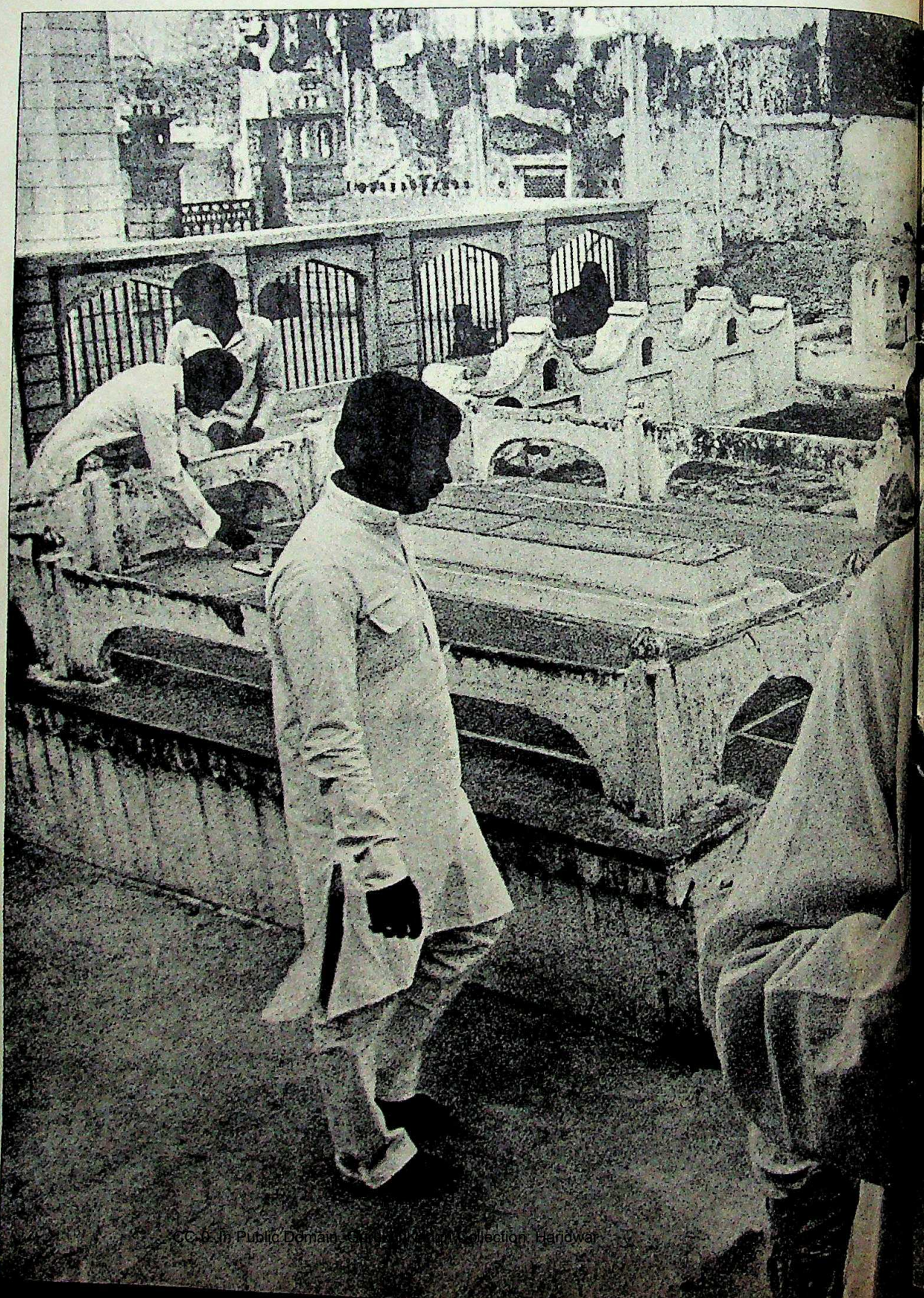
But I have barely reached the shore. I haven't yet even taken a dip in it."

Khan Sahib has not groomed a disciple. He teaches students when he has the time but there is no special heir. Of his six sons—Mahtab, Nayab, Hussein, Famin, Kazim, and Nazim—the youngest, Nazim, plays the tabla. "The days of *adaab* (old world manners and values) are gone," he says. "Musicians now go to school. They do not do *sadhana* with gurus. They want instant results. But the great old masters who did their penance—Fayyaz Khan, Abdul Karim Khan, Onkar Nath—died poor. No one knows about their sacrifices. Consider Swami Haridas. He produced Tansen. But no one knows Swami Haridas. They had no time for their own lives. No time for their families, their children. There are very few in this age who can do the real *riyaaz*. You have to have the ability to wipe yourself out. You have to get up before sunrise on freezing mornings, offer namaaz, go to the mandir, and begin



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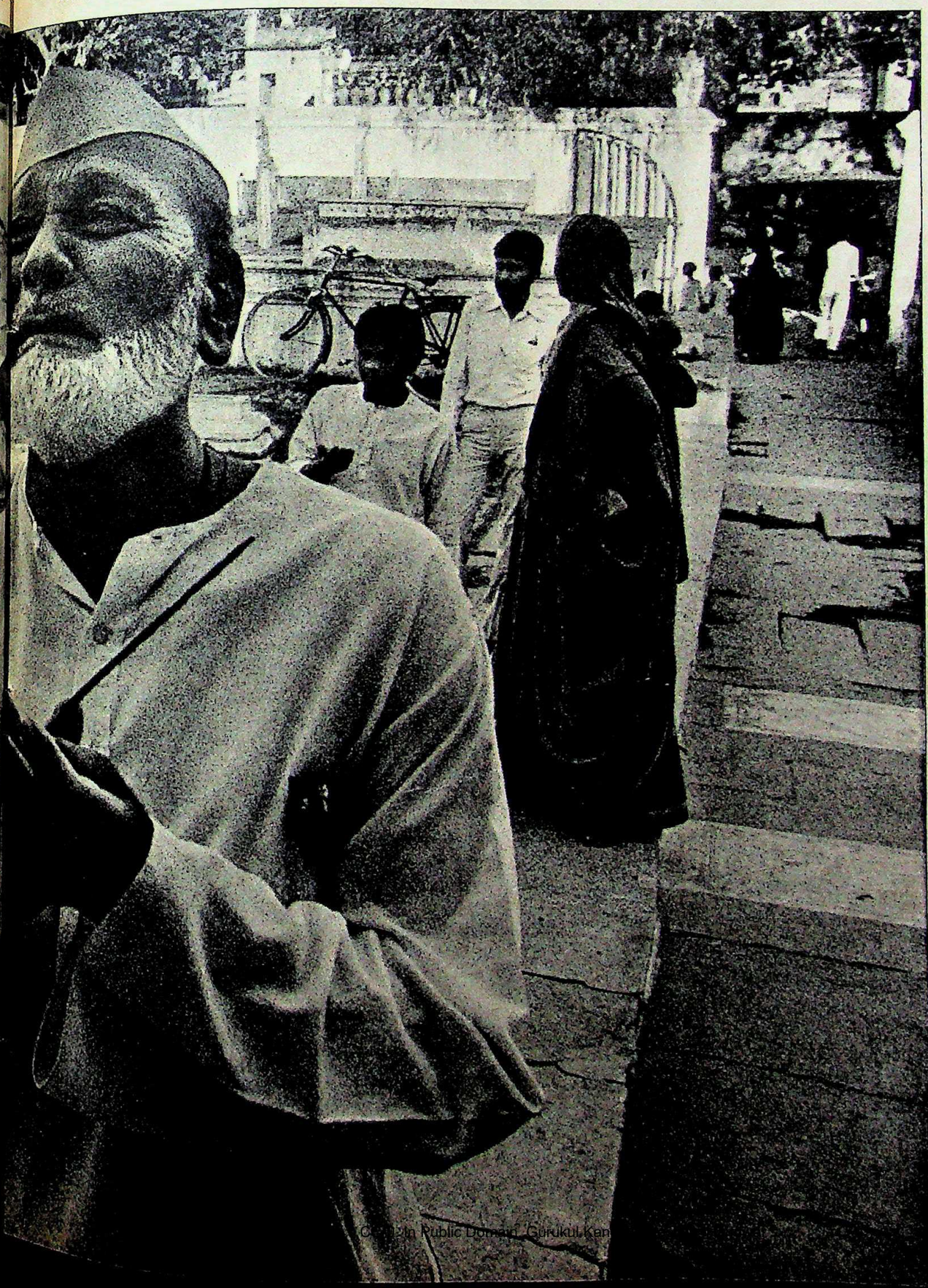
practice. These days musicians want to rise at 10 a.m. to go to music schools.

"But which music school has produced a Fayyaz or an Abdul Karim Khan? I say, leave those schools *aur aao maidan mein* (and come out into the real battle). But you have to have the discipline and the tenacity. Someone like me can give his time to a student, but the taker has to be willing to take, to wrest that time from his guru. He must find the time for his own *tapasya*. I remember when I was a boy and often my guru, tired from the day, would retire at 4 a.m., I would be awake. I had been waiting for him. I used to go to his bedroom and begin pressing his tired feet. He would look at me and he would know what I wanted. He would shake off his slumber and come alive. He would give me his shehnai and tell me: 'all right son, start playing'."

—INDERJIT BADHWAR in Varanasi

Weeping copiously in communion with God



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AIDS

Countering the Scare

SUDDENLY, the spectre of AIDS has cast its dreaded shadow over India. Last fortnight, two full-blown cases of AIDS surfaced in Maharashtra hospitals, putting the Government on red alert and highlighting the need to identify and control the disease.

Despite the alarm bells, there was some reassurance in the fact that both the patients had contracted the virus not through sexual contact in India but as a result of blood transfusions in US hospitals. Beharilal Ramchandra Makhija, a 55-year-old Bombay businessman who died on June 9 barely a fortnight after he was admitted to the Jaslok Hospital, had been given blood during coronary bypass surgery in a New York hospital in 1980. A 24-year-old microbiologist from Hyderabad, who was admitted to Pune's Sassoon Hospital showing symptoms of advanced AIDS immediately on his return from the US, is a haemophiliac who had received blood while studying in the US.

However, the two cases have fuelled fears that the killer virus may be stealthily spreading among high-risk groups like prostitutes, eunuchs and homosexuals. Only last month there was a scare when tests on six prostitutes in Madras showed the presence of antibodies meant to fight the AIDS virus in the bloodstream. Since then, 15 of the 2,000 blood samples collected by surveillance centres in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have proved to be AIDS positive. The Union Health Ministry is clearly worried over the spread of the disease but with such a small sample it is impossible to establish how far and wide AIDS has taken root.

Now, in one of the most elaborate operations of its kind, the Union Government has asked the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to conduct a two-month, nation-wide survey which will analyse 25,000 blood samples from high-risk groups and give some clue as to how seriously AIDS has stricken the country. Already AIDS surveillance centres have been set up in all the states and last fortnight, a special training camp was held at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) in New Delhi to familiarise microbiologists from all over the country with the AIDS testing kits.

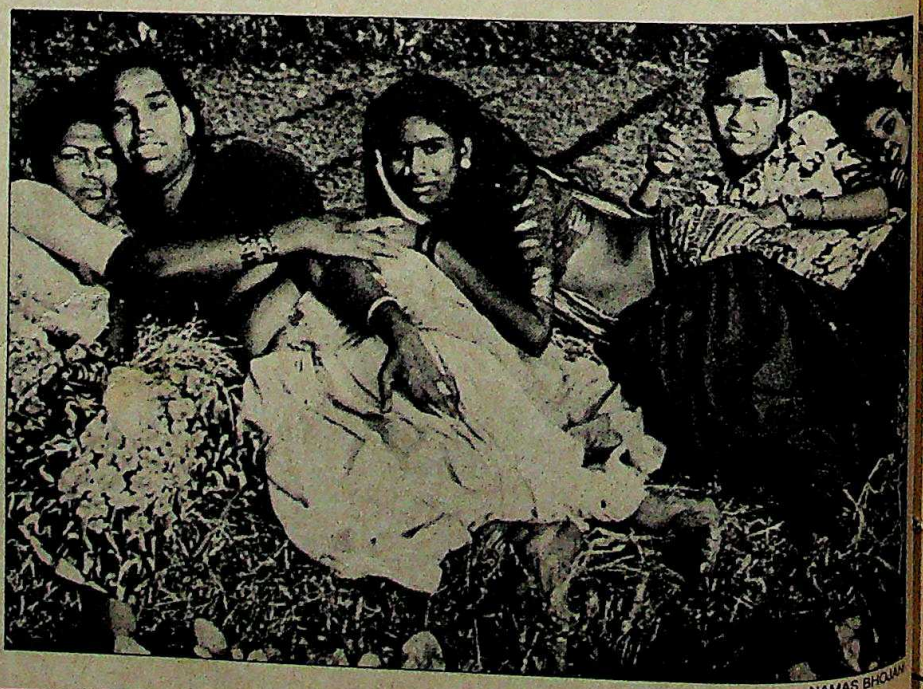
Justifying the high priority being assigned to AIDS, Dr V. Ramalingaswami, ICMR's bespectacled director-general, said: "AIDS is a killer disease. Of the 26,000 cases reported abroad, 14,000 have proved fatal. We simply cannot sit back and wait for the disease to spread in India. We must take steps to contain the disease before it overwhelms us."

Ironically, even though blood transfusion and haemophiliac patients are only a miniscule 2.5 per cent of the adult AIDS victims in the west, the first two serious cases to surface in India fell under this category. Maharashtra Health Minister Bhai Sawant told the Assembly that all blood banks had been instructed to test donors for AIDS and the Government was considering cancelling licences of private blood banks lacking in such facilities. But medical authorities in New Delhi are well aware of the difficulty in insisting that the 2.50 lakh litres of blood collected by both government and private blood banks in the country every year be screened for AIDS. Just the testing kit for such a massive operation would cost Rs 2 crore, not to mention the trained manpower that would be needed to carry out the tests.

Even though it may be a temporary phenomenon, the news of Beharilal Makhija's death at Jaslok caused a dramatic slump in the number of men visiting Bombay's red-light districts, which are the largest in the country, housing an estimated one lakh common prostitutes and eunuchs. Though a report that two *hijras* were suffering from advanced symptoms of AIDS proved to be incorrect, Bombay's brothels, with a significant number of foreign and Indian clients, are a major cause of worry for medical authorities. "Ninety-five per cent of our attention has to be given to Bombay," said Maharashtra Health Secretary D.T. Joseph. "There is no legislation to register prostitutes and eunuchs, but now, with the threat of AIDS, we will have to do something."

Doctors have also been insisting that a monitoring campaign in red-light districts can be successful only if prostitution is legalised. "Ninety per cent of the prostitutes suffer from venereal disease," said Dr Ishwarprasad S. Gilada of the J.J. Hospital who has been conducting medi-

DILIP CHAKRAVARTY



Prostitutes in Bombay (right); and eunuchs: potential risks

NAMAS BHOJAN

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cal camps in these areas for the last three years. "It would hardly be surprising if some of them contract AIDS also. Bombay is the gateway to India, and as expected, the first AIDS death has occurred here. Now the Government must legalise prostitution and make AIDS a notifiable disease if we are to have some check on the disease."

Though the Union Welfare Ministry is considering a proposal to legalise prostitution, concern about the deep-rooted public opinion against such a move has so far effectively stalled any amendment of the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act. Nor would a stroke of the pen really help because unless a foolproof system is designed to ensure that prostitutes are properly screened for sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS, this may end up like all other governmental legislation—good on paper but a farce in reality.

Meanwhile, the Government is considering other measures for preventing and combating the spread of AIDS in the country. But the first move—to get an AIDS-free certificate for all blood products, like immunoglobulins, that are imported for various tests—is facing several hurdles. The fear is that if the Government insists on such certificates Indians going abroad will also be faced with a similar demand. Right now, there are hardly any facilities in the country for the half million Indians who go abroad every year to undergo AIDS screening tests.

A major problem has been the shortage of AIDS testing kits in the country, and the Government is now importing them from the US at around two dollars a piece. The Elisa test kit, as it is called, went into production only in April last year and, faced with the massive demand from most countries, manufacturers find it difficult to keep up production schedules. Moreover, a photo-chromometer (cost: Rs 1.33 lakh) is also required to complete the initial AIDS-positive test. The Government is planning to allow private hospitals and clinics to import the testing kits and equipment duty free but has so far gone slow on it as a system would have to be worked out where the public is not fleeced by private physicians. Already, private clinics have got onto the AIDS bandwagon and last fortnight a clinic in South Delhi advertised AIDS screening tests. Although the clinic got scores of calls, most people were put off by the cost of the test, a prohibitive Rs 500.

BUT Makhija's case brought home the fact that ignorance about AIDS is as rampant among doctors as the general public. In 1983, three years after the unlucky businessman underwent bypass surgery in New York, he developed (through a fungal infection typical of immunosuppressed patients) low grade fever and started losing weight. The last two symptoms are typical of tuberculosis, and though Makhija was a rich man with the city's top doctors attending on him, for nearly three years he was treated for TB until, totally emaciated and afflicted with dementia, he was admitted to the Jaslok Hospital on May 27, under the care of Dr Lele, a pioneer in nuclear medicine. Since Makhija had failed to respond to TB treatment and tests had shown he did not suffer from cancer, Dr Lele suspected the worst—the first full-blown case of AIDS in the country. Immunology tests at the Tata Cancer Research Centre showed that the ratio of T-4 (helper) cells to T-8 (suppressor) cells, which is normally two is to one, was down to 0.5 to one (the AIDS virus HTLV-III directly attacks the T-4 cells which are the body's main weapon against viral infection). His blood's white cell count was down to 3,000 (against a normal 10,000), lymphocytes to just 300 (against a normal 1,200) and a brain scan showed atrophy of the brain typical of dementia in the final stages of AIDS. Blood tests at the National Institute of Virology, Pune, showed positive for HTLV-III, confirming the diagnosis made days before the patient died. Samples of Makhija's blood have been sent to the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta to isolate the AIDS virus and efforts are being made to establish whether the Indian virus is similar to the western or African variety.

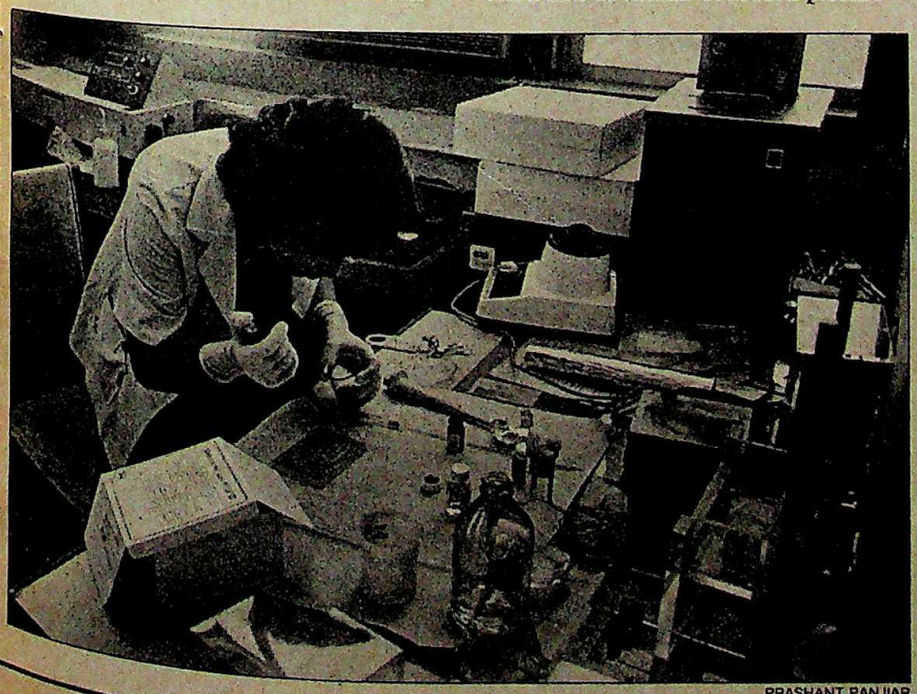
Coincidentally, two months before Makhija's death, the Maharashtra Government had been activated against the AIDS threat after Rajiv Gandhi, on a visit to Bombay, questioned the State health minister on the Government's AIDS surveillance programme. The prime minister is known to be taking a personal interest in the campaign. The Government has already launched a media campaign to educate people. Both Doordarshan and AIR regularly broadcast warnings against AIDS, *Roving Eye* did a special TV feature on the disease, and government-issued warning advertisements have begun appearing in newspapers. But so far the efforts have been amateurish and limited.

The Government's campaign has also come in for strong criticism from a section of the medical fraternity. "Government measures are not going to help anybody except produce mass hysteria and apprehension about AIDS," said Dr A.G. Phatak, a senior immunologist in Miraj. Dr Lele also expressed concern that the Government may divert scarce public health resources to the AIDS campaign. "People are dying of TB and malaria for which a cure is easily available, yet public opinion is more bothered about facilities for AIDS for which there is no cure," he observed.

But the appearance of the first cases of AIDS is a grim warning of the difficult task ahead. Scarce resources will have to be diverted to devise an effective anti-AIDS campaign even as medical administrators battle to ensure that lifting the veil on a mysterious and deadly disease does not unleash country-wide hysteria.

—M. RAHMAN with RAJ CHENGAPPA

AIDS test at AIIMS: confused picture



PRASHANT PANJIAR

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TEST-TUBE BABIES

Made in India

AN AIR of anxious expectancy surrounds ward 14 of King Edward's Medical (KEM) Hospital in North Bombay. The analogy is apt enough. It is here that the first made-in-India test-tube baby will be born next month to Mani Shyamji Chawda, a pert 23-year-old employee of a local school, now in her eighth month of pregnancy.

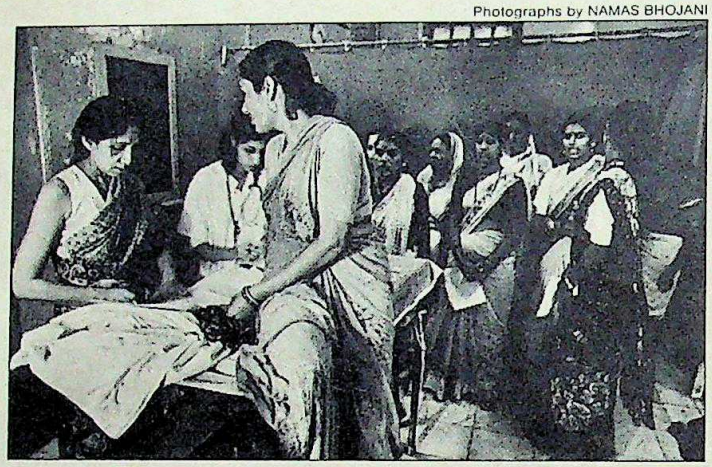
The birth of the 'Chawda Baby', as it has been christened by the scientific community, will be celebrated with more than usual enthusiasm, particularly by Dr Indira Hinduja, senior gynaecologist at the KEM, who has been in charge of the project for the last three years in collaboration with the Institute for Research in Reproduction.

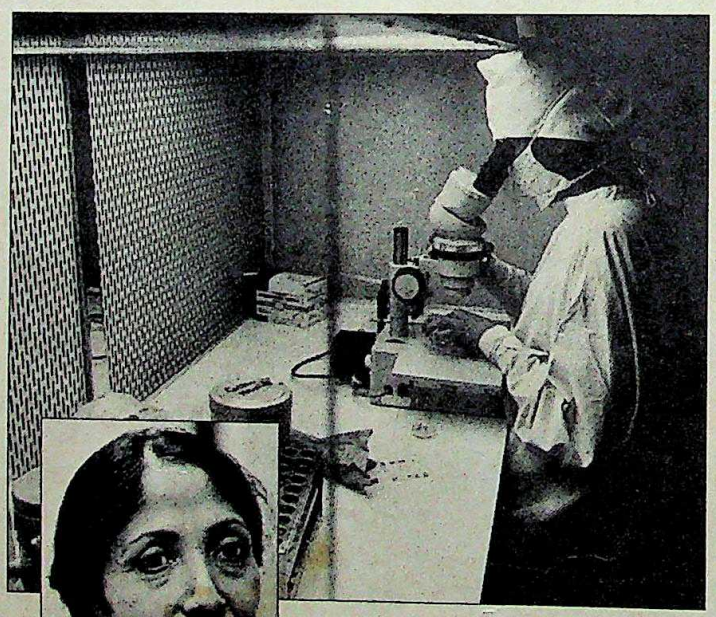
In purely medical terms, Dr Hinduja's achievement is hardly an earth-shaking event. Since the dramatic birth of Louise Brown, the world's first test-tube baby, in July 1978, well over 2,000 such babies have been born throughout the world. But the Chawda baby will, when it is born, become the first test-tube baby in India whose conception and birth would have been scientifically documented and accepted as such by the scientific community.

No such acceptance was afforded the team of doctors in Calcutta who announced the birth of India's first test-tube baby in 1978. And the test-tube baby born to Dr Prakash and Nirupma last month in Bangalore has been christened an NRI (non-resident Indian) baby in gynaecological circles since the fertilisation, conception and implantation of the embryo were done in Cambridge, England.

But for Dr Hinduja, the Chawda baby represents her first successful pregnancy and, in the Indian context, more of a social than a medical breakthrough. She had two other test-tube pregnancies. Unfortunately, the second expectant mother, a housewife from a Bombay suburb, aborted after a fall last fortnight. The other expectant mother, a 34-year-old schoolteacher from Goa, is not expecting her baby till much later.

Photographs by NAMAS BHOJANI





Hopeful women at King Edward's Medical Hospital; Indira Hinduja (inset); studies extracted ova

For Maria, as well as the many women crowding Dr Indira Hinduja's office, this is indeed the last exit—out of infertility. The room spills over with women clutching medical reports, their faces mirroring a mixture of hope and desperation. They have come from Dubai, London, Vellore, Chitraput, Hyderabad, Delhi and the suburbs of Bombay, on an anxious pilgrimage to the KEM Hospital. Most of them are in their mid-30s; a few are 40. But their common desperation to conceive and escape the ingrained social stigma of barrenness gives them a common identity.

Obviously, news of the impending birth has spread far and wide—and fast. Dr Hinduja first announced her success at the international meeting on the 'Biological basis of medicine' in Bombay in January this year. Today, over 15 new patients arrive at her clinic every morning, some straight from the railway station. She gets a similar number of letters every day with requests for in-vitro fertilisation and embryo transfer (IVF-ET), the process used in the Chawda case, from all over the country. Between August 1985 and last fortnight, Dr Hinduja has performed nearly 50 IVF's.

All indications are that there could soon be a test-tube baby boom. Madras is scheduled to open an IVF-ET centre in July. In Delhi, Dr Kamal Bakshi of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences is already working on a similar project. In Calcutta, a team of doctors has announced the coming birth of two test-tube babies in November. And a private clinic in Bangalore belonging to Dr Sulochana Gunasheela will, in collaboration with Bangalore University, soon start working on IVF techniques. Dr Gunasheela has no doubts about the demand for test-tube babies. Said she: "I am already receiving enquiries from childless couples. I am sure that once we start there will be such a long queue that I will be unable to cope."

Bombay itself has the most number of projects on stream. Working anonymously but frantically in one of the city's plushest clinics is a team of two doctors who claim to have a patient who is in her fourth month of pregnancy after a successful IVF-ET. But the doctors, who claim to have 1,000 new infertile patients each year, want to remain anonymous for the time being. Other private doctors, including the renowned gynaecologist Dr R.P. Sonawala, have also been working on IVF-ET. Nanavati Hospital plans to start an IVF-ET centre soon, as does Bombay Hospital. The Jaslok Hospital will also

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probably set up an entire unit. And, once the rate of failure is considerably reduced, private practitioners could well mushroom overnight.

Initially, however, it is only the affluent who will be able to afford the treatment. In KEM Hospital, a patient has to spend almost as much as Rs 1,500 to 2,000 for the first cycle: the patient bears the cost of the injections, tests and hormones. But it is the municipality of Bombay, of which KEM Hospital is a part, and the Institute of Research in Reproduction which bears the brunt of the cost. Privately, the cost of a test-tube baby can be as high as Rs 50,000 according to Bombay gynaecologist Dr C.L. Jhaveri, who will be involved with the Nanavati Hospital IVF unit when it comes up.

But in the context of the cost of having the operation performed abroad, India still works out comparatively cheaper. Rashida Begum, 40, rushed to KEM with her husband, an electrical engineer, from Dubai when she read about Dr Hinduja. Married for 13 years and after going through "fifty doctors and about as many tests", she decided that having a test-tube baby was the only answer. "I know that this is our last chance," she says. A month earlier, two nurses from Kuwait, who had previously worked at KEM Hospital, stopped by to inquire about the possibility of

BANGALORE

The Long Wait

PATIENTS at the St Philomena's Hospital in the heart of Bangalore were startled by a stream of reporters, photographers and sundry visitors into their otherwise quiet corridors last fortnight. The centre of attraction in the missionary hospital was the first 'test-tube' baby born to an Indian couple.

For the couple, H.M. Prakash, 40, and Nirupama, 28, from Hassan district in Karnataka, the birth of the 2.5-kg baby boy was a miracle that put an end to 10 years of agonising waiting for a child. After an unsuccessful operation in Bombay to correct Nirupama's blocked Fallopian tubes, the couple opted for in- vitro fertilisation (IVF-ET). The in-vitro (outside the womb) embryo was conceived and implanted in the mother's womb at Dr Patrick Steptoe's Bourne Hall Clinic—where the world's first test-tube baby Louise Brown was born—near Cambridge in England and the baby was delivered 38 weeks later in Bangalore. Although the in-vitro operation was done abroad, the Bangalore baby was being touted as "India's first test-tube baby" to the amusement of the proud father. Said Prakash, himself a doctor: "I simply can't understand why there is so much publicity."

Prakash, the son of an advocate in Hassan, married a coffee planter's daughter in May 1976 and went off to Arak in Iran where he had become a government doctor a year earlier. Nirupama conceived in the next year but had to be aborted in an Arak hospital because of hyperemisis gravidorm (excessive vomiting in early pregnancy). There was no sign of a child for the next two years and then the couple was shocked to learn from a specialist that the abortion had resulted in some subclinical infection which in turn blocked the uterine ends of both her Fallopian tubes. Prakash realised that it was almost impossible to have a child: any operation to repair the tubes would have a 10 per cent chance of success.

Deccan Herald

Prakash and Nirupama with baby

Prakash brought his wife to Bombay in 1982 where she underwent the Tuboplasty operation by reputed surgeon R.P. Sonawala to open up the Fallopian tubes. It could not be immediately ascertained whether the operation was successful and the couple then spent six tortuous months waiting for confirmation. But an X-ray examination revealed that only minor openings had been made in the tubes. A second surgery is ruled out in such cases. "It was then," recalled Prakash, "that I began the long search for alternatives."

Prakash, from his knowledge of medicine, scooped up the names of all leading medical bodies in the world and wrote to them explaining his wife's case. Almost all of them replied that the only recourse left was to go in for the IVF-ET. The couple chose the Bourne Clinic. After a long wait—due to the demand for test-tube babies—the couple were called by the clinic in 1984 but they could not leave Iran because of that country's war with Iraq. They were called again in August last year and finally flew to London.

After painstaking tests, nine eggs were taken from Nirupama's ovary and were fertilised with Prakash's sperm in the clinic's laboratory. Three fertilised embryos—frozen at minus 273 degrees Centigrade in liquid nitrogen for two days under a method developed by Australian doctors—were implanted in Nirupama's uterus but they died. Meanwhile, two of the remaining six embryos died in the freezing process. Of the four left, two were implanted in Nirupama's womb again in her next cycle. And finally, to the disbelief of even the couple, one embryo survived and Nirupama became pregnant. The cost: £3,350 (Rs. 63,516)

The couple now have one remaining 'quandary': What to do with the two remaining embryos lying in the Bourne Clinic? They can go back to Bourne and have two more babies. Prakash said he is "not very keen" on having more test-tube children. But Nirupama has other views: "I feel as if my son's brothers or sisters are floating in the freezer there and I want to have them," she says.

—SRINIVASA PRASAD in Bangalore

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RESEARCH

In Infancy

CREATING life outside the womb by tampering with Nature's birthing process is no longer the medical miracle it was when, in July, 1978, Patrick Steptoe announced the birth of Louise Brown. But the act of adding sperm to a ripe egg in a laboratory dish and after incubation, transferring the developing embryo to the uterus, is still a delicate and partially-understood operation. It was only in the early '60s that researchers were able to fertilise mammalian eggs in a laboratory. Nine years later came baby Brown.

Since then, more successful technology has evolved to extract the eggs from the ovary. Steptoe and others use a laparoscope, but another technique is to use an ultra-sound scanner that shows the mature egg-bearing follicles in the ovary on a TV screen which can then be 'aspirated', or sucked onto a small needle.

The emerging technology of embryo transfer carries basic risks like the development of chromosomal abnormalities during test-tube fertilisation. Wider use of the IVF-ET technique can improve understanding of reproductive biology, genetic diseases and innovate newer methods of contraception. The allure of embryo transfer lies in its potential to rapidly replenish any species on the verge of extinction as well as the genetic quality of the human species.

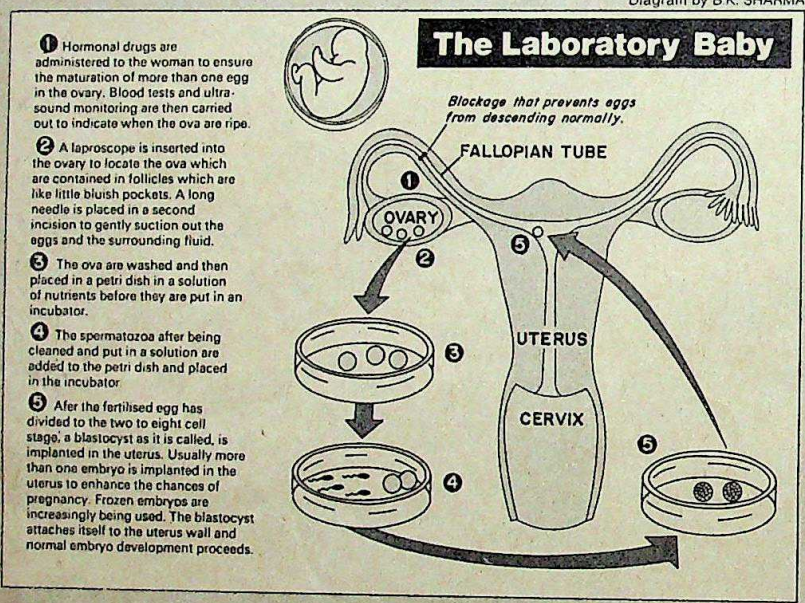
In India, work on embryo transfers began only in the 1980s. Dr Hinduja began in collaboration with the Institute of Research in Reproduction three years ago. She worked with hamsters and then with human beings. She claims a success rate of 10 to 15 per cent, but is confident of attaining 40 per cent.

Though nearly three thousand test-tube babies have been born the world over, the IVF-ET technique is complicated and the success rate fairly low. Techniques may vary, but the basic principle involves the extraction of a mature egg (oocyte) from a woman's ovary and its fertilisation in a petridish by a sperm. After the embryo develops to the four to eight cell stage, it is transplanted into the woman's uterus. This obviates the need for the embryo to pass through the Fallopian tubes; most candidates are women with blocked tubes and it is so far their only hope.

Several gynaecologists, including Dr Hinduja, are about to experiment with another method, appropriately called GIFT. The egg is aspirated, as in IVF; but the sperm, after being treated, is artificially placed at the ampiciliary end of the tube where fertilisation takes place. The oocyte and sperm in this case meet the normal way, rather than outside the body, in a dish.

—MADHU JAIN with AMARNATH K. MENON

Diagram by B.K. SHARMA



their having IVF-ET done.

Test-tube babies are in great demand in India. Despite the galloping population, infertility is quite prevalent. Nearly 10 per cent of Indian couples are sterile, according to Dr Mahindra Watsa of the Family Planning Association of India, while Dr Hinduja puts the incidence of infertility among married couples in India at nearly 20 per cent.

Since test-tube babies are still an infant phenomenon in India, the ethics of it have not even been considered. In a country like India, the distance from test-tube babies to surrogate parents (the rent-a-womb syndrome) is indeed tiny. Asks one gynaecologist: "Who would not want to sell their body for Rs 40,000 in a poor country like India... Moreover, with the IVF method, sexual contact is also avoided." Explains Dr Watsa: "Earlier, if the man was sterile, the woman could be impregnated with donor semen. But if the woman has blocked tubes and the womb is alright, the IVF method is effective. But then there is the ethical question: it could be done with or without the father's sperm. Whose baby would it be then?"

Until now most of the Indian doctors have only been carrying out IVF-ET with couples—but it will not be too long before donors will be involved. The demand for babies is so great and intense that rich couples would go to any lengths to have a baby. Discretion, however, as is the case with artificial insemination, will have to be the rule. Donors have to sign a paper saying that they will not ask for the name of the couple; the couple also has to sign a declaration stating that they will not demand the name of the donor.

Tragically, most of the contenders for IVF-ET have not even considered the possibility of adoption as an alternative. The stigma of infertility might be unbearable, but adoption is even more so. Says Dr Jayshree Patel, a Bombay gynaecologist: "Unfortunately, it is in our culture. People do not adopt children because of our beliefs. Take Karan in the Mahabharata. Or take Hindi movies: the adopted sons always create trouble, they are the bad blood. When a child is to be married, the question of blood comes up because they want to ask about the genesis of the next generation." And, judging by the sudden and unprecedented interest generated by the Chawda baby, the genesis of an increasing number of Indian babies could well be frozen in a test-tube.

—MADHU JAIN

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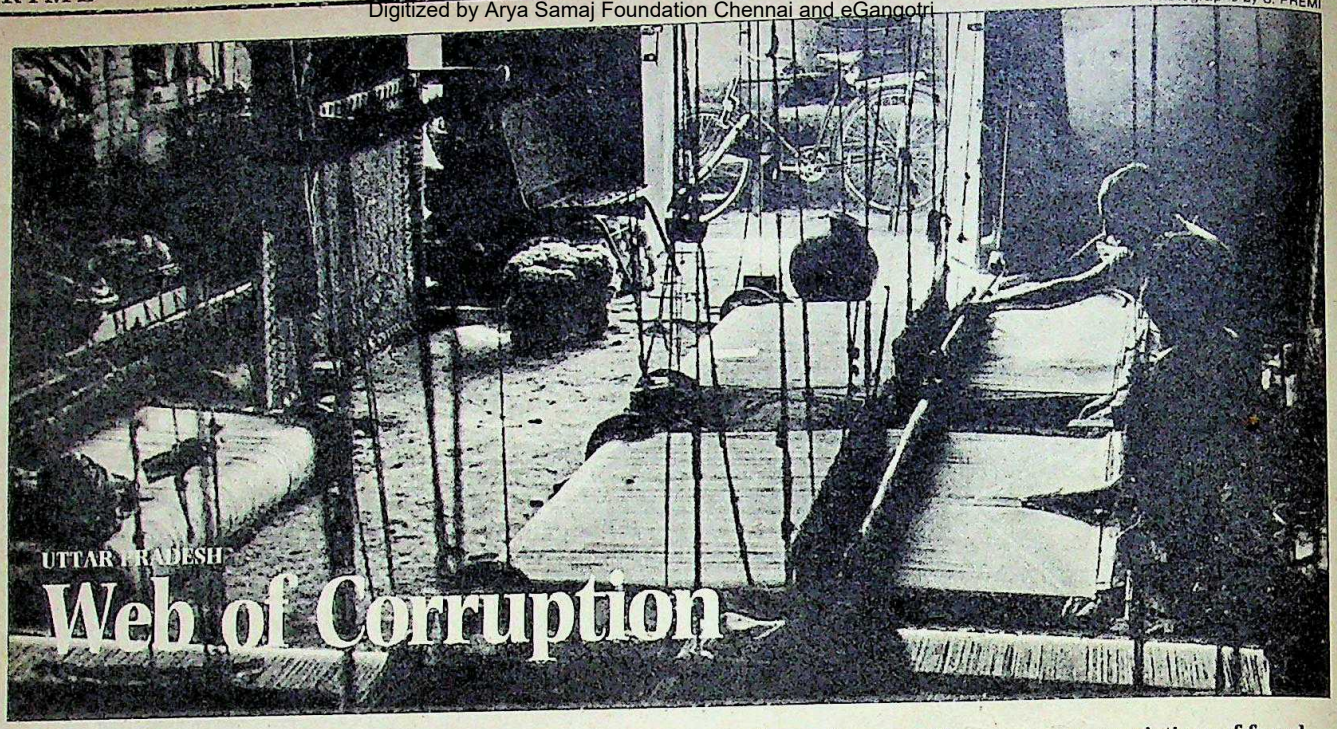

UTTAR PRADESH

Web of Corruption

Kanpur weavers: victims of fraud

THE COOPERATIVE movement in Uttar Pradesh, the sacred cow of India's ambitious development drive, has been milked dry by a long and undistinguished line of unscrupulous politicians. The latest such instance surfaced in the form of a first information report (FIR) filed in the industrial township of Kanpur last month by the CID. It charged Jagdish Awasthy, a sitting Congress(I) Lok Sabha member from Kanpur, and president of the District Cooperative Bank, and half-a-dozen senior officials of the local Industries Department for recommending and releasing loans worth over Rs 4 crore to fictitious cooperative societies of weavers based in the town. A number of arrests were made but Awasthy, the alleged master-mind behind the entire operation, vanished underground.

The crack-down followed on the heels of a flurry of representations from bona fide weavers' societies to the state Government charging that bogus societies floated by criminals and influential politicians were cornering huge amounts of money from cooperative banks, resulting in their being denied loans for purchase of cotton from the market.

The political dust kicked up by their charges prompted Chief Minister Beer Bahadur Singh to order a full-blown police investigation. A preliminary probe revealed that not only were many of the societies bogus but even where they existed, there was no office or a duly elected body.

Investigative officers in the Cooperative Department carried out a summary check of loans drawn from various cooperative banks by societies and found that a staggering Rs 160 crore had been cornered by them as 'loans'. Since it would have been physically impossible to scrutinise all the 3,488 registered societies, it was decided to begin with Kanpur district where 482 societies were registered. Sample checks had pointed to Kanpur societies being involved in a major share of the fraud cases.

"Crores of rupees have been sanctioned for the welfare of 15 lakh weavers. Such fraud and embezzlement is surprising."

BEER BAHADUR SINGH
chief minister, Uttar Pradesh

The scrutiny revealed that a majority of the weavers' societies, which had taken loans from the Kanpur District Cooperative Bank, could not be traced. Even more incredible, in the Kidwainagar suburb, they found a cycle shop, a *paan* shop, an electronics goods shop and even a restaurant functioning in what were registered as the premises of a cooperative society.

In one case, both the father and the son of one family were holding the post of president and secretary though the rules expressly prohibit blood relations from doing so. Further, the Rs 2.5 lakh, 'lent' to the society for its business activity had been embezzeled and police found hard evidence of political connections.

Cooperative banks in Kanpur alone, it was discovered, had been defrauded of Rs 40 crore and the extent of the fraud was reflected in the 63 FIR's filed later by the investigators. Said Chief Minister Beer Bahadur Singh: "Crores of rupees have been sanctioned for the welfare of 15 lakh weavers. But such fraud and embezzlement is surprising. Unscrupulous persons have taken advantage of the situation." But

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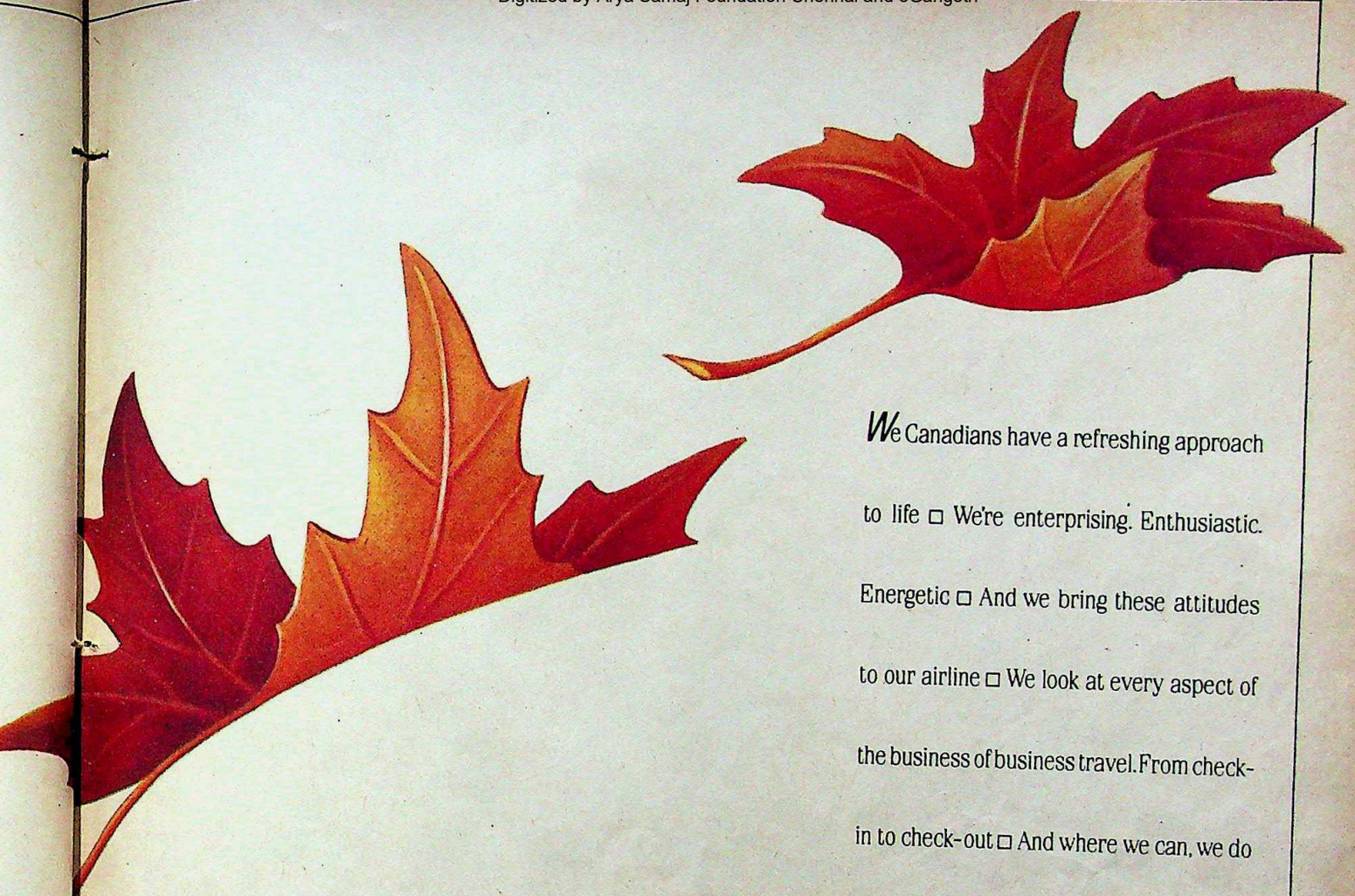

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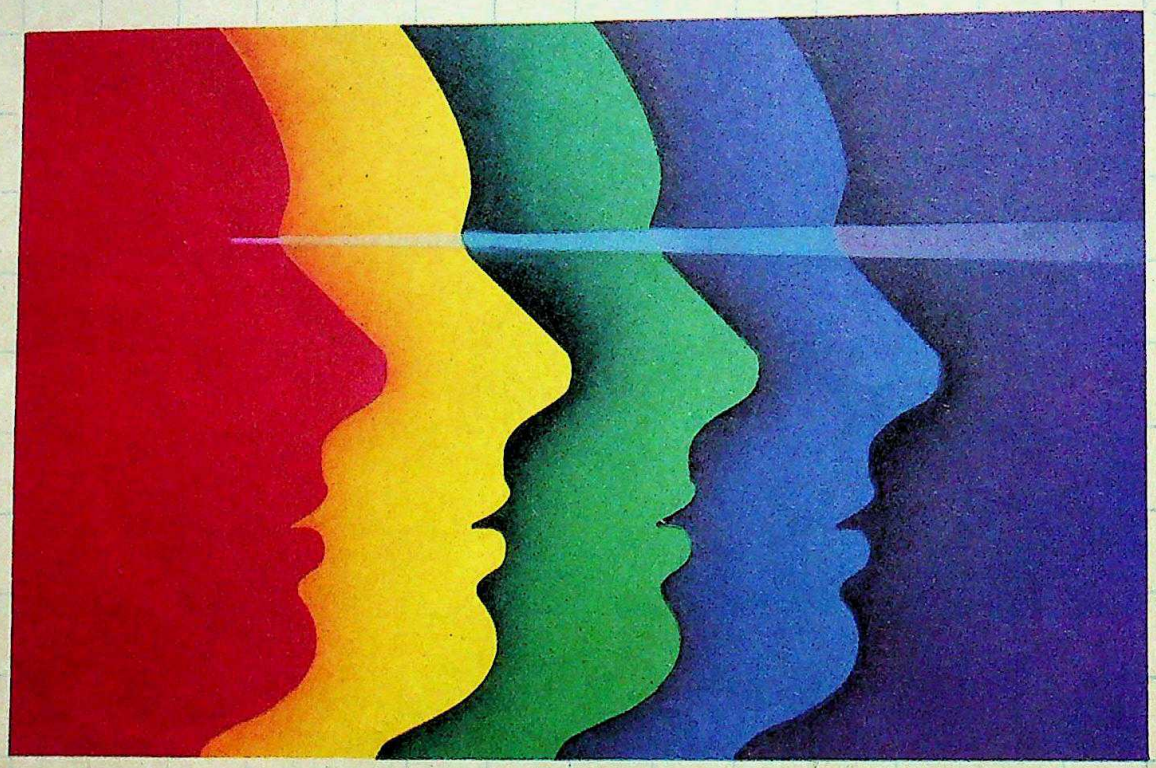

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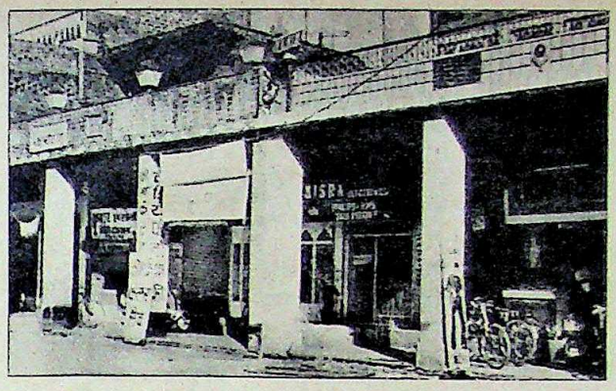
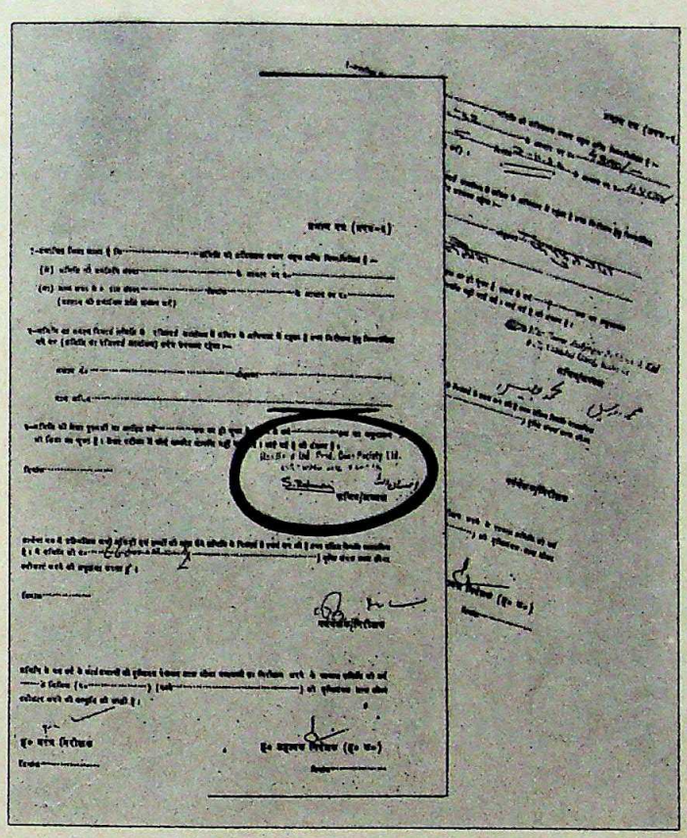
Kanpur is obviously only the tip of the massive fraud iceberg. Janata MLA Ravindra Nath Tiwari charged in the state legislature that such embezzlement was common in societies in Gorakhpur, Varanasi, Azamgarh, Lucknow and other districts. He also alleged a political cover-up. "There is a move to get the case shifted to the Vigilance Department from the CID so that it would take years to complete," he charged.



Ishaq Ahmed, till recently a weaver before quitting his job to drive a cycle rickshaw, alleged that society office-bearers generally cornered all the money. Looms were never bought and documents were falsified to show another society's looms as its own. Lamented Ishaq: "These leaders have used the money to buy tempos or taxis. Some have even bought buses and are running them at a healthy profit, whereas the looms are languishing."



Kidwainagar "offices" of the fraudulent society (top); and the blank forms

Official statements, however, stop short of admitting that there is widespread fraud. Ravi Mathur, director, Handlooms and Textiles, claimed that a three-member committee, which randomly checked some 20 cooperatives, found evidence of irregularities in only one case. Facilities to this society were stopped. "Under the RBI (now NABARD) scheme, banks provide working capital assistance to cooperative societies. A cooperative bank sanctions a cash credit limit in favour of a society and informs the Handlooms and Textiles Directorate. The district cooperative bank then issues a guarantee of up to 90 per cent of the cash credit limit," he explained.

In 1984-85, guarantees amounting to Rs 16.69 crore had been issued in favour of 1,761 societies which included a Rs 3 crore guarantee in favour of UPICA—the apex cooperative body. But when queried about embezzlement, Mathur side-stepped the question by pointing out that checking of societies was underway and the money would be sanctioned only after proper scrutiny.

But there was no denying the damning case set out in the original FIR which states: "The Lakshmi Handloom Co-operative Society, Khapra Mahal...has been registered in connivance with the officials of the Industries Department, Handloom Department and the District Cooperative Bank in Kanpur. The membership is bogus, the office-bearers were not traceable, the address was false and there was no physical evidence of the society's existence. The society has not submitted its monthly progress reports and handloom officials recommended the release of funds despite numerous irregularities. The society secured money from the bank showing false receipts and has even earned rebate on false bills of sale of its products."

In the case of the New Rubi Handloom Cooperative, the FIR states that the society does not exist on the address at which it was supposed to have been registered but that did not prevent the local industries department from providing it with a valid registration certificate and recommending its case for loans.

And evidence of official connivance continues to mount. Loans were sanctioned by the office of the assistant director (handlooms) on application forms which do not give the name of the society but only the secretary's or president's name. In some cases, the amount column has been left blank—the applicant is apparently free to fill in the amount he desires. The same office has also recommended increasing the cash credit limit of Universe Handloom Cooperative Society, Kanpur, on the grounds that its production and turnover were high!

In a belated awakening, the authorities have now issued directives to all field officers to carefully scrutinise loan applications, intensify the drive to recover arrears from defaulting societies, follow NABARD guidelines on cash credit limits and have specimen signatures and photographs of the society office-bearers on the application forms. As an additional precaution, the district magistrate has been authorised to supervise the elections to the executive committee every three years.

State Cooperatives Minister Arun Kumar Singh has promised stern action as the damaging revelations continue to surface. "Action will be taken against the culprits. But political parties are taking advantage of the situation," he says. The last statement, however, sounded hollow in the light of the fact that many CID officers privately told INDIA TODAY that they would prefer the Central Bureau of Investigation to take over the case. As a senior officer remarked: "MP's, MLA's and other politicians are involved in this racket." In that context, a large question mark still hovers over the question of exactly how much of the tangled web of chicanery and corruption will be eventually unravelled.

—S. PREMI in Kanpur

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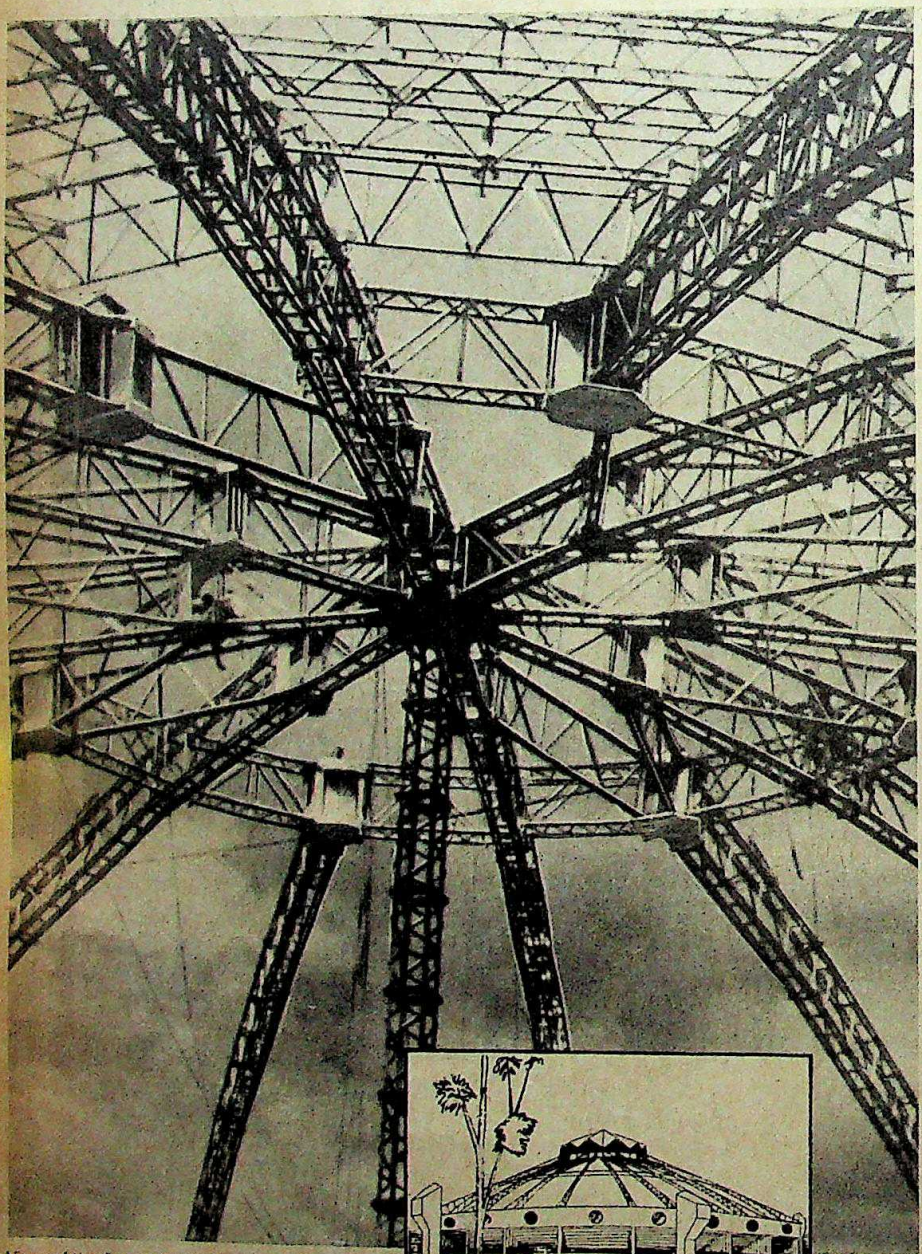
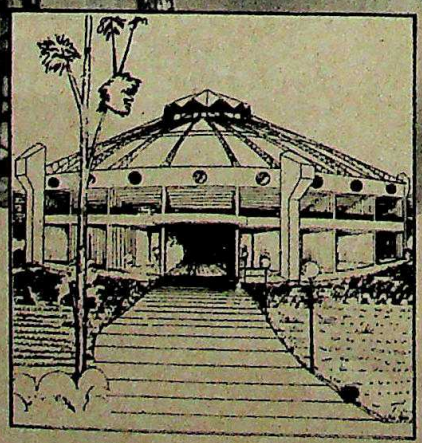


View of the Space Frame Structure



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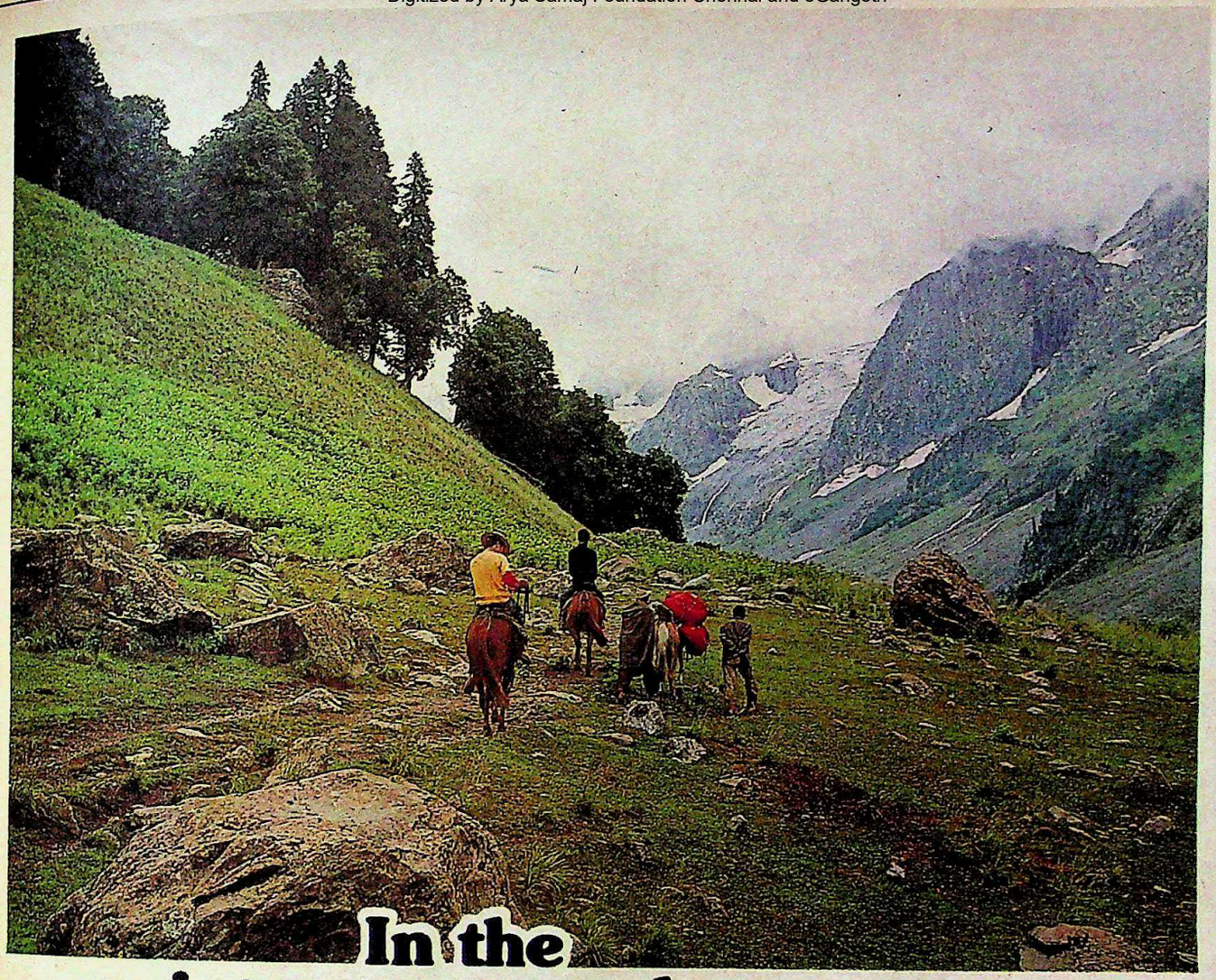

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KAPIL DEV

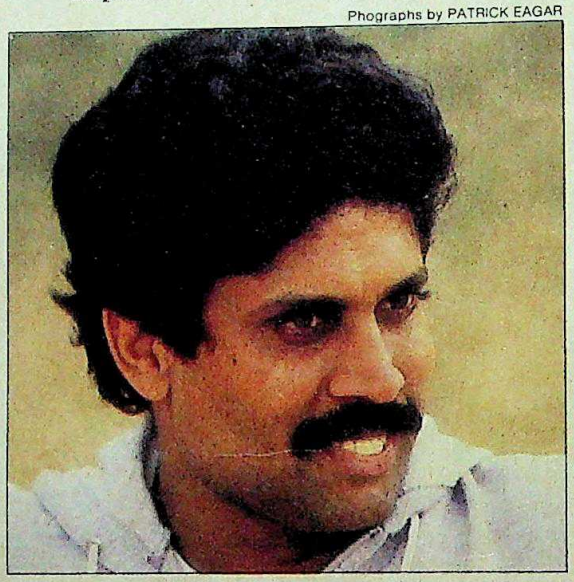
India's Greatest All-Rounder

THIS TIME there were no hastily-scrawled banners waved aloft in the stands. No frenzied *bhangras* in front of the balcony. No all-night celebrations in the streets. Instead, Kapil Dev and his team-mates trooped back to their hotel rooms where they had a quiet champagne celebration, confined strictly to the team, and then dispersed to their rooms as if their historic achievement that forenoon was all part of a day's work.

In a sense, their blase attitude to the day's triumph—winning the second successive Test match against England and thus the series—was somehow quite in keeping with the audacious self-assurance and outstanding all-round ability the Indian cricket team has started to display in the traditional five-day game. As a quietly-elated Captain Kapil Dev himself remarked to INDIA TODAY after the heady Headingley victory: "We virtually have a new team."

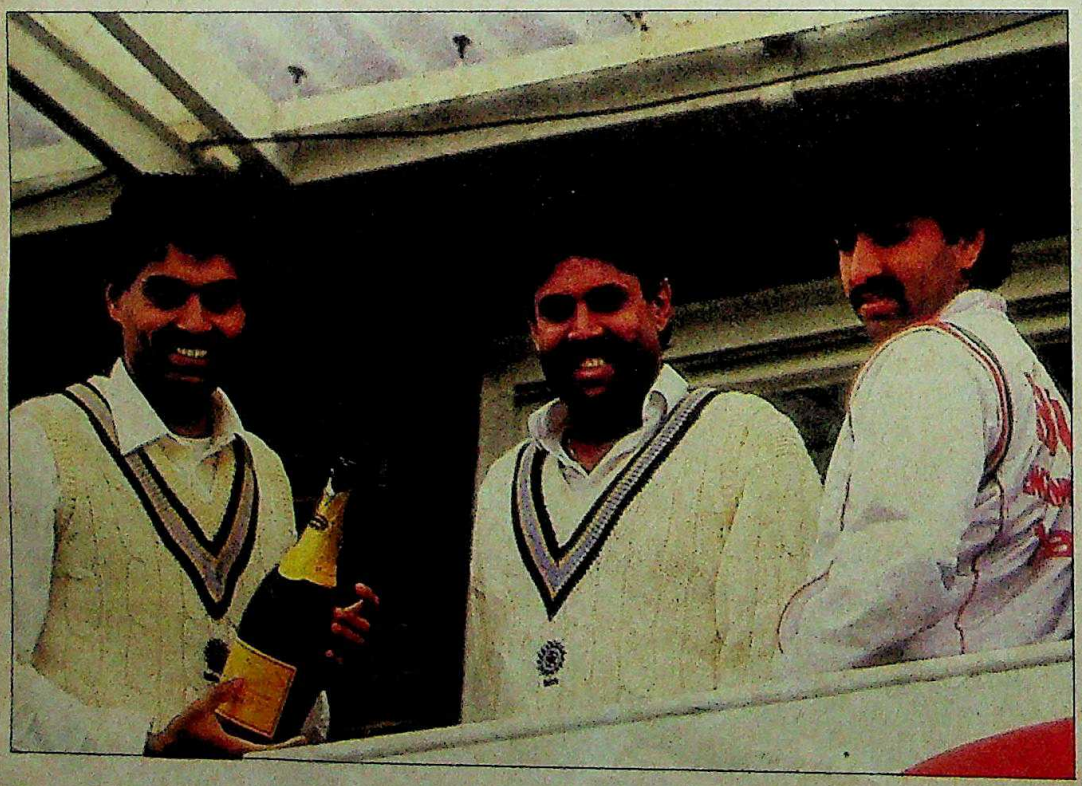
And, he might have also added, if modesty permitted, a new captain. Gone is the earlier hesitancy and indecision, the lack of forcefulness in leadership, the debilitating personality clashes and above all, the reluctance to go on the offensive that cost India the last series in Australia. Kapil Dev Nikhanj is suddenly a man transformed. After 20 Tests without a win as captain, Kapil broke the hoodoo last fortnight with a virtuoso individual performance—both as captain and player—that effectively silenced his many critics and overjoyed thousands of cricket fans back home who had almost begun to despair of India ever being able to win a Test under his captaincy.

Phographs by PATRICK EAGAR



Says former captain Bishen Singh Bedi: "He has not put a foot wrong so far. He has led from the front, shown a positive approach and impressed me no end by his cool and composed statements after the victory. This is a new Kapil we are seeing." Adds 'Tiger' Pataudi, another ex-captain: "He certainly seems to have become more positive in his approach." Veteran London-based cricket scribe Dicky Rutnagur waxed even more eloquent: "Kapil Dev's long wait for success as captain and particularly the two near-misses in Australia, have toughened him up to lead his team with more than just personal example. He has gained in confidence and authority. Surely, we see the dawn of a new, brilliant era."

And even if the dawn was somewhat obscured by the football fiesta in Mexico and the majesty of Wimbledon, it could hardly detract from the triumph of the Indian cricket team's first series victory abroad in 15 years, including their first-ever win at Lords, the Holy Grail of international cricket. The victory was only the second series win by an Indian team in England. Neither



Champagne time with Dilip Vengsarkar at Headingley; and (right) drawing first blood in the second innings to set up the historic series victory.

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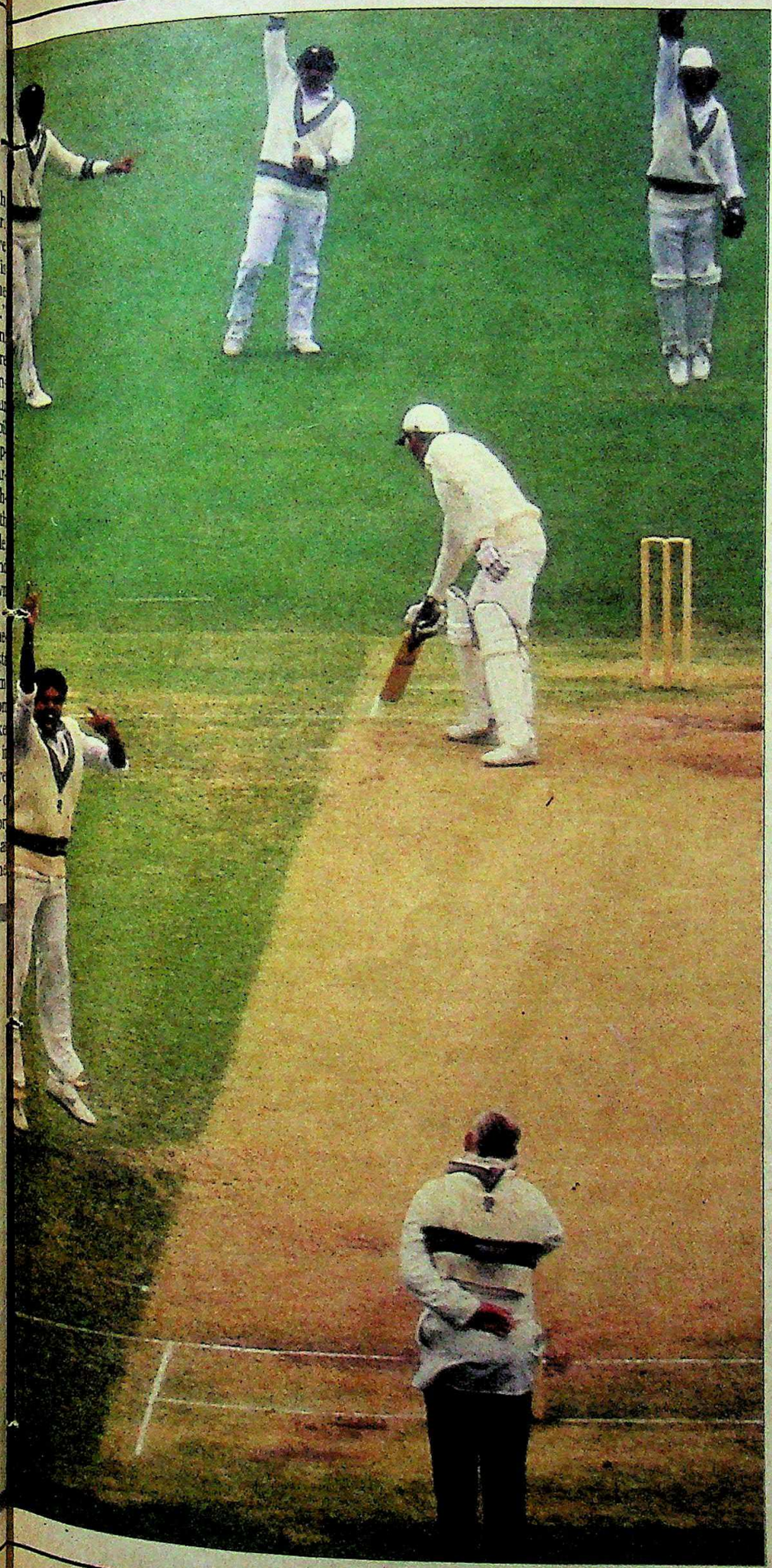

could the fact that England are a demoralised team after their recent blackwash in the West Indies take away from the near-total domination the Indian team exercised in both the Tests played so far. Much of the credit for that must necessarily go to Kapil Dev and his new aggressiveness.

The new approach was in evidence right from the first day of the opening Test at Lords, when Kapil, on winning the toss, decided to send England in to bat rather than play safe. "His decision to send the opposition in at Lords was inspired," says Pataudi. And then, on the fourth day, Kapil gave notice of his intentions to lead by personal example when he ripped the heart out of the English batting with an inspired spell which fetched him four vital wickets, out of which three—Robinson, Gooch and Gower—fell in the space of 19 deliveries. Then, appropriately enough, Kapil blasted the English attack after India, needing 134 runs for a win, had lost five wickets for 78, and in a flourish typical of the "Haryana hurricane", scored the winning run through a majestic six over mid-wicket. His outstanding performance edged out century-maker Dilip Vengsarkar for the man-of-the-match award and re-established his credentials as one of the greatest all-rounders the game has been privileged to see.

That conclusion was confirmed authoritatively in the second Test at Headingley when Kapil harnessed the overcast conditions quite superbly to produce one of the finest spells of seam bowling seen at the historic ground. Swinging the ball prodigiously, almost fast leg-breaks, Kapil bowled with the venom of a King Cobra and had the English batsmen groping and fending like blind men. Unfortunately, however, the Gods of cricketing fortunes were looking the other way this blustery day as Kapil failed to get among the wickets, coming perilously close on innumerable occasions, but lacking the edge of luck. In the event, the only wicket he did take, that of Graham Gooch, turned out to be the best ball of the day. As veteran commentator Henry Blofield appropriately described it: "The ball just exploded in his (Gooch's) face. It was a brute of a ball which only a bowler of Kapil's ability could have produced. Like Malcolm Marshall, Kapil's power and fine action allows him to make the occasional ball lift from surprisingly far up the pitch."

Kapil's magnificient spell seemed to energise the other Indian pacemen, Roger Binny and Madan Lal, to heights they have never achieved before. Binny and

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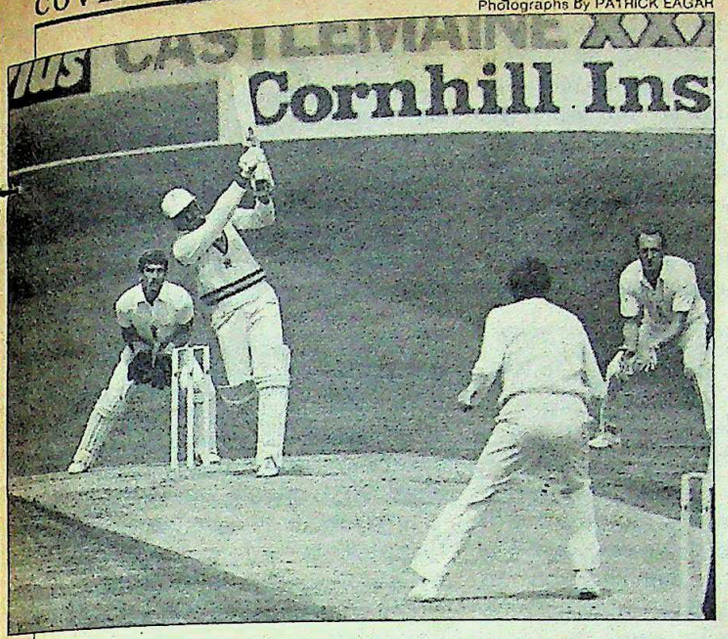

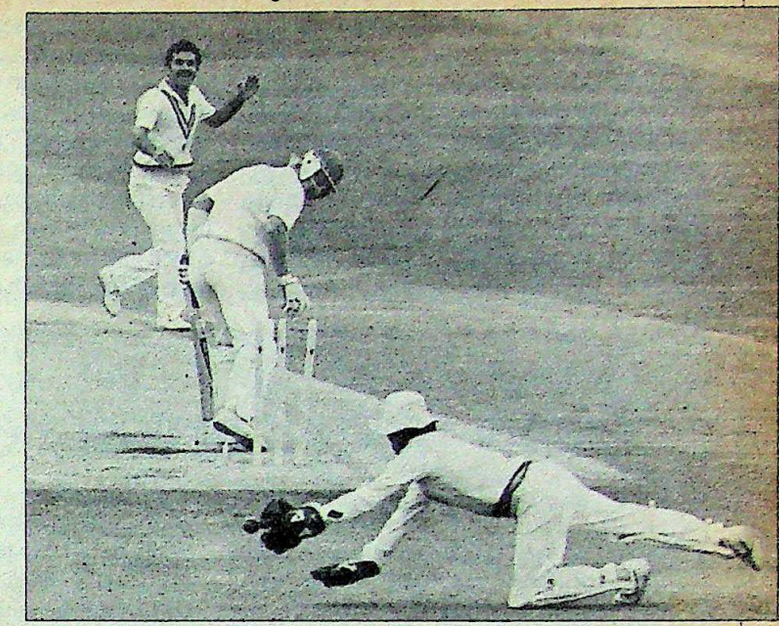

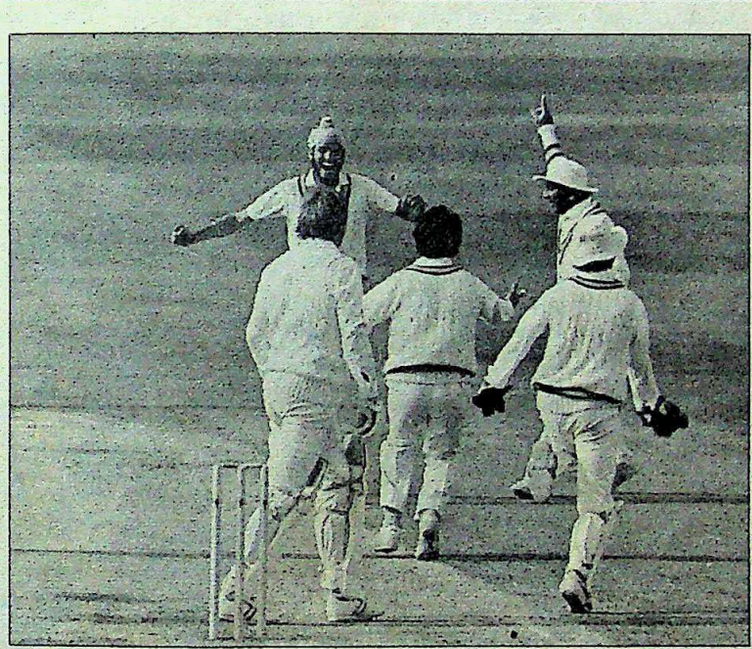

Vengsarkar (above) driving Emburey on his way to his record century of the series at Headingley after top-scoring in the first innings.

Madan Lal shatters the stumps to have England reeling in the first innings while Maninder (left) scalps seven to give India victory.

Madan Lal had England sagging against the ropes with some intelligent and accurate bowling, picking up eight of the 10 wickets. Madan, who had been hastily recruited at the last minute from the Lancashire League—he was playing for Ashton-under-Lyne—to replace the injured Chetan Sharma, removed opener Wilf Slack with his second ball of the match, a beauty which swung in late and spread-eagled the stumps. Then Binny took over to completely demolish the England batting with a devastating spell that fetched him his first haul of five wickets in a Test, the last three in just six balls at the cost of three runs, having missed a historic hat trick by the proverbial whisker. Wrote John Woodcock of *The Times*: "I am ashamed to have written before the series began that runs would seldom have been cheaper for English batsmen than against this Indian attack. Yesterday, as at Lords, this was far from being so."

Few Yorkshiremen at Headingley could recall such an incident-packed day in which 17 wickets tumbled for 209 runs, including five in the Indian second innings for a paltry 70 runs. But the lanky and taciturn Dilip Vengsarkar produced what must rank as one of the finest knocks in Test cricket to notch up his second century after top-scoring for India in the first innings. Playing with sublime grace, Vengsarkar unleashed a dazzling array of silk-lined strokes to frustrate the English attack, unperturbed by the bizarre sight of the Headingley spectators performing the "Human wave", a la Mexico. In the member's pavilion, the septuagenarian Len Hutton, one of the game's all-time greats and former England captain, mused in a typically English understatement: "This chap Vengsarkar, what a fine player he is." Marvelled former English Test star Denis Compton: "His century was one of superb quality. He has a wonderfully correct technique."

But even the supreme majesty of Vengsarkar's innings could not dilute the fact that it was an outstanding team effort that put India in the driving seat. Vengsarkar was aided by some exceptional batting from the pint-sized and acrobatic wicket-keeper Kiran More, surely the find of the tour, a typical run-a-minute assault from Kapil and vital contributions from Binny and Madan Lal. Lamented Robin Marlar of the *Sun-*

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day Times: "Only flood or pestilence can save England now."

Nothing else could have made a difference to the result on the fourth day as Kapil and Roger Binny once again broke through early to dispatch the early order and then the reed-like Maninder Singh baffled the English batsmen with some top-class spin bowling to skittle England out for 128. It was another inspiring display of razor-sharp fielding by the Indian team, particularly by More who snapped up four catches behind the stumps, and intelligent and accurate bowling. In just 75 minutes of play, Kapil and his men had given England one of its most statistically dramatic defeats in Tests between the two countries. Acknowledged former England captain and chairman of the English selection board, Peter May: "England has been outbowled and outbatted, not in some dusty eastern maidan, but on our own northern cabbage patch."

But more important than winning the series was the fact that the Indian team managed, in one master-stroke, to erase their reputation of being capable of winning only in the one-day variation of the game. Said Kapil: "We were prepared to

INTERVIEW

"I was under pressure"

IN A SPACIOUS flat on a leafy, tree-lined avenue of Maida Vale in west London, India's cricket captain Kapil Dev, having led his side to a landmark series win over England, is nursing a cold and a strained back. He is watching the day's televised Wimbledon matches on an enchanting summer's day. The sprawling apartment is sparsely furnished and Kapil emphasises that it does not belong to him but to a "very dear friend"—Shankar Ramani—a wealthy US-based oil entrepreneur.

As the plush coach carrying the Indian team meanders its way from one enticing English hamlet to another, a familiar sight has been Kapil engrossed in a game of chess—usually with Srikkanth or Maninder. "Kaps", as he is known to his buddies, has gradually emerged as one of the country's most popular captains. In a lengthy interview to INDIA TODAY *London Correspondent* RAMESH CHANDRAN, *Kapil spoke about his trail-blazing career, the controversies he has had to endure and his ambitions. Excerpts:*

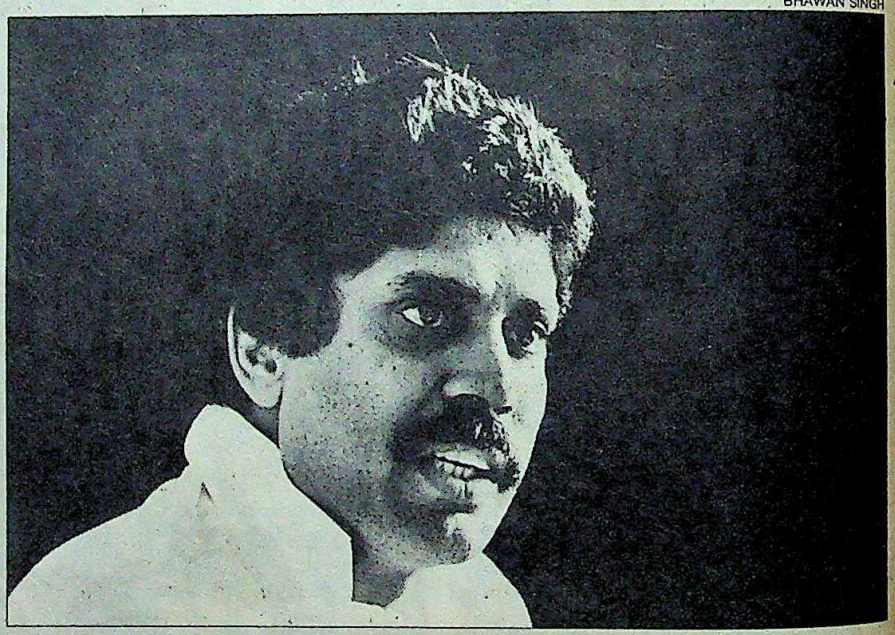
Q. *Twenty Tests at a trot without a win—that must have been mortifying. How confident were you here?*

A. Although we did not win any Test, the Indian team recently has not done too badly. We dominated the series in Australia and it was due to bad weather we couldn't win two of the Tests. I thought we played extraordinary cricket there. Even against the West Indies, who are the top team at this stage, we didn't do as badly as some others. However, winning is vital for the team. Against England we were prepared to play positive cricket.

Q. *There must have been some pressure on you to win something here.*

A. Yes, there was. People expected a great deal from us. We were winning one-day matches but not Test matches. So the pressure was building up on me as well as on the team. I can now say a win does make so such difference, and to think that at one stage I used to think winning is not everything.

BHAWAN SINGH



Q. *Did you work out any form of strategy for the English tour?*

A. That we used to do in other Tests too. The difference here is that we had to exploit the special English conditions which we did perfectly and we needed that little bit of luck which we lacked in Sri Lanka and in Australia. The other plus point was the emergence of our spinners. In the past few years I have seen our spinners were on the decline. Now we have these new boys who are improving with every match. In fact, we virtually have a new team.

Q. *To what precisely do you attribute the success of Chetan Sharma, Binny and Maninder in this tour?*

A. Several things, I think. First, there were the conditions. Then their entire approach to the game is changing. Most of these new boys now realise that cricket is not just a fun game. They have developed a more professional attitude. There is more money in the game and then there is the accompanying publicity. The attitude of today's youngsters like Chetan and Maninder has changed from what it used to be when I started.

Q. *They are no more nice guys?*

A. They have the killer instinct and I am delighted to see it. We—Indian sportsmen—have lacked this in the past. This current Indian team will fight to the last minute to win. I give these younger players a lot of credit. And I am also pleased to see more youngsters coming forward to be seam bowlers.

Q. *England seem a demoralised side after the blackwash in the West Indies and the chopping and changing of the team. In that context how high would you rate your victory here?*

A. I always find that the English team is very good in England. They can use the wicket and exploit the conditions better than anybody else. But they did have

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play positive cricket. People were expecting a great deal from us. We were winning one-day matches but not the Tests. So the pressure was building up on me as well as the rest of the team."

Kapil will also be the first to admit that the mounting pressures were what transformed his approach to the game and marked his coming of age as a captain. "This is not the somewhat restless and indecisive Kapil we have seen after the first World Cup win," says Bishen Bedi. Kapil's performance in England showed that, however belatedly, he has now matured considerably as a leader who is capable of earning the undivided loyalty of his team-mates, unlike earlier where rifts in the Indian camp were regular media fodder.

According to insiders, Kapil has acquired a new determination and an iron will to win. At Lords, he adopted a new strategy of consulting the entire team on whether or not he should put England in to bat first. He also seems to have finally buried the hatchet with Gavaskar as far as their long-running differences are concerned, another sign of his emerging maturity. "I am very proud of him. He is doing a wonderful job," says Desh Prem

quite a few players under tremendous pressure trying to retain their places. But I would rate our win highly because it is also a reflection on our bowlers like Maninder and Shastri, who have matured. I still don't say they are the best but they are gaining confidence with each Test. I won't say we are the best or even second best. However, this Indian side will figure high because it is a well-balanced team. And we have a great batting line-up. Our bowlers are rapidly improving.

Q. *Have the problems between you and Gavaskar been settled?*

A. There is no problem. There was never any problem. At least, according to me, Sunil and I had never any disputes. We have never had any problems which could have harmed Indian cricket or our own performances. Now that we have won the series, why doesn't the press raise questions about team spirit? Does this spirit exist only when we win matches? Tell me, what is this team spirit? I think the Indian press has put so much pressure on both of us without any reason.

Q. *Then why don't you set the record straight about the latest controversy regarding your book and the chapter on Gavaskar which have certain unflattering references on him? Was it printed without your permission?*

A. Yes. It was printed without my permission.

Q. *So are you going to sue the publishers and the co-author?*

A. My lawyers are looking into it. There will be legal action but I can't say anything more since I am here in England. I will have a better idea once I get back. But I want to clear this once and for all. There is no dispute between Sunil and I. I wish the media would stop talking about this team spirit. We give a 100 per cent on the field. And you can't win all the time. You win some, you lose some. And if you try hard enough, you will win sometime. It is no point blaming lack of spirit amongst the players.

Q. *Do you have personal goals to attain like most cricketers seem to have?*

A. It depends whether I am playing as a bowler or a captain. I must see what's best for the team. And it depends on luck. Often you bowl well and never get any wickets. At other times, you bowl rubbish and get a wicket—a short-pitched ball which ought to have gone to the boundary results in a catch at mid-wicket. And we can't expect the bowler to have all the luck. The bastmen will have some of it too.

> "They have the killer instinct. We have lacked this in the past. This team will fight to the last minute to win. I give these younger players a lot of credit."

Q. *But surely you have some personal ambitions. Three hundred Test wickets to begin with.*

A. Yes, I am certainly keen to get 300 wickets. Wishing to achieve a personal landmark is a great motivating factor.

Q. *And as a batsman.*

A. I wish I had got more centuries. I am batting well now. When I go from the game, if I have got 10 hundreds, I'd feel superb. I know certain people say I ought to be more defensive in my batting. Why should I change my natural technique? But of course, it does depend on the situation your team is in.

Q. *On comparing yourself with Botham, Hadlee and Imran Khan—three other great all-rounders, where would you place yourself?*

A. I don't like to compare but I think each of them in their own way is a great player. Look at their cricketing qualities and their record. They have done so well. Since they don't play together for the same team and the conditions vary from one series to another, these comparisons are difficult.

Q. *Money seems to have been on top of cricketers' priority lists not so long ago, rather than winning. Has this changed?*

A. Well, that's not so. Every player wants to do his best for his country. And there is nothing wrong if players are well paid. For this, I would credit the media who have done a great deal for the game.

Q. *Besides cricket, you do have flourishing business interests, don't you?*

A. Well, my family takes care of our timber and hotel interests. My elder two brothers Ramesh Nikhanj and Bharat Bhushan Nikhanj look after it. The 15-room hotel in Chandigarh— "Kapil" is doing okay.

Q. *What do you do with your spare time?*

A. Well, the last few weeks I have been watching the football World Cup. But my interest has waned after my favourite team Brazil lost to France. Usually, I relax with my wife Romi. She often gets lonely when I am away playing cricket. We are given a house in Worcester when I am playing there but Romi accompanies me everywhere. I feel better that way. She is only now beginning to understand the game. I used to cook a bit, but over the years, Romi has become an excellent cook. She enjoys it. I eat all sorts of food—Chinese, Continental—foodwise, you name it, I have tried it. We do try to catch the odd play or movie. I watch a bit of video but have never seen a Hindi film in its entirety. Basically, our evenings are what Romi wishes to do. She reads a lot more than me. I catch up with news of India through magazines and dailies. I used to play squash till the doctor's advice forced me to give it up. I enjoy swimming and a bit of golf if I can find the time.

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Charts by B.K. SHARMA

THE ALL-ROUNDER LEAGUE

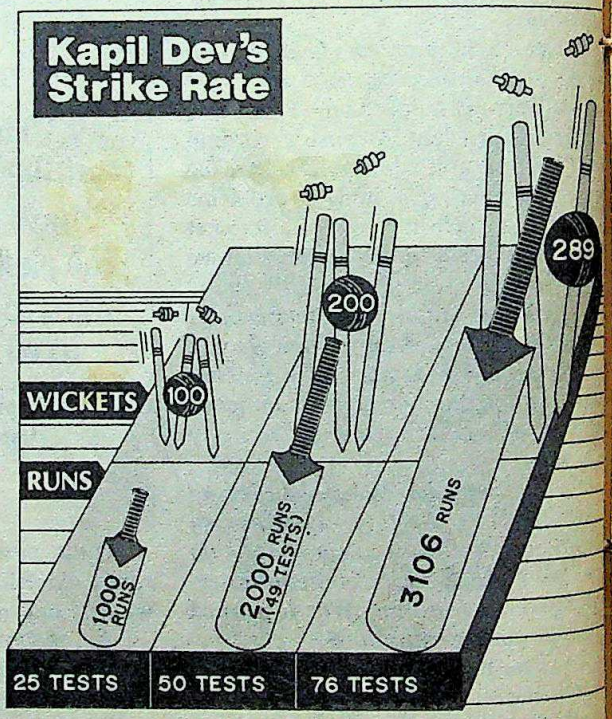
	Kapil Dev	Ian Botham	R. Hadlee	Imran Khan
TESTS	76	84	63	57
RUNS	3106	4577	2304	2140
AVERAGE	29.86	34.67	25.60	30.14
WICKETS	289	354	315	264
AVERAGE	28.48	27.06	22.63	22.18
STRIKE RATE	3.80	4.21	5.00	4.63

Azad, the legendary cricket coach from Chandigarh, where Kapil was born. He had first spotted the shy but sturdy teenager, tall for his age, who used to hang around the city's sprawling stadium that has been the nursery for such cricketing luminaries as Chetan Sharma, Ashok Malhotra and Yog Raj Singh. That was in the early '70s when Kapil was a student at the DAV High School, an institute with a well-earned reputation for sports.

RECALLS Azad: "I tested him out on his dedication to the game and whether he was really serious. I have always been on the lookout for strong, sturdy players who could be moulded into medium pacers and Kapil proved that he was eager to learn." Further encouragement came from his mother, Raj Nikhanj, of typical Punjabi stock (Kapil's father died some years ago), who watched and nurtured her son's growing involvement in cricket with maternal pride. Says she: "I was not worried when Kapil started spending more and more time at the playing fields. Kapil was a talented boy and everybody said so. After we migrated from Pakistan, he developed a strong sense of adventure. So we let him do what he wanted. At least he wasn't loitering around the coffee shops like other young boys."

Reminisces Raj Singh, manager of the current Indian team in England: "I recall the time when, way back in 1978, we took a Rajasthan sports club team to Kenya on a tour and I got a call from a Haryana lad pleading to come along. Kapil was a totally unknown commodity then. But he performed excellently."

Kapil's record-breaking performances in the last seven years have made him the leading contender for the title of the best all-rounder in the game today.



Kapil learnt early in his cricketing life to take disappointments in his stride. He was bitterly upset when all his cricketing mates were inducted into the Haryana team for the zonal matches in 1974 and he was left out. In the event, however, he didn't have to wait long. He got his first major chance in the 1975-76 season when he made his first class debut for Haryana against Punjab at Rohtak, and, typically, he grabbed it with both hands. He took six for 39 in the first innings and scored 26 quick-fire runs, remaining not out. Since then, as the cliche goes, he has never looked back.

The day he was selected for the Indian team in the match at Faisalabad against Pakistan in 1978, he quit his undergraduate studies, supremely confident that from then on, cricket was to be his career. He was then 19 years old. In the space of the next seven years, he was to inject a new and almost forgotten element to the Indian cricket team: an opening pace bowler of genuine class and speed, something that had not been seen in Indian cricket since the days of Amar Singh and Nissar. Says Azad: "He developed one major trait very early in his career—observing the faults of the

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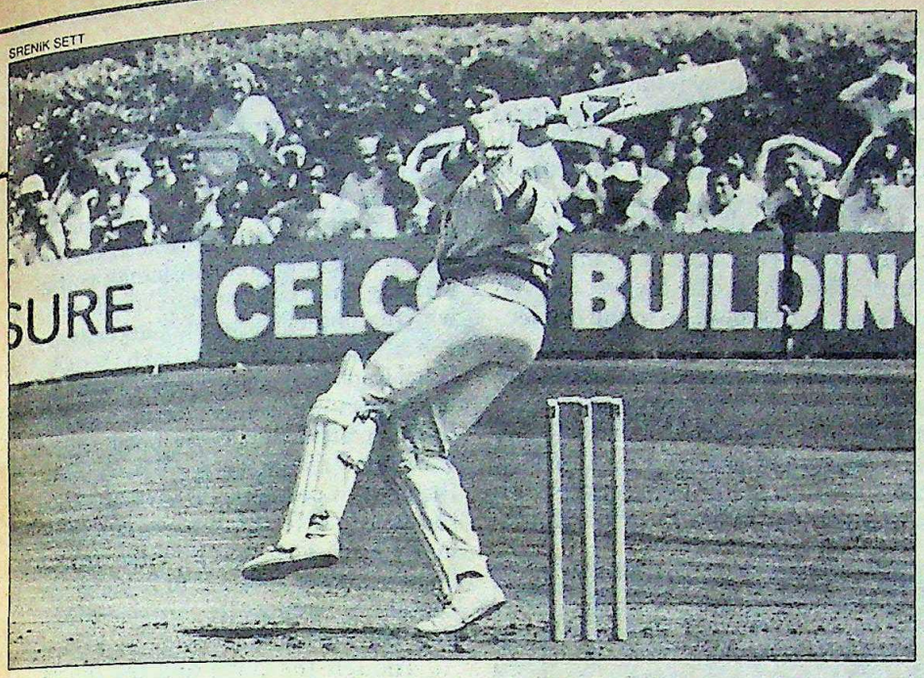
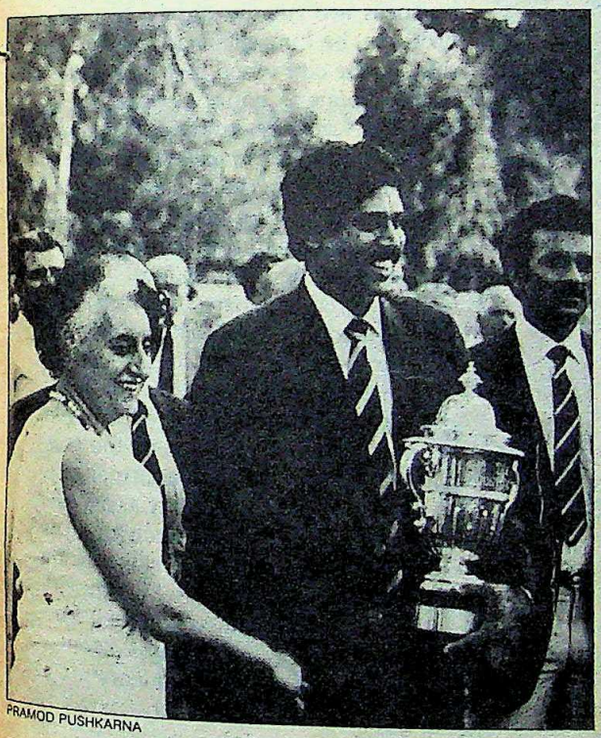
SRENIK SETT





PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Kapil's stupendous knock against Zimbabwe powered India to a historic win in the Prudential Cup at Lords, but a Test victory still eluded his grasp.

men and being able to exploit them."

In his second year (1979) itself as a professional cricketer, Kapil broke the record for the most number of wickets in a calendar year *(see chart)*. His bag of 32 wickets in the 1979-80 series against Pakistan was another record for the highest wicket aggregate for India against Pakistan, surpassing the great Vinoo Mankad's performance in 1952-53. In January 1980, he became the youngest-ever player (21 years and 25 days) to complete a tally of 100 wickets in Tests. In a mere two days later, he also became the youngest player to score 1,000 runs in Test cricket.

By virtue of that feat, he also set up the world record for the coveted 'double' (100 wickets and 1,000 runs) by achieving that landmark in the shortest time—one year and 108 days—in the history of the game, 267 days faster than England all-rounder Ian Botham, alongside whom he was now being bracketed. And, as if that were not enough, by scoring 126 not out (reaching his century with a typically towering sixer) in 222 minutes against the West Indies at New Delhi in 1978-79, he became the youngest Indian batsman to score a test century—20 years and 21 days. And, in grabbing his 200th wicket at Port of Spain against the West Indies in 1983, in his 50th test, Kapil, at 24, became the youngest in cricket history to complete the second 'double' of 2,000 runs and 200 wickets. His tally of 29 wickets against the West Indies established a new series record for the highest wicket aggregate in a rubber against the West Indies. His bowling figures of nine for 83 against the West Indies also represented the best by any player in an India-West Indies encounter and the best by any captain in Test history.

THE PREVIOUS year, Kapil had already given dramatic notice of his abilities as an all-rounder when he scored 292 runs in four innings against England at an astonishing average of 73.00, including field-scattering innings of 89 runs in 78 minutes off 55 balls with 13 fours and three sixes at Lords, 65 in 77 minutes off 55 balls at Manchester and 97 off 93 balls at the Oval. His tally of 289 wickets after the Headingley Test last fortnight makes him by far the highest wicket-taker in Indian Test history, surpassing Bishen Bedi's 266 wickets and making him the eighth highest wicket-taker in 109 years of Test cricket. His tally of five or more wickets in 19 innings is also the highest for any Indian bowler. Right now, Kapil is poised on the edge of yet another milestone—just 11 more wickets away from becoming the second cricketer in test history to achieve the rare triple 'double', 3,000 runs (in Australia in the 1985-86 series) and 300 wickets. Only Ian Botham has done this so far.

Kapil's remarkable career has, however, not been without its controversies—and its downs. As a player, he was undoubtedly world class. But his capacity to captain India was always in serious doubt ever since Gavaskar was removed from the top job after a disastrous series in Pakistan. Immediately after taking over, Kapil was accused of promoting his Haryana team-mates and ignoring the claims of other, better qualified players. His highly individualistic attitude and his lacklustre approach as captain led to his being ignominiously replaced at the helm by Gavaskar. In fact, his open rift with Gavaskar was often cited as a major cause for India's below par performances in Tests. Matters came to a head during the 1984 series against England when he played some unforgivably irresponsible strokes and was dropped, at the stubborn insistence of Gavaskar, for the Ahmedabad test for disciplinary reasons.

His absence marred his unbroken run

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as a member of the Indian team and also revealed the streak of immaturity then prevalent in Kapil. Immediately after being dropped, he rushed back to Chandigarh and held a press conference to announce that he was going to campaign for the local Congress(I) Lok Sabha candidate, Jagannath Kaushal, then Union law minister. Shortly after, he was reinstated as Indian captain.

But in subsequent series, he showed that he was still far from being captain material, especially in Sri Lanka, the youngest Test-playing nation, where Kapil's defensive tactics lost India a Test they had in the bag. The same defensive attitude cost India the Test series in Australia earlier this year and seemed to only confirm the fears that there was a jinx on India's Test-winning abilities under Kapil. His only notable triumphs were in the one-day arena, where India registered a historic triumph at Lords in the Prudential World Cup. There Kapil undoubtedly played a major role, most notably with his stupendous and exhilarating 175 not out against Zimbabwe at Turnbridge Wells, the highest individual score ever registered in the Prudential Cup.

Last year, Kapil made his debut as an author of sorts when he produced his autobiography ghost-written by Vinay Verma, an Indian settled in Australia, titled *By God's Decree*. Patently the work of Verma, it gave few insights into the man or his character, except for reaffirming his deeply religious nature and his absolute faith in God's guidance of his destiny. "He leaves everything to God," says Azad. "He always says that God sees all and will do justice."

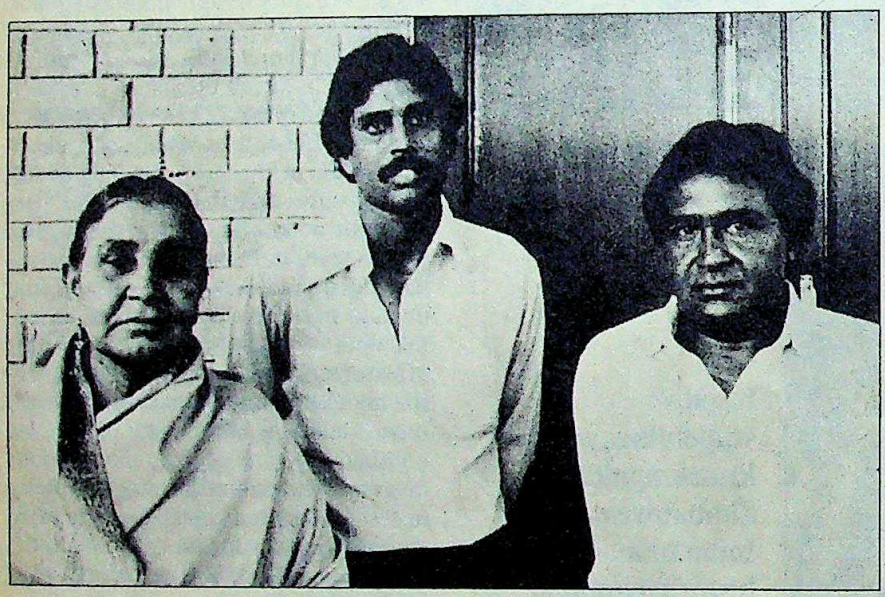
At 28, Kapil is, after Gavaskar, probably the richest Indian cricketer on the Test scene. The Nikhanj family run a thriving timber business in Chandigarh, with his mother as the presiding deity. In 1983, Kapil opened a Rs 60 lakh 15-room Hotel Kapil in the city complete with an 'Oval' restaurant and a 'Sixer' bar. But the main attraction for the hotel's clientele is the fact that it is Kapil Dev's hotel. He also has considerable earnings from the many advertising appearances he makes each year and from his regular county cricket contract in England. As captain, he is reputed to earn close to Rs 1 lakh per Test match.

Though the hotel and the timber business are run by Kapil's two elder brothers, he himself spends most of his time in the city when he is not on Test duty or playing county cricket in England. He still goes to his old stamping grounds at the cricket stadium and obviously laps up the adulation he gets from young cricket fans, handing out cricket bats and kits to promising youngsters and sitting through local matches or holding court at the family's sprawling house in the city with his comely wife Romi constantly at his side.

But obviously, Kapil has reached a stage where he has started to learn from his mistakes and also handle the pressures of captaincy. His performance in England marks his maturity as a leader and he is now obviously much more of a team man than at any stage of his chequered career. Says Raj Singh: "Indian cricket has gained so much from this gifted personality. Today, he is one of the game's greatest all-rounders and as a captain, he has developed a bowler's mind and a bowler's heart. Like Bedi, he encourages other bowlers and leads by example. We need Kapil around for many more years. He has gained in confidence and is now a real leader."

Kapil is undoubtedly now in supreme command of the Indian team—and his own God-given gifts. In cricketing career-graphs, the best years of a player are between 28 and 31 and with Kapil six months short of his 28th birthday, he is almost certain to finally confirm his credentials as the best all-rounder in the game today.

—DILIP BOBB with RAMESH CHANDRA in Heading



Kapil, flanked by his mother and former coach Azad, both of whom played a major role in his formative cricketing career; and (below) with his wife Romi, a constant companion.

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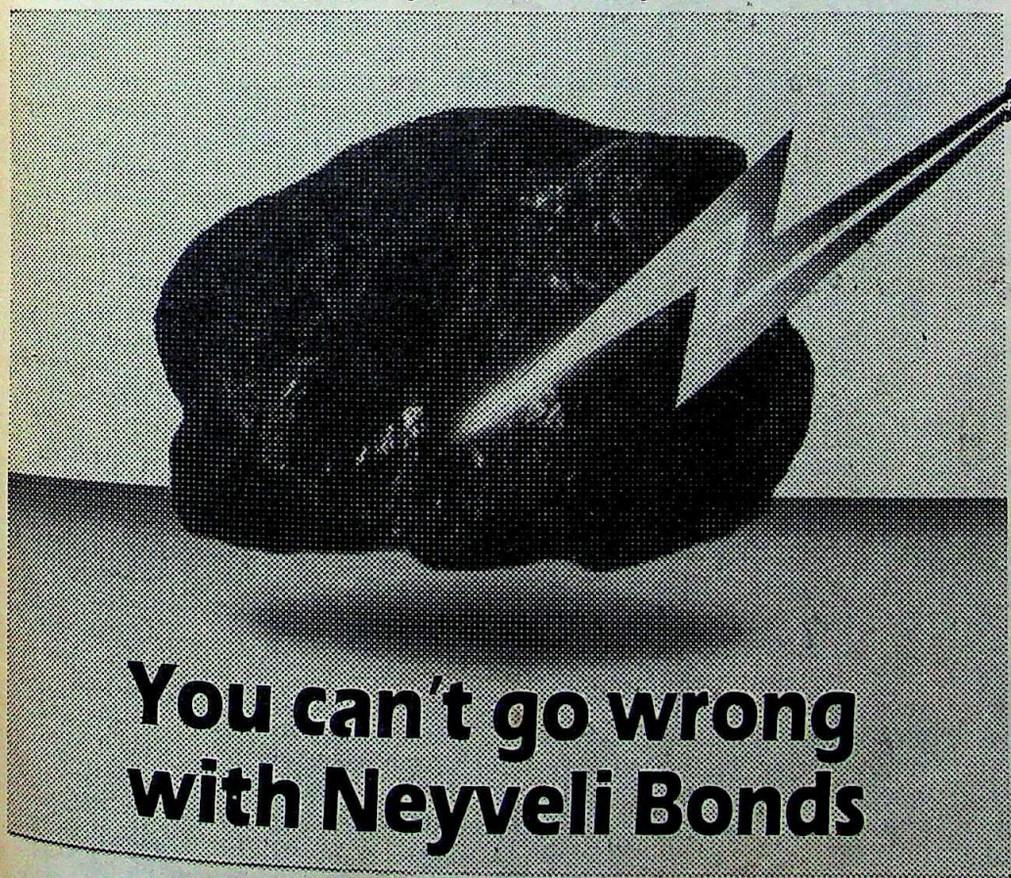

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The Roots

Sikh Separatism: The Politics of Faith
by RAJIV KAPOOR
Allen & Unwin
Price: £10; Pages: 175

ONE OF the very unfortunate side-effects of the Punjab crisis is that it has spawned a whole generation of Punjab experts whose memories go back no further than five years. Many of these experts are actually journalists who have written learned treatises on the Punjab problem after the unforgettable experience of two meetings with Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. The result has been a surfeit of illiterate, unresearched books on the Punjab problem which crowd out virtually all other subjects in the political sections of bookshops and libraries.

Naturally, this has caused a certain amount of reader fatigue and if, for this reason, Rajiv Kapoor's book were to attract fewer readers than it otherwise would have, it would be most tragic since it is possibly the most important book on Punjab to have been written in the past few years.

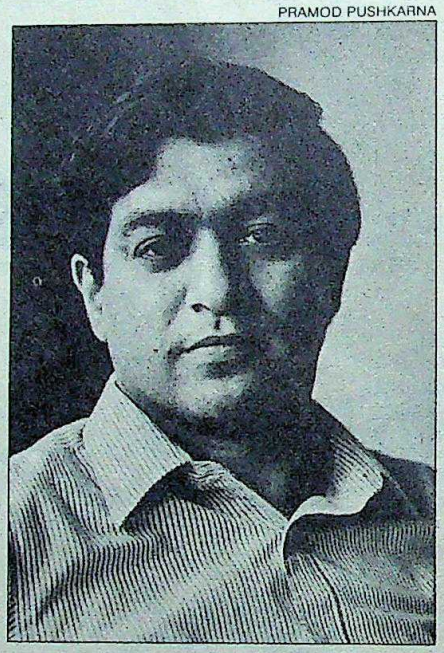
Kapoor's book is important because it is a book with a memory. It begins with the birth of Sikh communal consciousness towards the end of the last century and traces its evolution into a separate identity through the rise of a Singh Sabha movement, the creation of a *Tat* (true) Khalsa, then on to the gurudwara agitation and its convergence with the national movement and finally the creation of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) through the Gurudwara Act of 1925.

The significance of the book lies in the fact that it is a clinical and unemotional analysis of the events that led up to the legislation that, for the first time, institutionalised a separate Sikh identity. Most other writers on this period of Punjabi history tend to lay the blame on either the militancy of the Sikhs or on the Arya Samaj for spearheading the Shuddhi movement which heightened Sikh fears of absorption into the vast Hindu fold, or on the British for having insisted on Khalsas rather than Sikhs in the army. Kapoor takes no sides, merely stating what happened.

As he told INDIA TODAY: "My interest was in the structure of power that was created (by the Gurudwara Act) and which is still relevant. And in creating that structure, the Akali Dal argued for the preservation of a separate Sikh communal identity which has pushed it further and further towards a political stance that it has perhaps not intended to take."

Kapoor's thesis is that the events of the past few years were an inevitable consequence of the kind of political stance which the Akali Dal found itself being forced to take, once a separate Sikh communal identity was established. Ironically, when Kapoor conceived the book, the Akalis were in power in Punjab and there were no signs yet of the explosions that were about to occur.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Kapoor: useful contribution

"I became interested in the Gurudwara Act" says Kapoor, "while I was doing research in Oxford. My subject was Punjab politics and when examining the Gurudwara Act, it suddenly came to me that something very significant had happened and that its consequences had not been fully understood. I started writing the book in 1980 and when the agitation began the following year, it only confirmed my initial interest."

Kapoor's thought-provoking book is basically about the convulsive Sikh agitation in the '20s in which some 300,000 Sikhs were arrested, 400 lost their lives and 2,000 were wounded before the Gurudwara Act finally came into being in 1925 and from which came the SGPC. From the very beginning of the agitation, the SGPC was used by the Akali Dal, which has always controlled it, as a powerful political tool even if it was in fact meant to be a strictly religious body. Said Kapoor: "Due to the close historical evolution of the SGPC and the Akali Dal, Akali leaders did not hesitate to employ the SGPC cadre of preachers and missionary workers for Akali campaigns and considered such tactics as normal and justified." One senior Akali Dal leader explained the use of the SGPC's religious preachers stating: "It does not make any difference if the preachers engage in political work. The Akali Dal and the preachers say the same thing."

What is fascinating about Kapoor's book is the fact that it shows, through a consistent and detailed analysis of earlier Akali agitations, how little has been the degree of change in Akali politics, not only where strategy and tactics are concerned, but even in their demands. Not only have the arguments over the right to wear a *kirpan* and its length been going on since the very beginning, but even the demand for Khalistan came much earlier than either Bhindranwale or Jagjit Singh Chauhan.

As Kapoor points out: "In a memorandum to the Cabinet mission, Tara Singh stated that the Akali Dal preferred a united India since the creation of Pakistan would divide the Sikh community. However, if Pakistan was to be formed, the Sikhs would insist on a separate Sikh state, with the right to federate with either India or Pakistan. The objective of a separate Sikh state of Sikhistan or Khalistan was officially adopted by the Akali Dal in March 1946."

If Kapoor's book has a fault it lies in the fact that when he comes to Bhindranwale, he treats him also as an inevitable consequence of Akali politics. Queried, he said that he had avoided going into the allegations that he was a creation of the Congress(I), only because there was very little evidence to support this. Also, he added, the book is essentially about a structure of power and not about individuals.

Sikh separatism, despite its saffron and blue cover, is not likely to be a popular book with Sikhs in the Punjab, but it is essential reading for anybody who really wants to understand what has gone wrong with Akali politics and the hidden dangers of the use of religion as a political weapon.

—TAVLEEN SINGH

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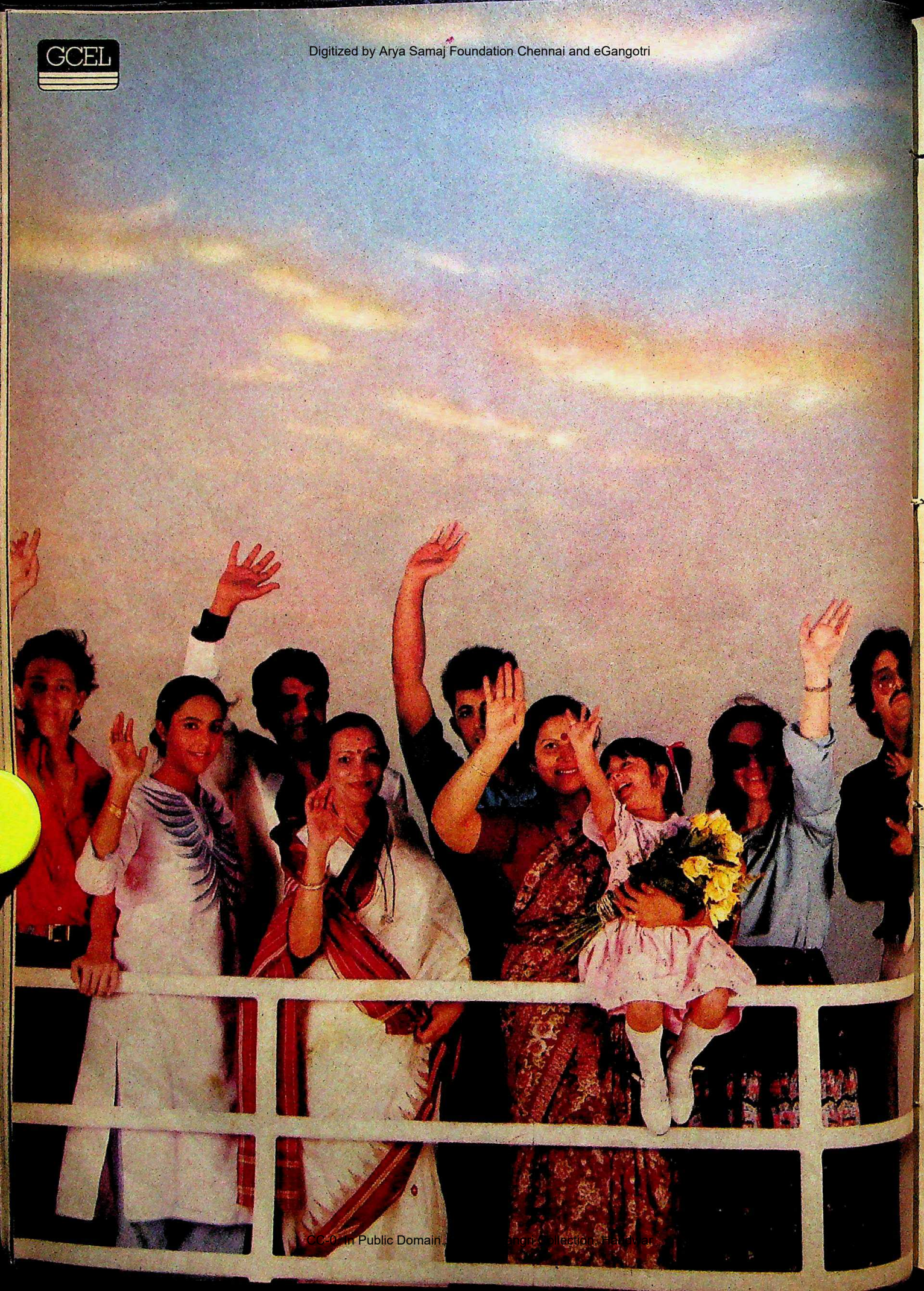

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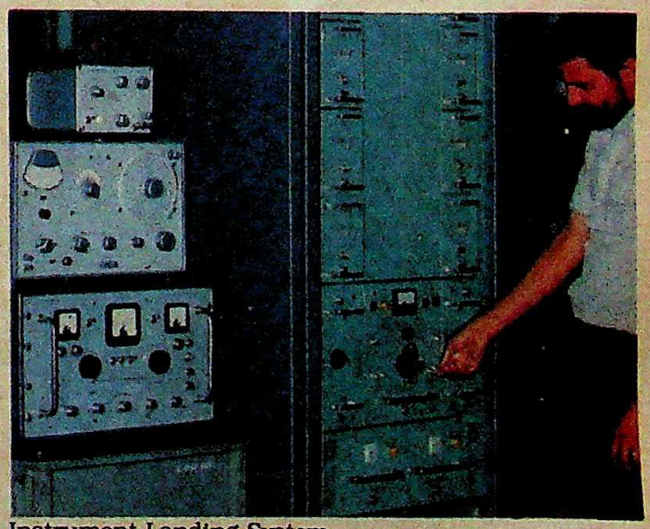

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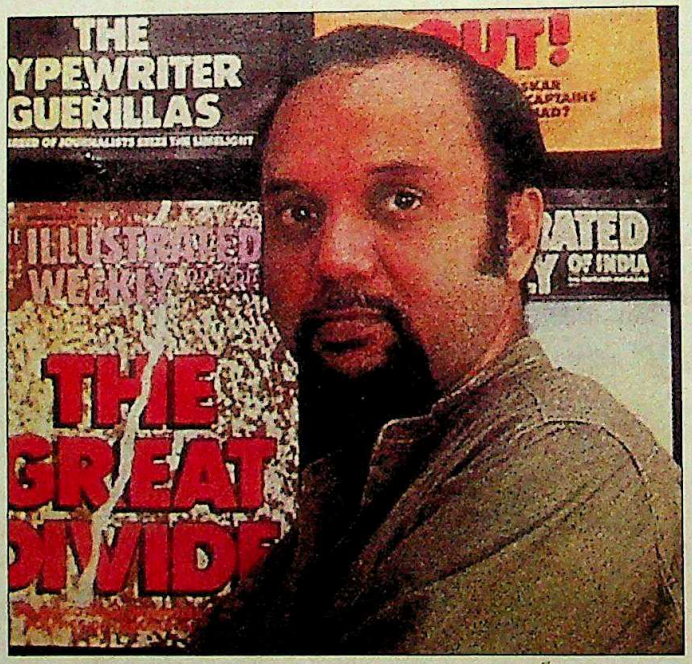
◆ Recovering from heart-break, yoga and seclusion, **Rekha** is all set and raring to play a glamourised, gun-toting Grande Dame of the Ravines—something of a Putlibai-Phoolan Devi combine which will have you on the edge of your seat. The film, directed by Mohan Sehgal and titled in the manner of all good dacoit films—*Kasam Suhaag Ki*—will have none of the jiggles, wiggles and provocative hip-swinging the actress is famous for. Instead, for a change, she will be seen, to the boisterous delight of the front rows, hurling oaths like a trooper, spilling gore and swearing vengeance. The role—a kind of female replay of her former co-star's famous antics—is the first such in the accomplished actress' career and naturally Rekha is all excited and enthusiastic about it. The motto obviously being: if you can't get him, ape him.

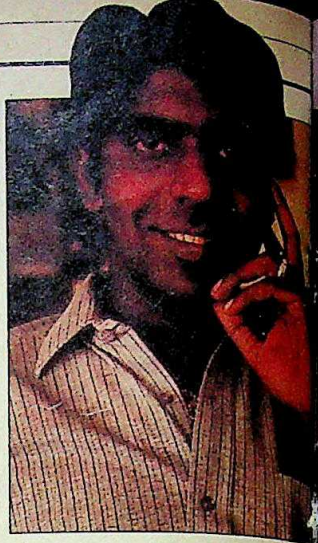
◆ The turban sat regal and imposing on the forbidding brow when our Lord of the Manor of Butley was at last presented to the Queen Mother in London last fortnight. For **Iqbal Singh**, 56, the first Sikh lord of England, it was a dream come true. A dream that Singh had nurtured ever since he came to England to study medicine 30 years ago and stayed on. A dream for which the wealthy property developer paid an unspecified—but no doubt astronomical—price when he bought the Lord of the Manor title in Suffolk last year and joined the snooty ranks of British aristocracy. Another feather in the turban came with the patronage of the Domesday National Committee, set up to organise the 900th anniversary celebrations of the Domesday Book—a historical survey dating back to William the Conquerer. "The title has changed my life. And I enjoy the accompanying fame," said the Lord, beaming at his blue-blood transfusion, as the world press queued up outside his Wimbledon manor. "I love the royal family, and my next big day is the Domesday Gala Ball, to be attended by the Prince and the Princess of Wales in July."



Nandy: inviting trouble

Singh: snob story

◆ "Shocking!", *The Illustrated Weekly of India* had screamed while publishing "the strange escapades of J.B.Patnaik, Orissa's chief minister". *Weekly* editor **Pritish Nandy** now finds himself facing a Rs 1 crore law suit but remains undaunted. "I don't care, I have enough to crucify Patnaik politically," the goateed poet-editor declared. Meanwhile, Nandy has broken new ground by interviewing and putting on the *Weekly* cover the magazine's proprietor, Ashok Jain. "There was an internal war in the organisation, and nothing is beyond the pen of a journalist," Nandy said in justification. But this is one story for which he won't get sued.



Amritraj: two love

◆ It was a veritable racket that he was involved with—until they discovered that **Vijay Amritraj's** love for tennis wasn't his only addiction. His courtship with the film industry soon had him performing on different sets, most notably in the James Bond film, *Octopussy*. Now, the darkly attractive tennis star, living in the US with wife and two-year-old kid, is playing a bumbling, golden-hearted Indian cop on temporary assignment with the Los Angeles police department in another Hollywood production called *The Last Precinct*. Amritraj—who's called Alphabet in the film because of clumsy English—has all his co-actresses bowled over by his dark looks, disarming manner and juicy gossip. Amritraj thinks he's "very lucky" and is thrilled. "Maybe I didn't have the little bit of extra luck you need to win a Wimbledon, but overall I've always had the breaks. With this new game, he is certain to add considerably to his net earnings.

—Compiled by MOHAMMED ASLAM

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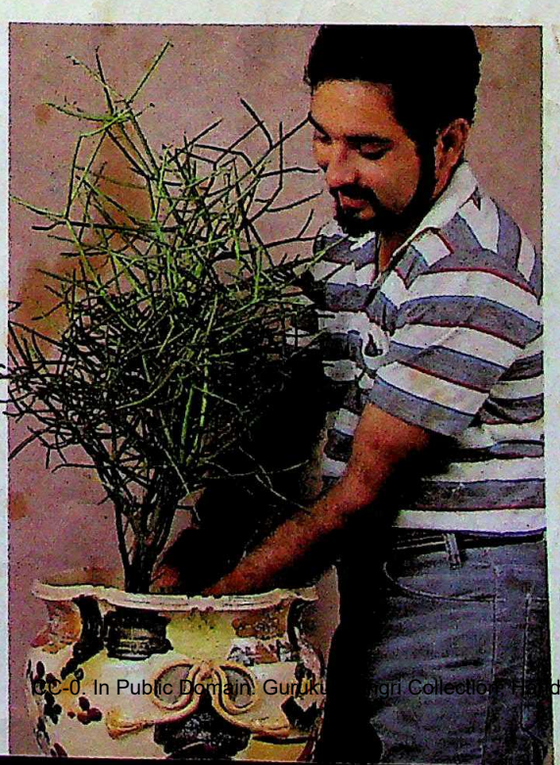

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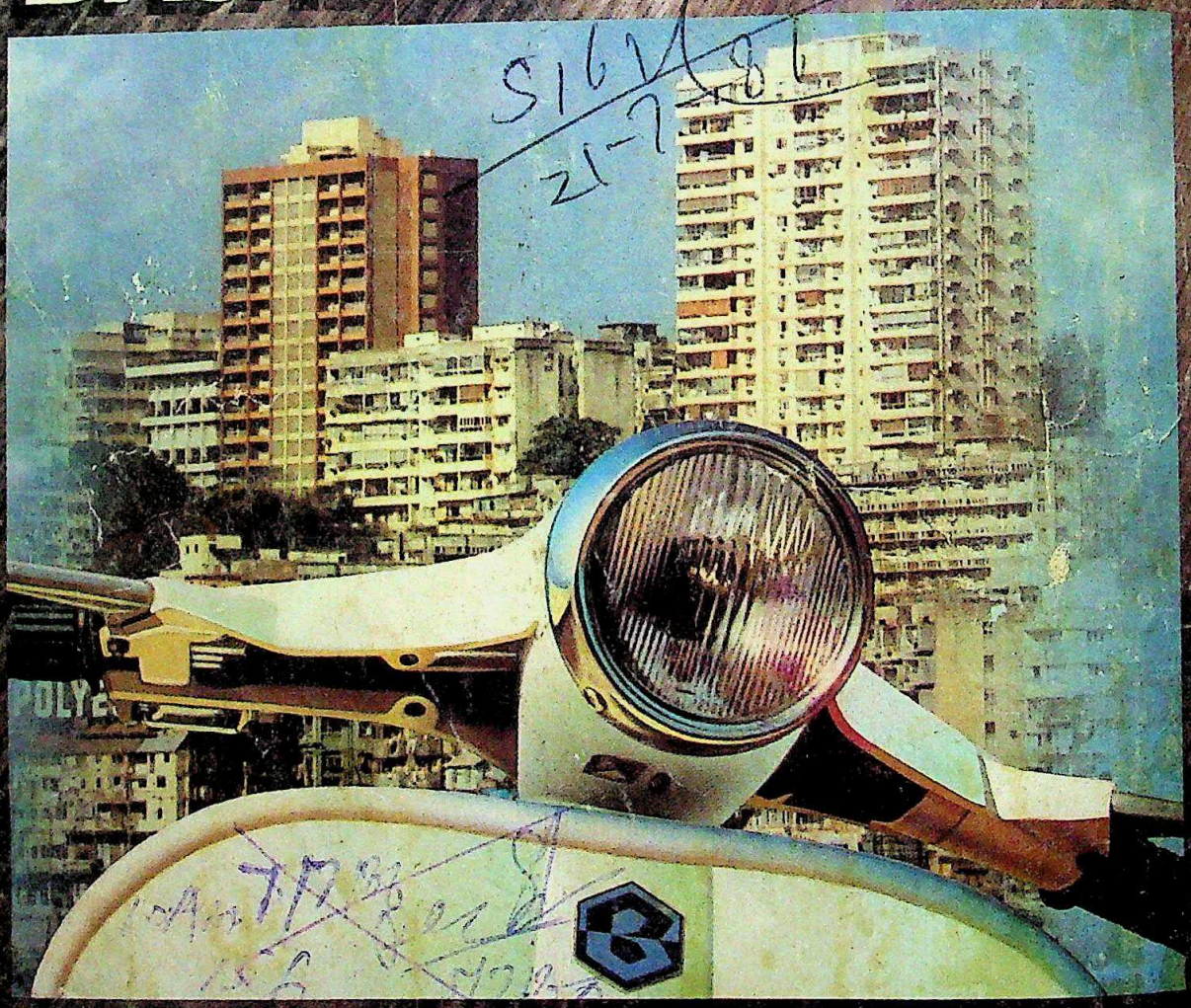
You just can't beat a BAJAJ



The scooter that carries the entire population of an average Indian city – over 4 million people

Which Indian scooter can claim the privilege of carrying so many people? Only Bajaj. Because only Bajaj has nearly 2 million scooters on the road today. Considering 2 persons per Bajaj makes it 4 million people.

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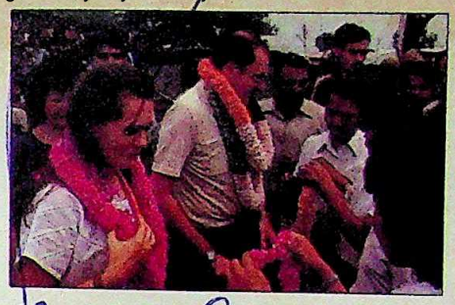
How much are you worth?

The latest Pay Commission has given government servants a lopsided bonanza: huge hand-outs to some and none at all to others. But all salary-earners in the country find themselves fighting a constant battle to keep pace with inflation.

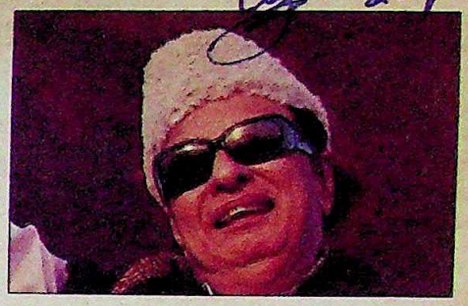
COVER STORY 70



Quest for Peace

The Mizoram accord between the Centre and rebel leader Laldenga promises to finally bring peace to the troubled state. The prime minister seems determined to ensure its success, judging by his four-day visit to the state last fortnight. But many hurdles still remain.

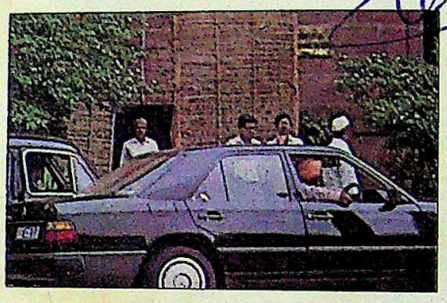
CURRENT EVENTS 26



Fading Glitter

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran's once indestructible image has taken a heavy battering. His illness and his personal quirks have robbed him of the charisma that ensured his survival in office. For the first time, MGR looks vulnerable.

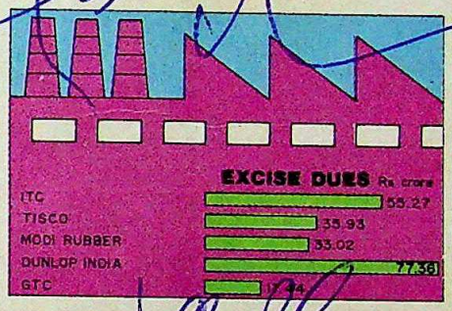
SPECIAL REPORT 62



Turbulent Times

The Foreign Office is facing major problems. Once considered the elite bureaucratic corps, it is now hamstrung by a succession of changes at the top, external interference, politicisation of the service and an increasingly reduced role in policy making.

SPECIAL FEATURE 86



The Business Blacklist

The Finance Ministry last month decided to blacklist 21 leading business houses which had Central excise dues of over Rs 5 crore each. Though many have gone to court, the Government has decided to deny them licences, loans and other sanctions.

BUSINESS 94

The New-wave Saga

Few television serials have elicited such an emotional response from viewers as the slickly-produced *Buniyaad*. Its authentic portrayal of pre-partition days, through the travails of a family, contains all the elements of nostalgia, pathos and passion. A report.

TELEVISION 146

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OPINIONS TODAY

Your chance to speak out

Who should be the next President? You decide.

Is R.Venkataraman your idea of a good Presidential contender? Is Field Marshal Manekshaw? What about Justice P. N. Bhagwati, Morarji Desai, Narasimha Rao, Arjun Singh, Zail Singh, Kamalapati Tripathi?

The second of the Opinions Today polls gives you your chance to decide.

Your task–to rank the 8 names above, in order of their ability to be India's head of state.

Thus when you finish, each name will carry a number from 1 to 8 in the box beside it. Since this is a ranking, and not a grading system, no two persons can have the same rank.

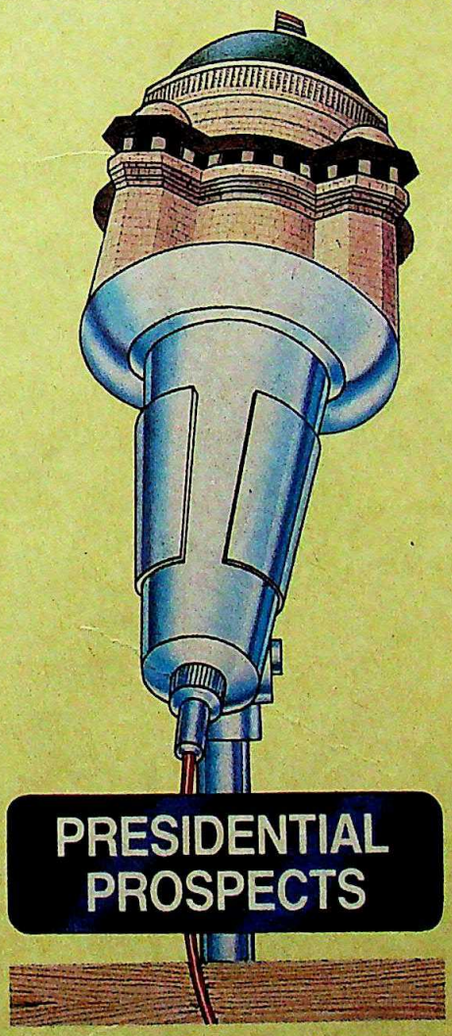
Explain your first choice.

Once you have finished your rankings, the next step is to explain the reasons for your No. 1 ranking.

That is, if you think that 'X' is the most worthy Presidential prospect, then in not more than 50 words, you have to tell us why you think so.

The entries will be evaluated by computer to determine the national average.

An entry that ties in closely with this average will make you a contender for the various awards associated with this series of polls.



An entry form and a list of rules and regulations are at the back of this page.

Who should next occupy the highest office in the land?

We, as members of the public, will not decide that.

But we can express our opinion to those who will.

This poll is your chance to do so.

The awards.

For this poll.

First : Weston Colour TV and VCR, courtesy WESTON ELECTRONIKS.

Second : Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Third : Weston 2-in-1, courtesy WESTON ELECTRONIKS.

Consolation : Annual subscriptions to INDIA TODAY.

Across six polls.

First : Return First Class air tickets for two to Los Angeles, courtesy PAN AM.

Second : A specially commissioned painting (30" x 40") by M.F. HUSAIN.

Third : PC Junior computer with printer, courtesy EIKO COMPUTERS.

Consolation : The World and its People–a 27 volume set.

Turn overleaf to express your opinion.

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OPINIONS TODAY

Your chance to speak out

Rules and regulations.

Since the entry forms will be processed by computer, it is important that you follow these procedures carefully. Incorrect or incomplete entries will be rendered invalid.

1. You can voice your opinion only through a valid entry form, such as the one below.
2. In case you have difficulty in obtaining the entry form, please mail a stamped, self-addressed envelope marked 'Opinions Today' to us at INDIA TODAY, 316 Competent House, F-14 Connaught Place, New Delhi-110 001.
3. An individual can send in only one entry form per poll.
4. The entries will be evaluated by means of a software package, specially designed by Tata Consultancy Services. The package will be run on a Burroughs B 6900 mainframe.
5. Important : while filling in this entry form, please ensure that you leave one square blank between the various units in your name and address.
6. All the eight options in each poll have to be ranked from 1 to 8. No two options can have the same ranking.
7. The name should start with the family name, followed by the first name.
8. Also ensure that you enter your first two or three initials in the space provided.
9. The date of birth should start with the date (two digits), followed by the month (two digits) and the year (again two digits). For example, if your date of birth is February 9, 1956, it should be entered as 090256.
10. Please tick the appropriate square, for other details such as sex, education, occupation.
11. In your address, please also give the pin-code number.
12. Please ensure that you fill in your particulars consistently across all subsequent polls.
13. In every capsule, you will have to explain the reasons, in not more than 50 words, for your No. 1 ranking. This is the 'tie-breaker'. Be sure to write the tie-breaker. You can miss out on the big awards if you don't. However, if your entry ties in with the national average, you will still be entitled to receive consolation prizes.
14. The entries will be evaluated by a panel of judges.
15. The results will be published in the forthcoming issues of India Today. The winners will also be notified seperately by post.
16. Employees (and their relatives) of Living Media India Pvt. Ltd., its associate companies, Tata Consultancy Services, and Interface Communications Pvt. Ltd., are not eligible to participate in this opinion poll.
17. The decision of the judges will be final and binding.
18. ALL ENTRIES MUST REACH LIVING MEDIA INDIA PVT. LTD., P.O. BOX NO. 29, N.D.H.O. NEW DELHI-110 001, BY THE LAST DATE INDICATED ON THE ENTRY FORM.

ENTRY FORM:2

Please fill in BLOCK CAPITALS

NAME : Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____ Surname _____ First Name

DATE OF BIRTH: D D M M Y Y SEX : M [1] F [2] INITIALS : _____

EDUCATION : Professional [1] Post-graduate [2] Graduate [3] Matriculate [4] Others [5]

OCCUPATION : Service [1] Business [2] Housewife [3] Student [4] Others [5]

ADDRESS : _____

CITY _____ Pin-code _____

Have you participated in the previous Opinions Today poll? Yes [1] No [2]

OPTION NO.	PERSONALITIES	RANKING
1.	JUSTICE P.N. BHAGWATI	
2.	MORARJI DESAI	
3.	FIELD MARSHAL SAM MANEKSHAW	
4.	NARASIMHA RAO	
5.	ARJUN SINGH	
6.	ZAIL SINGH	
7.	KAMALAPATI TRIPATHI	
8.	R. VENKATARAMAN	

Please give reasons for your No. 1 ranking _____

Signature of participant : _____

Your opinion must reach us by 4.8.1986.

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THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

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ALL-ROUNDER NONPAREIL

I commend your fine cover story on Kapil Dev ("India's Greatest All-Rounder", July 15). Now that he has got over the early hesitancy, indecision and lack of forcefulness in leadership, he should now be poised to lead India's cricketers to great heights. We look forward to further dazzling exploits and good examples from our heroes in sports.

Bangalore **G.S. CHANDY**

■ The cover story on Kapil Dev was excellently presented. It contained valuable comments of cricket experts and interesting statistics. The small mistake it made was that Kapil was not dropped for the Ahmedabad Test since England never played any Test at Ahmedabad during the 1984 series. The disciplinary action was taken due to his rash and irresponsible innings in the Delhi Test.

Chandigarh **V.K. CHAWLA**

■ Indian cricket has at last found a very reliable skipper for its team in Kapil Dev for many years to come. Kapil has proved his mettle as a captain by leading his team to victory in the first two Tests against England, thus shattering the myth that India cannot win Test matches under his captaincy. Kapil is, in fact, an all-rounder nonpareil in India and one of the very best players of the game. Being a very modest person, Kapil Dev imbibes the spirit of camaraderie with his team-mates. To put it succinctly, the Indian cricket team without Kapil Dev now is actually like Paris without the Eiffel Tower.

Bangalore **K. CHIDANAND KUMAR**

■ Kapil Dev is truly 'India's greatest all-rounder'. It has been champagne all the way in English conditions, but Binny and Sharma cannot be expected to slice through batting orders, especially in Indian conditions. Our team will soon need fresh blood. Cricket mania in India has surely generated money. Is it being used to unearth and coach young cricketing talent?

Bangalore **VINOD KUMAR B.**

■ Your cover story was most apt at the moment of glory for India, beating the British in Britain at their game. However, the write-up was quite disappointing and lacked the adequate thought and research for which INDIA TODAY is different from others in the stands. It was also surprising that the name of V.M. Mankad never featured in your write-up. Mankad's Test records do not fall short of those attained by Kapil Dev, when extrapolated to the 77 Tests that Kapil has played. Mankad's statistics are as follows: Tests 44, Runs 2,016, Wickets 142, Centuries 5, Double Century 1. Though Kapil and his men must be praised for their achievement, beating a morally battered English side should not give us unnecessary pride, as we will start expecting nothing less than winning from Kapil, which could be very unhealthy for the game in our country.

New Delhi **DR S.M. SHIVAPRASAD**

TEACHING AIDS

The propaganda on television about AIDS ("Countering the Scare", July 15) has created the belief that AIDS is widespread in India when, in fact, not a single documented case of AIDS originating in India has yet occurred. A handful of prostitutes have been found seropositive, which is a quite different thing. I have seen worried parents rushing two-year-olds with ordinary sore-throats to the hospital fearing that they have AIDS. The television propaganda should be restricted to teaching people how to avoid getting AIDS (by avoiding homosexuality, promiscuity, etc). Education about its symptoms and diagnostic facilities should be focused on doctors and not on the clueless lay public.

New Delhi **DR RAJIV BAJAJ**

ACCORD DISCORD

Your editorial ("Save the Accord", July 15) was balanced and comprehensive, particularly your advice to form voluntary organisations for building up mutual confidence. One measure may be to form village or mohalla committees in Punjab to protect residents against terrorist acts, in collaboration with the security forces. If the Sikhs can show by

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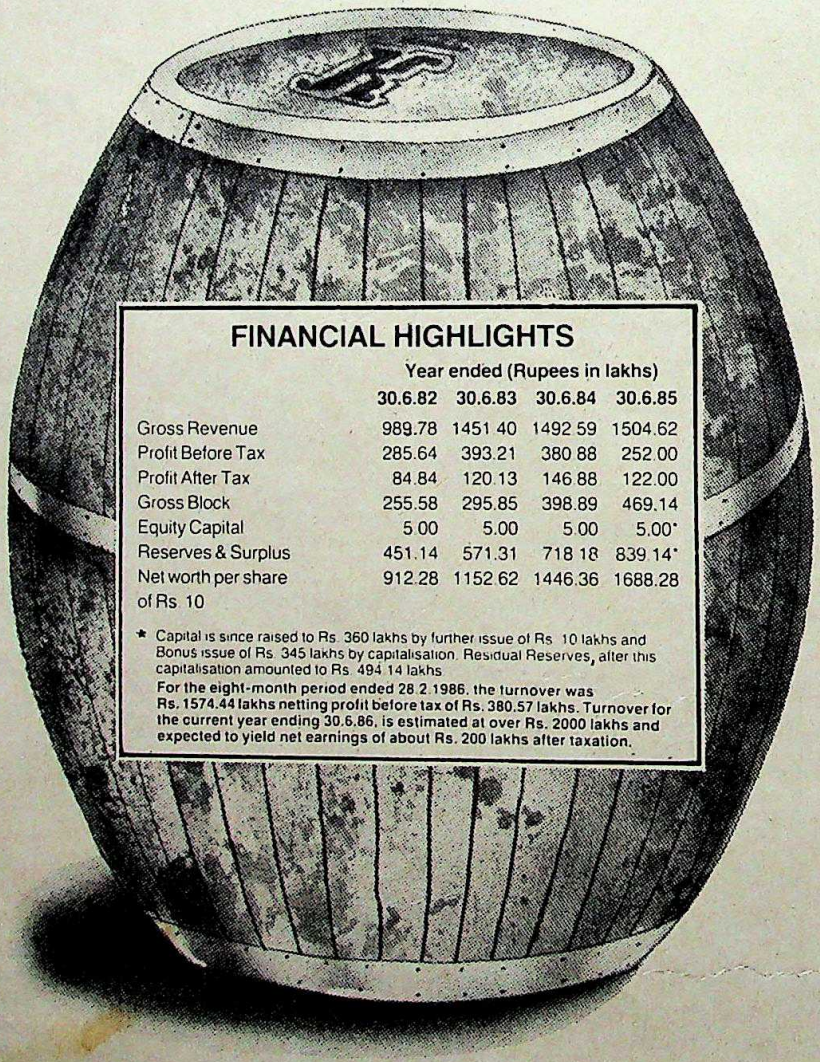
KHODAY DISTILLERIES

When profits leap ahead by the barrelful

what's sure to pour out is promising returns.



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

	Year ended (Rupees in lakhs)			
	30.6.82	30.6.83	30.6.84	30.6.85
Gross Revenue	989.78	1451.40	1492.59	1504.62
Profit Before Tax	285.64	393.21	380.88	252.00
Profit After Tax	84.84	120.13	146.88	122.00
Gross Block	255.58	295.85	398.89	469.14
Equity Capital	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00*
Reserves & Surplus	451.14	571.31	718.18	839.14*
Net worth per share of Rs. 10	912.28	1152.62	1446.36	1688.28

* Capital is since raised to Rs. 360 lakhs by further issue of Rs. 10 lakhs and Bonus issue of Rs. 345 lakhs by capitalisation. Residual Reserves, after this capitalisation amounted to Rs. 494.14 lakhs

For the eight-month period ended 28.2.1986, the turnover was Rs. 1574.44 lakhs netting profit before tax of Rs. 380.57 lakhs. Turnover for the current year ending 30.6.86, is estimated at over Rs. 2000 lakhs and expected to yield net earnings of about Rs. 200 lakhs after taxation.

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Bombay

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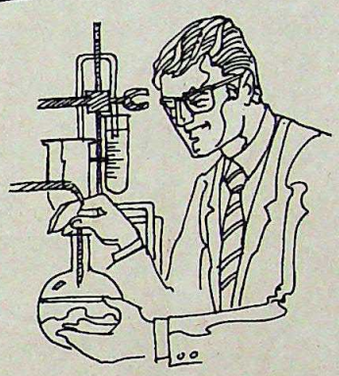
Issue of 24,00,000 Equity Shares of Rs. 10 each for cash at a premium of Rs. 10 per share with 4,80,000 – 15% Secured Redeemable Non-Convertible Debentures of Rs. 100 each for cash at par

Khoday Distilleries Ltd. (KDL) is the star performer of the dynamic, Bangalore-based Khoday Group. Today the group commands an annual turnover of Rs. 70 crores and has distinguished itself in a diverse spectrum of activities ranging from distilleries, breweries, glass-bottle manufacture, engineering/civil construction, electronics, hotels, travel, to beverages, stationery and watches. Khodays IMFL's have a hi-flying reputation for quality.
The international quality standards of Khodays Liquors has won global recognition. The Company's products have bagged 'Gold Medals' at La Monde selection, held at Luxemburg, Rome, Geneva and International Wine and Spirits Competition in U.K. At La Monde Selection, Lisbon, in 1985, Khodays walked away with a tally of 14 Gold Medals.

KDL successfully commissioned malt-distilling operations in 1965 under technical guidance from renowned Scottish distillery experts and today manufactures some of India's leading brands of IMFL



Sprawled over 160 lush acres, Khoday Distilleries houses some of the world's finest distilling equipment. Backed by ultra-modern in-house research facilities, the quality conscious Khoday's distill liquors to international standards. These have earned tremendous brand loyalty and leadership in their class.

Never resting on its achievements, KDL has diversified into electronics and engineering. The electronics division manufactures sophisticated equipment for geo-physical investigation, while the engineering division fabricates product engineering items and equipment for distilleries, dairies, breweries and pharmaceuticals. The engineering division is currently executing a contract for erection of 600 HIG houses for the Bangalore Development Authority.

To capitalise on the galloping demand for its products from the domestic and overseas markets, KDL is today poised for rapid growth. The turnover of KDL increased from Rs. 990 lakhs in 1982 to nearly Rs. 1500 lakhs in 1985. KDL with its established product image and well developed marketing network together with the implementation of the schemes on hand is well positioned to take advantage of the growing demand. The turnover is expected to reach Rs. 2700 lakhs by 1986-87 and touch Rs. 4000 lakhs by 1987-88. Based on this and the current performance, the Directors are of the opinion that the Company will be in a position to pay dividend of 20% (prorata) for the year ending 30.6.1987 on the increased capital, barring unforeseen circumstances.

"KDL is now going public" offering Equity Shares linked with Non-Convertible Debentures in the proportion of 20 Debentures for every 100 Equity Shares. Be sure to make it a part of your portfolio.

Issue Opens for Non-Resident Indians: 19th July 1986
Indian Public: 28th July 1986

HIGHLIGHTS

- Bonus entitlement within two years
- Established profitable Company with large reserves
- Assured 20% dividend (pro-rata) for year ending 30th June 1987.
- Manufacturers of popular brands of IMFL with diversified activities in Engineering and Constructions
- Assured Market and well developed countrywide marketing network
- 15% interest on Debentures – option of Cumulative and Non-Cumulative Interest Schemes to the investors
- Easy Liquidity – Listing on Bangalore and Bombay Stock Exchanges

Khoday Distilleries Limited

Administrative Office: Khoday House 26/2 Sankey Road Cross, Golf Links, Bangalore 560 001.

Growth through Diversification

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word, deed and thought, that they shall have no truck with terrorism, it will be shorn of its communal trappings and lose its most dangerous teeth.

New Delhi — BRIGADIER J.S. BAWA (RETD)

CORRECTION TIMES

In your article ("The Times of India: Changing Face", June 30), Ashok Jain is wrong in saying that there are two winners of the Magasaysay award for journalism in India. The earlier recipients were Amitava Choudhury, B.G. Verghese and Gour Kishore Ghosh.

Durgapur, Birbhum — SOMENATH ROY, Q.A. RAQUIB

STARRY INVASION

The cover story ("Invasion of the Starlings", June 30), was a true portrayal of the dilemma that the cine-world is undergoing. Miles away from realism, the stereotyped mini-parade of the starlets stinks of glamour and a world of fantasy which tends to leave the common man in utter bewilderment. The film world has reached a dead-end. It is high time we abandon this world of illusions and seek fresher arenas of aesthetic art and culture. There is need to usher in a film world with a brighter perspective and more acceptability.

Gurgaon — ANITA YADAV

■ While some may fault you for so prominently displaying the new starlings and devoting so much space to them, I for one do not. Though there may be any number of magazines dedicated to the breed, still the cinema and its concomitants have become a part of everyday life in India. So what if INDIA TODAY does its bit by this variety? It is a refreshing change from the numerous pages devoted to our politicians.

As for the actresses, though they have shown a penchant for stripping, they are only stripping the cinema-goers of their hypocrisy. For they, while overtly showing themselves as being scandalised, actually lap it all up.

Bangalore — ANSELM BRITO

■ It would have been possible to convey the story without the crudely titillating photographs of women in provocative dresses. If INDIA TODAY thought this "invasion" worthy of such coverage, there are slightly more decent ways of reporting. The array of revealing photographs seems like a strategy to boost up sales. You have faithfully followed the tradition of objectifying women for economic gains.

Baroda — BINA SRINIVASAN

DAMNING EXPOSE

Congratulations for exposing these tension-creating politicians! Your editorial comment ("These Damn Politicians", June 30) should at least make them conscious of their abominable deeds. The reason behind their imprudent acts is that most of them are either frustrated or have lost hope of retaining power. Thus they attempt to embarrass their rivals at the helm. More distressing is the fact that the press, the most effective voice of the public, instead of condemning these so-called politicians, sometimes even joins hands with them.

Cuttack — ASHOK KUMAR SARANGI

■ It was indeed a well-timed editorial. As a matter of fact, it is only a handful of politicians who pollute the otherwise peaceful atmosphere in the country. It will be a great service to the country if editors write in a similar way so that people at large may start thinking how far it is advisable to back these vultures in their pursuit of self-interest.

Calcutta — B.R. NAYAK

PAPER TIGER

Your interview with V. Prabakaran ("Profile of a Tiger", June 30) is excellent. India should desist from a policy of involvement or protection to Sri Lanka terrorists like Prabakaran and his gang of armed mercenaries. When India is facing similar demands by Punjab secessionists and is condemning their training by Pakistan, the same logic should be applied to Sri Lankan terrorists.

Kolhapur — TATYA TENDULKAR

■ It is astonishing to note that a reputed magazine like INDIA TODAY could fall into a plot by Prabakaran to secure publicity in India. You should at least have analysed his strength by talking to a few others instead of giving your readers the impression that he is the only answer to those who want Tamil Eelam, which is definitely not the case. It is just that he has a well organised public relations set-up and enjoys a good rapport with the AIADMK Government. It is high time the Tamil Nadu Government rids itself of its obsession with the Sri Lanka issue and pays attention to its near-standstill administration.

Madras — K.S. SEKAR

FEAR IS THE KEY

The article ("The Grip of Fear", June 30) is really a timely eye-opener on the unstable situation in Punjab. All right-thinking citizens have become the victims of terrorists who have taken the state by storm. The unabated violence in Punjab has completely paralysed normal day to day life in the state. If this alarming situation is not stalled immediately, the very security and unity and integrity of the country will be at stake. However I think the best and only solution to tackle this deteriorating situation is to impose President's rule in Punjab and to defer the transfer of Chandigarh for the present.

Baroda — T. BHAMBHANI

■ The migration of Hindus must be stopped at all costs if a total breakdown of the economic and social structure in Punjab is to be avoided. But at the same time, the Government should try and do something about the scores of Sikh families who have migrated to the state of Punjab after the November riots from other parts of the country, especially since the migration seems to be continuing. According to the deputy commissioner of Ludhiana, there are around 26,000 registered Sikh families who have migrated to Punjab at the moment. Should not the governments of the states from where the migration has taken place take steps to instil confidence among the Sikhs so that they don't migrate?

Ludhiana — NAVNEET WADHWA

TALL CLAIMS

This letter is in response to F.H.J. Taleyarkhan ("Everest Expedition: Peak of Endurance", December 15, 1985) who claims that Brigadier Jagjit Singh who led the Indian Army Mountaineering Expedition has not participated in any major Himalayan mountaineering venture for the last 10 years. This is not at all true as Brigadier Jagjit Singh participated in numerous expeditions. These include expeditions to the famous Nanda-Devi (1976), Khardungla, Saserla, Kara Koram and Changla (1977-79), Saser Kangri (1979) and Trishul (1981). Not only these, Jagjit Singh has also led a number of succesful National Cadet Corps expeditions. In particular, he led the successful IMA Golden Jubilee expedition to Kamet peak and Abi Gamin in the year 1982.

Chandigarh — PARAMJEET

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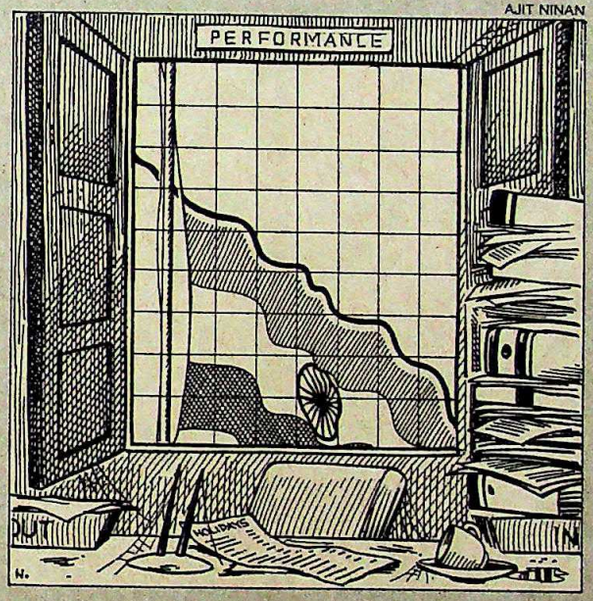
State-sponsored Absenteeism

THERE is something seriously wrong with the work culture in any society which thinks that the way to celebrate, mourn, worship, protest or commemorate is to stop work for a whole day (or days). A politician dies, and because it is a week-end the next day is declared a government and school holiday. Rabindranath Tagore's 125th birth anniversary comes around and once again the Government declares a holiday. There is a victory on the sports field, or some particular group of politicians or trade unions wants to protest over some issue, and a city, state or the whole country is held to ransom and asked to stop work. Often, those who wish to work anyway are coerced into submission.



It is no disrespect to Mr Jagjivan Ram—a political stalwart with an illustrious innings—to suggest that the country could have mourned his passing without closing down offices and schools, and without the ludicrous hypocrisy of substituting the broadcasting of running commentary on a cricket match in England with half-hourly updates from the cricket ground. For those keen on sport, these are irritants. For those seeking escape from offices, such state-ordained holidays legitimise a joyous absence from office. Either way, the Government's purpose is defeated—unless, of course, the objective from the start was to gain political mileage. This was probably the case in Jagjivan Ram's instance, and certainly so on Tagore's birth anniversary. Such motivations make the decision to pull down shutters even more indefensible.

There are civilised ways of mourning or taking note of special occasions without affecting normal, everyday life. Flags fly at half-mast, moments of silence are observed, there are gun salutes. Those who wish to pay personal homage can do so outside working hours. Except in the case of presidents and prime ministers, such mourners can usually be counted in their hundreds or thousands, and there is no call to send everybody packing on their account.

Then, there are the inconsistencies. Last fortnight, a former minister's death was cause for a government holiday; three days later, a sitting minister died but only his ministry closed. When Mrs Gandhi was assassinated, the country's cricket team in Pakistan abandoned a one-day cricket match and the rest of the tour. Understandably, perhaps. But when President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed died in 1977, a Test match in Bombay was stopped for no more than two minutes of silence. Mrs Gandhi may have been a political colossus, but what is the degree of respect due to the head of state?

Even without such unplanned holidays, government servants can legitimately take off every second day of the year (given the two-day week-end, the plethora of normal public and 'restricted' holidays, plus the annual quota of earned, casual and sick leave, not to mention half-pay leave and other such anachronisms). Clearly, therefore, the effort should be to avoid all but the most essential closure of public offices. Politicians who are heedless of this—and unmindful of the problems caused to ordinary citizens who might need to draw money urgently from banks, get a foreign exchange permit, collect some bit of documentation from a government office or merely keep an appointment—should ask themselves how many other countries in the world have the same profligate attitude to working days.

The problem with state-sponsored absenteeism goes beyond the days of official mourning. Those countries that have five-day weeks do not have the plethora of public holidays that this country does. Many of these are religious occasions on which only the practitioners of the concerned religion should be allowed to stay away from work. Why should the entire country shut down to mark the birth anniversary of someone who is a religious figure for 2 or 3 per cent of the population? If all Saturdays have been declared government holidays, surely it should be possible to reduce the number of days permitted as casual leave. In any case, most people do not seem to need so much casual leave, because it is an annual ritual for people in offices to try and exhaust their quota of unavailed leave when the year-end approaches. And while a month's earned leave is routine here, most countries in even the developed West keep this down to two or three weeks. Even when the five-day week is abandoned—as happened recently in Andhra Pradesh—the working day is kept down to six hours, with every second Saturday of the month a full holiday. That makes for something like a 35-hour week: a luxury that, once again, even the affluent countries do not feel they can afford.

No people get anywhere except by the sweat of their own brows. The post-war successes in Germany, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and any of a dozen other examples bear eloquent testimony to this. By the same token, numerous economies in Europe are now on the decline because of the onset of a decadent culture that does not place a premium on hard work, with the state often dishing out doles to those who are simply too lazy to enter the job market. As a poor country that has a long way to go before it can reach any level of economic well-being, India should be particularly mindful of the importance of the work ethic. State-sponsored cavalierness to work simply has no place in India's time and situation, especially so when the Government claims to be one that works faster.

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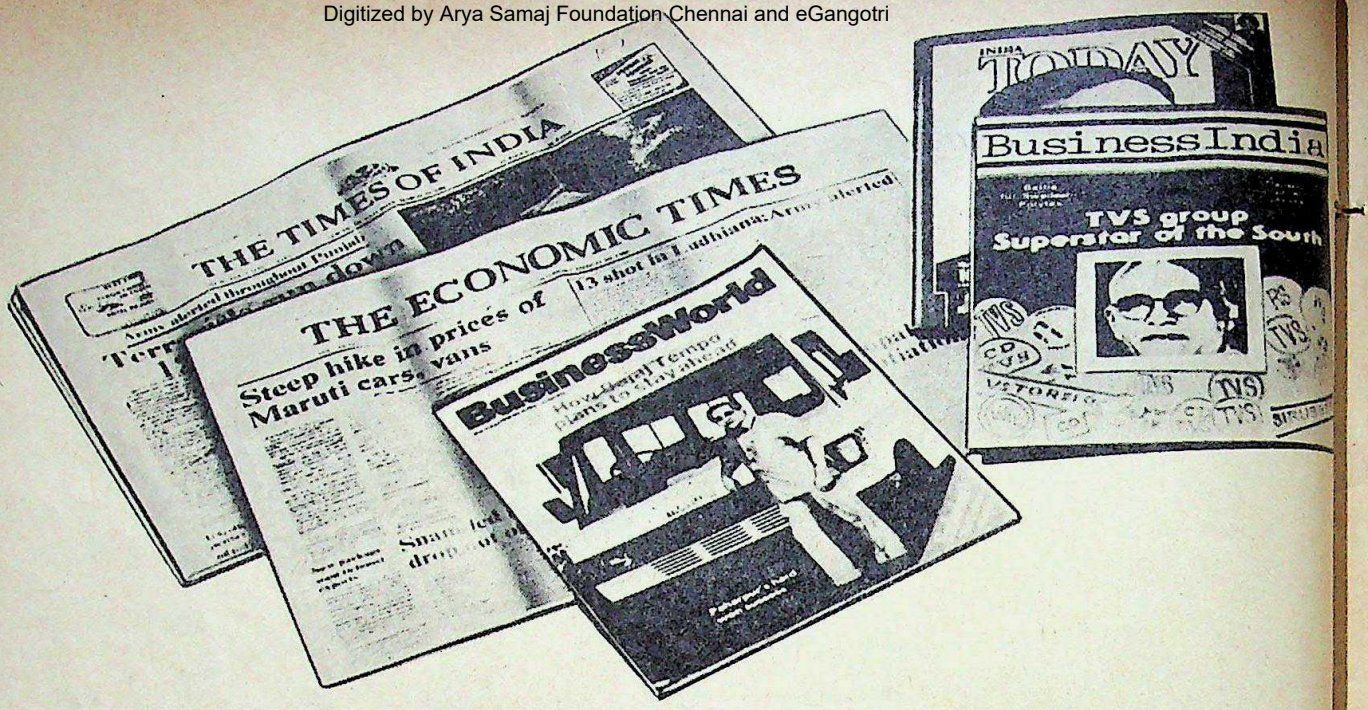

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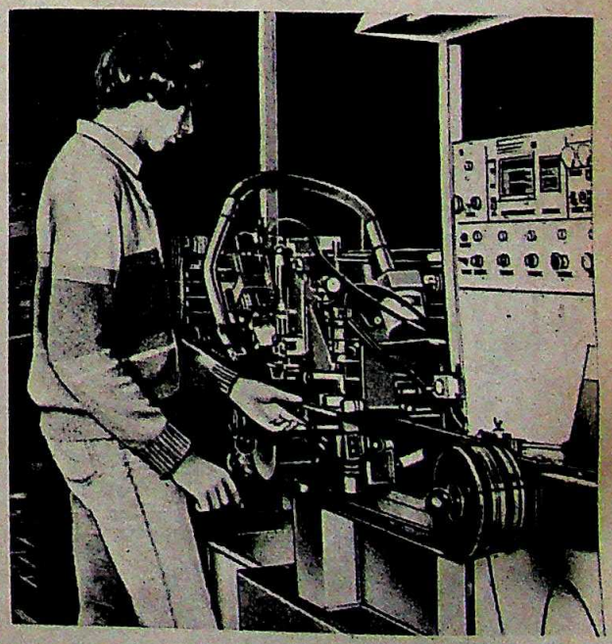

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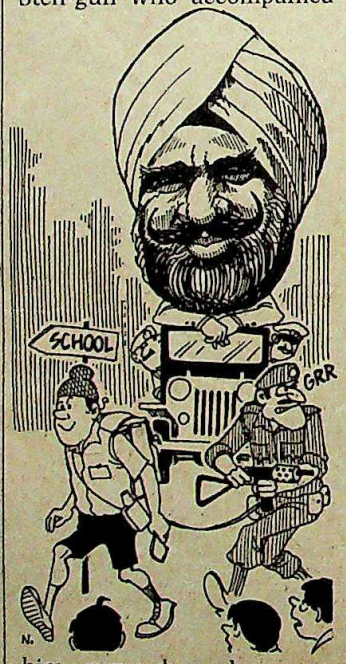
Sleepy Seminar

● You can lead senior bureaucrats to the trough of modern management but you cannot get them to drink. Or at least that's the moral from the management seminar held in

Delhi last month. The confabulation was billed as a biggie. A special film show—with the blessings and encouragement of the Prime Minister's Secretariat—had been arranged at North Block. It was supposed to be a training film on aggressive management techniques which are now a part and parcel of refresher courses being doled out to government officials to equip them to deal with and fit into "the Government that works faster." Secretaries, additional secretaries and joint secretaries were encouraged to take time off their busy schedules and attend the show. But what they saw on the screen made them wish that they had not lapped up the sales line so glibly. The film was a B-grade business production meant for American salesmen starting out in life. It consisted of a junior American salesman making a pitch for a product in front of his managers. Within minutes pipe-smoking secretaries mumbling pejoratives under their breath began walking out. By the time the hour-long show ended, all who remained in the room were a few sleepy junior secretaries, who could not muster enough courage to stage a walk-out, and a snoring projectionist.

Sten Stun

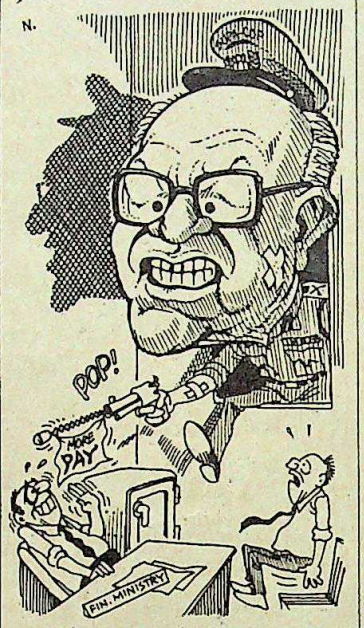
● A security guard dogging the footsteps of Buta Singh's son at the Air Force Bal Bharati School had been a familiar sight ever since the father was declared *tankhaiya* by the Sikh head priests. But keeping the sensitivity of children in mind, the bodyguard stayed in the background and kept his pistol discreetly in its holster. The new school session that started last fortnight however, saw a dramatic change. The boy entered the school with a menacing looking bodyguard brandishing a Sten-gun who accompanied



him everywhere he went, parking himself resolutely outside each class the boy attended, and following him even to the canteen, totally oblivious to the nervous glances of the other students. The new charge assumed by father Buta Singh as Cabinet Minister for Home Affairs obviously qualifies the son for a higher degree of protection, notwithstanding the sensation it is creating in the school.

Paying Up

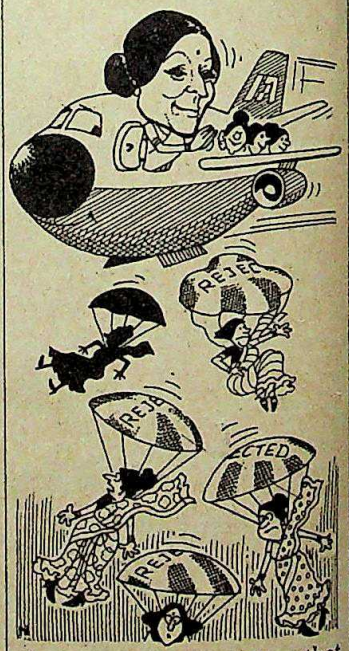
● If this is the season for talking about salaries and payscales, this tale from the corridors of North Block takes the cake. It seems that when Julio Francis Ribeiro, the Bom-



bay super-cop willingly agreed to give up his job as special secretary in the Union Home Ministry to be the director-general of police in Punjab, he was told that along with a drop in rank he will have to accept a drop in his pay-check as well. As a secretary his salary was Rs 3,500 per month but a director-general of police can be given no more than Rs 3,250. Ribeiro cried foul and in the nonchalant drawl that has by now become so familiar in the Home Ministry, told the Government that he would have none of it. The financial wizards in the Ministry came up with an instant solution—offering him Rs 250 a month as personal pay, a proposition which only got Ribeiro madder. He went up to the minister and said that he would either have Rs 3,500 as basic salary or go to Punjab on a token salary of one rupee a month. The bureaucracy, cocooned in self-spun red-tape, realised that they were up against a different sort of policeman; wheels turned within wheels and a new notification was issued, allowing Ribeiro to retain his salary as a one-time exception to the rule. Who says the steel-frame can't bend under a little pressure, exerted, of course, at the right time and with the right elan?

Fancy Flights

● For all those hapless passengers on Indian Airlines flights who have been subjected to rude, indifferent or sloppy service by cabin stewardesses who aren't even easy on the eye, there is fresh hope on the horizon: former film actress Jaya Bachchan, wife of Congress(I) MP Amitabh Bachchan, and former foreign secretary Romesh Bhandari's wife have been nominated to the panel that will interview and recruit fresh air hostesses. What the two well-connected ladies



know of the requisites that make for good air hostesses is, of course, another matter. But who knows? The two may bring a breath of fresh air to the airconditioned cabins of Indian Airlines' fleet of Airbuses, Boeings and the lesser aircrafts. They might even produce people with the best possible combination of starlet beauty and diplomatic niceties, and make air travel a nice, cosy affair.

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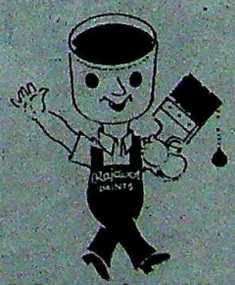

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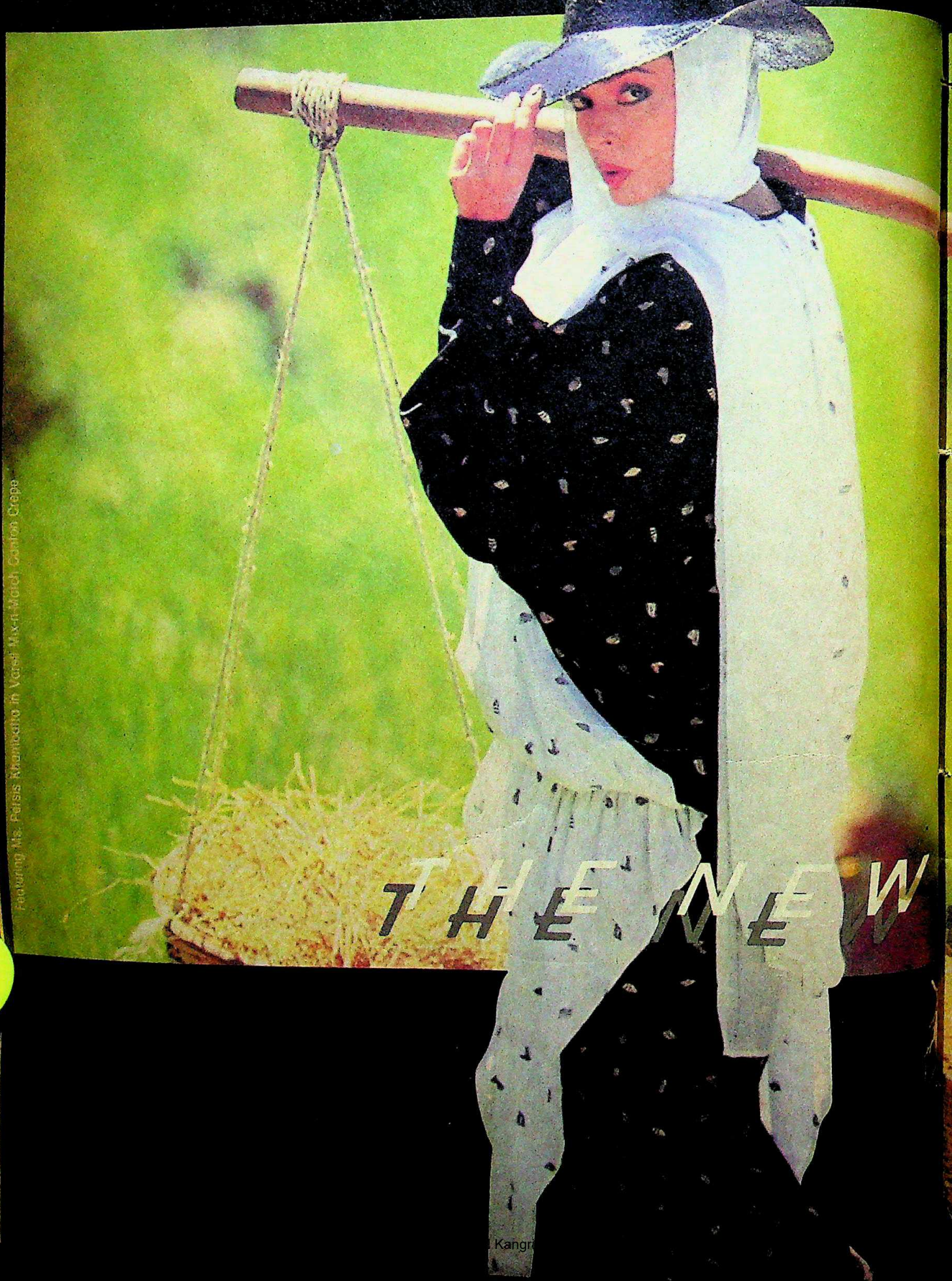

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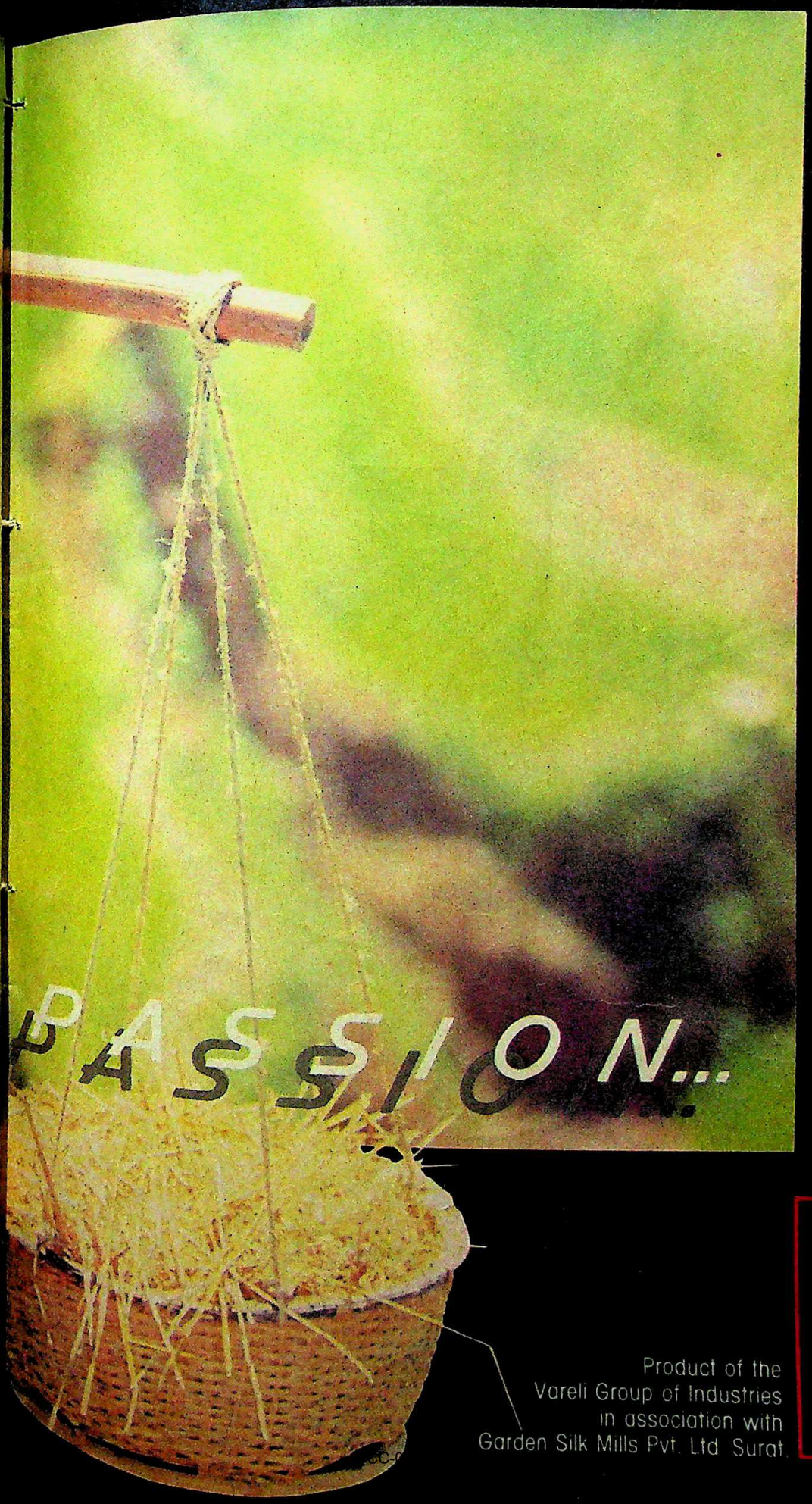

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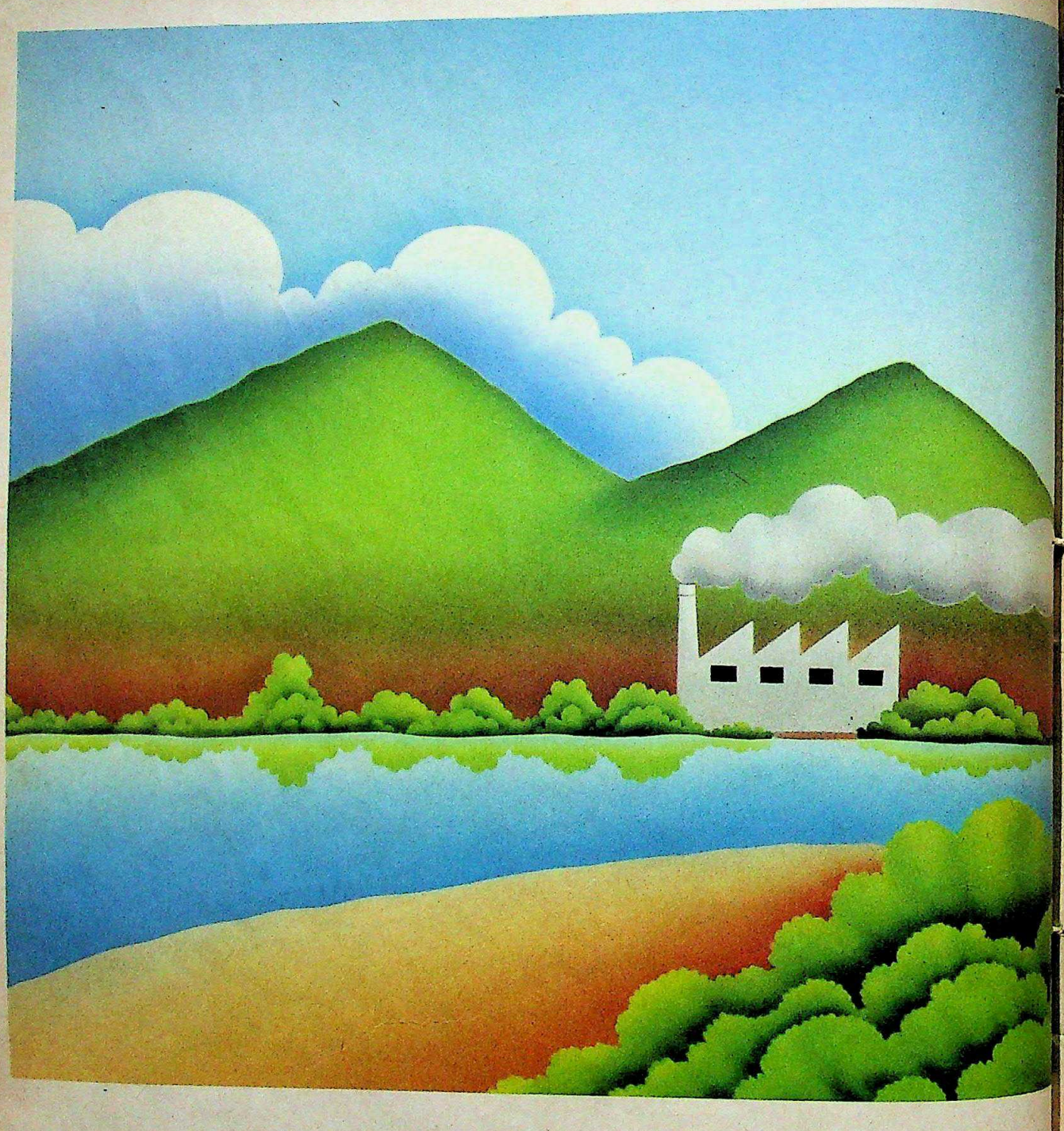

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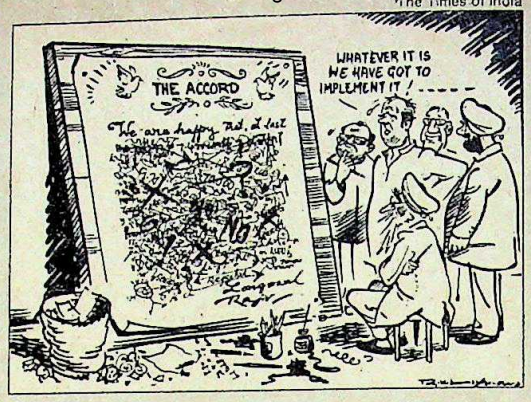
The Times of India



● *It is daylight robbery. I see it as a victory for dishonesty. I have been raped.*

■ SWRAJ PAUL on the settlement over the transfer of shares to Escorts.

● *I cannot definitely say she (Benazir Bhutto) has financial backing from India. But I know Russian money is flowing into Pakistan...the interests of India and the Soviets converge in destabilising Pakistan. What do they find? Benazir Bhutto.*

■ ZIA UL-HAQ, Pakistan president, in *Newsweek*

● *If not living within one's means and taking recourse to either overdrafts or newly-printed currency notes is considered as profligacy, then in the recent period, the Government in New Delhi has been much more profligate than the states.*

■ ASHOK MITRA in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

● *Certainly certain countries which wanted to destabilise India were helping us. And in that context "foreign powers" has the right connotation.*

■ LALDENGA in *The Telegraph*

● *Whether it is a Congress(I) or Akali Government in Punjab, why should the third-lowest president of the Congress(I) meddle in Punjab affairs? What is the tuk in it?*

■ GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA in *Current*

● *The joke of keeping MGR as chief minister of Tamil Nadu has gone too far. Arguments before the high court have revealed that his nomination papers carry only his thumb impression—a facility extended only to the illiterate.*

■ Editorial in *The Statesman*

● *I don't want The Times to be a Woolworth or a Selfridges. I want it to be a Harrods.*

■ GIRILAL JAIN in the *Sunday Observer*

● *I don't foist anybody. To be frank, I cannot. Everybody has to be elected right from the bottom. I'll not help my son in any way. In fact, I have all along been discouraging him. The* DMK *is not the Congress(I).*

■ M. KARUNANIDHI in *Weekend Review*

● *We do not suffer from the handicaps of the common man. We can speak in English, Hindi, Kannada, Marathi and maybe other languages, but the common man knows only the mother tongue.*

■ RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE on the linguistic reorganisation of states in *Sunday*

● *Srikkanth, of course is Srikkanth. He comes down with his blinks, winks, sniffs and smiles and shrugs. It is quite an experience batting with him.*

■ SUNIL GAVASKAR in *The Hindu*

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CONFESSIONS

of a Housewife

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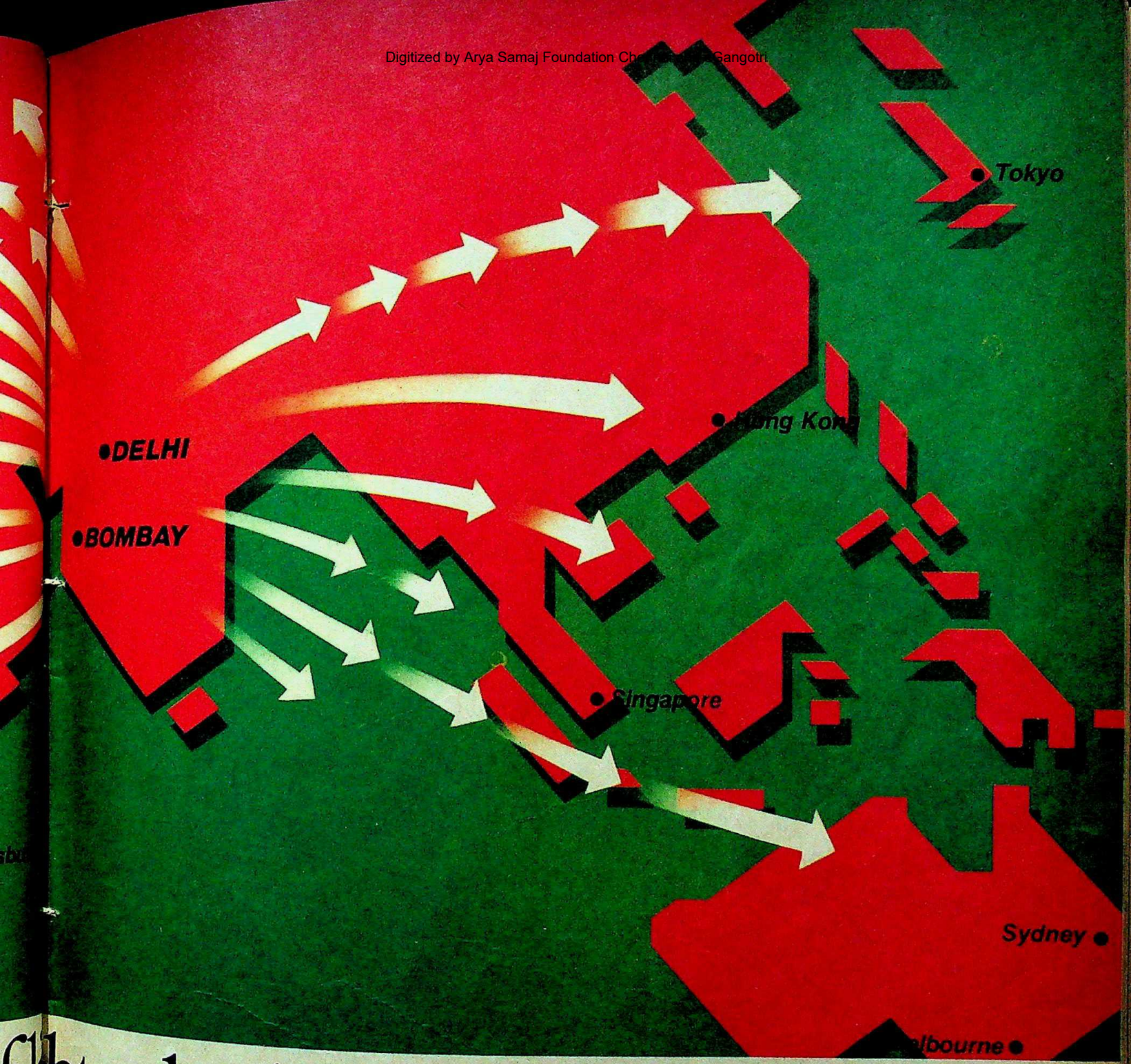

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HEIR RAISING

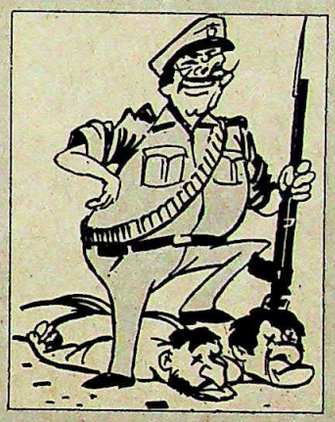
■ The current cold war between the Bihar Police and the Bihar Engineering Services would be considered serious enough were its origins not so ludicrous. The first broadside was fired when a police posse raided the residence of an engineer, S.N. Srivastava, on the premise that he was in possession of "property" allegedly stolen from Inspector General of Police J.S. Mehta. The plot thickened when it was discovered that Mehta and Srivastava are in fact neighbours. And the 'search' lasted well over 90 minutes, during which Srivastava's 90-year-old father was manhandled and one of his arms fractured.

But that was the only serious element in what turned out to be a childish farce. Reporters converged on the local police station to examine the first information report filed by Mehta and get an idea of exactly how valuable was his stolen 'property' since the search at Srivastava's house had proved futile. On paper, the property in question was hardly notable. Mehta had ordered the search because he suspected Srivastava's teenaged son of stealing his daughter's school notes! For the city's amused citizens, that was literally a turn up for the books.

FAKE FACTS

■ Mention Ranchi, and most people will conjure up a mental image of the city's one dubious claim to fame—its lunatic asylum. Now, it would appear that many of its inmates are finding alternative accommodation in the city's police force. Under considerable psychological pressure from the public for its failure to curb spiralling lawlessness, the Ranchi police resorted to an act of sheer lunacy. A senior police officer rang up local newspaper offices late on a Sunday night to proudly announce that two "notorious criminals" had just been killed in an encounter at a city park.

The officer claimed that the two criminals had been lurking in the park with the intent of robbery when the police, conveniently enough,



received an anonymous phone call tipping them off. However, a sceptical press interviewed an 'accomplice' arrested during the alleged "shoot-out", who stated that the three of them were picked up from a slum where they lived and forcibly taken to the park. Slum dwellers also confirmed that the two hardly figured in the Al Capone bracket as the police were loudly proclaiming.

GANGING UP

■ The phrase, as thick as thieves, has never been more aptly applicable than to two rival underworld gangs in Meghalaya, especially if the word 'thick' represents that part of the anatomy which rests on the neck. So bitter was the rivalry, that both groups had informers in each other's camps. Thus, when one of the gangs recently robbed a businessman and

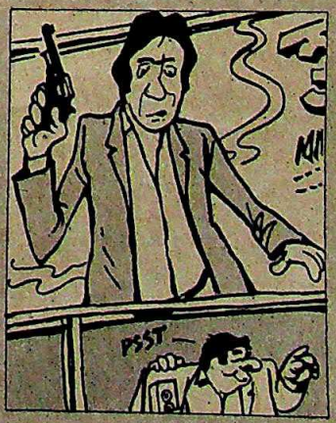
escaped with a fair amount of bounty, the other gang came to know of their success and exactly where and when the proceeds were going to be divided up and set out to rob the robbers.

They arrived, masked, at the meeting point and caught their rivals with their pants down. Grabbing the booty, they stole away but even with the masks, the robbers knew exactly who the robbers were and hit upon a way to get even. The gang leader called the local police and named those responsible, complete with descriptions and dresses. The culprits were duly rounded up and the booty recovered except for one thing—the items matched precisely the list of goods submitted to the police a day earlier by the businessman who had been robbed. Both gangs are now lodged in the local jail, their rivalry temporarily confined.

STAR TRIPS

■ Bombay's film industry, hard hit by video pirates, has been desperately looking for ways to curb the baddies. They tried forming themselves into vigilante groups and raided video parlours but discovered that such public-spirited crusades didn't quite work the way it does in the movies. But, now their stars seem to be looking up, thanks to a private Delhi-based company that has approached the Indian Motion Picture Producer's Association (IMPPA) with a script that seems tailored for success.

The company has, on behalf of the IMPPA, announced that anyone who gives them information leading to the recovery of a reasonable number of pirated video films will be rewarded with a free, all-expenses-paid trip to



Bombay and a conducted tour of the city's film studios and personal meetings with the stars. It is, of course, no coincidence that the scheme was announced on the eve of the release of a film starring a lanky actor who is married to a former actress, whose father is a well-known poet, who now lives in Delhi and also happens to be an MP. No prizes for the correct answer.

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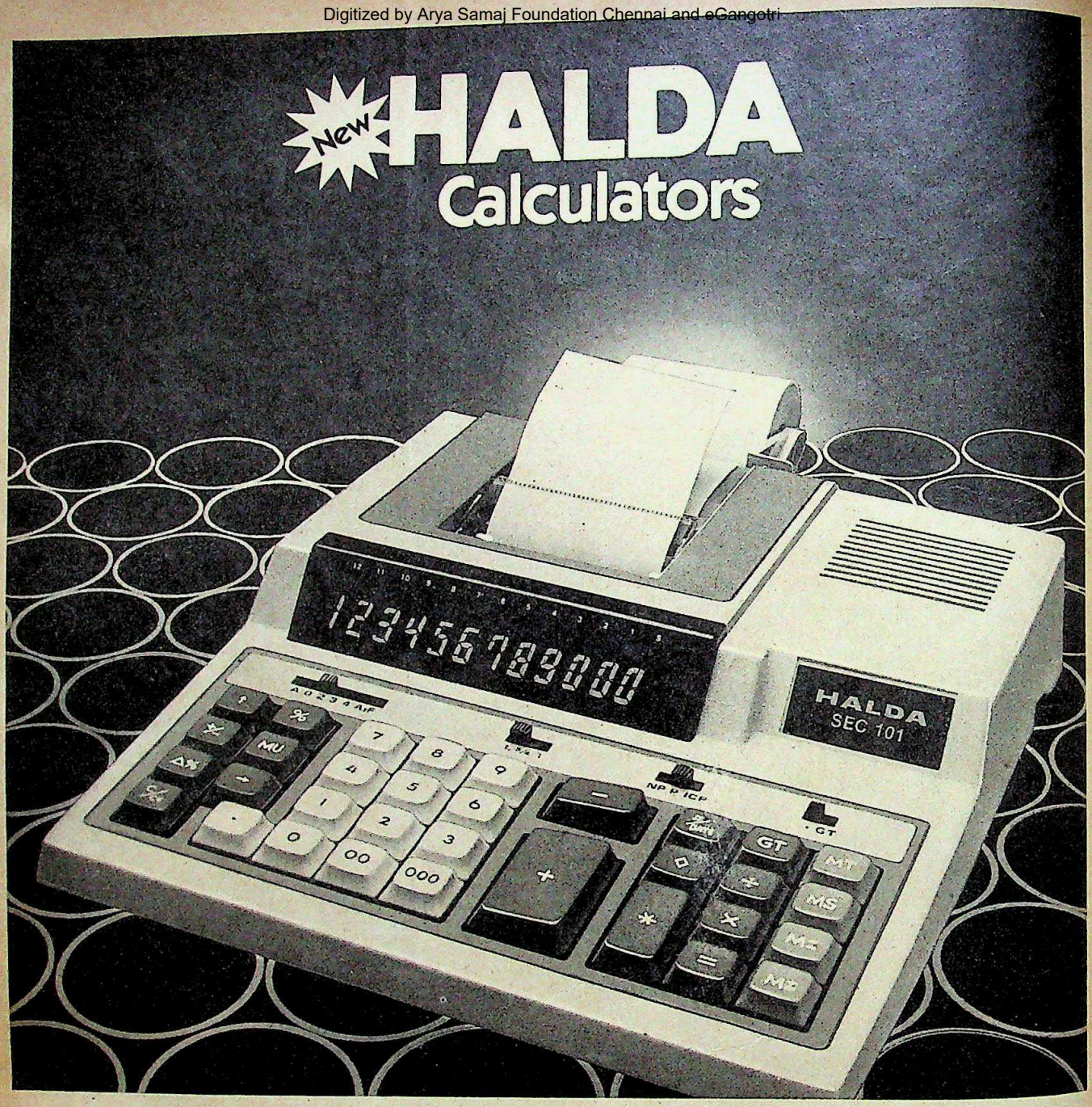

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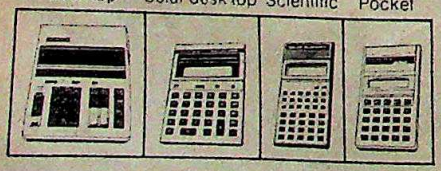

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CHAIRMAN'S SPEECH

UNITED INDUSTRIAL BANK LIMITED

STATEMENT BY
SHRI J.N. BISWAS
CHAIRMAN
UNITED INDUSTRIAL BANK LTD.
AT THE FORTY-SIXTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF THE BANK
HELD IN CALCUTTA
ON JUNE 27, 1986.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 46th Annual General Meeting of our Bank. I presume all of you have received a copy of the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 1985.

The economic scene of our country to-day is one of hope and optimism. The Sixth Five Year Plan's target rate of growth of 5.2% was fully achieved. This could be done mainly because of good agricultural production and rapid growth of services sector. Though during the Sixth Plan period the overall growth rate of industrial production was somewhat below target, the industrial scenario appeared to be brighter and more promising in the first year of the Seventh Plan mainly due to liberal and progressive industrial policy of the Central Government.

In tune with the improving industrial climate in the country, the economic situation in West Bengal, where major part of our activities is concentrated, also started showing signs of revival. It will be the task of the banking sector to correctly identify and provide suitable assistance to the emerging class of professional entrepreneurs who are entering new fields like electronics, telecommunication, chemicals and plastic technology so that this part of the country can stage an industrial revival.

The performance of the Bank has been appropriately brought out in the Annual Report. During the year under review the Bank has crossed the deposits of Rs. 200.00 crores mark having a total deposit of Rs. 203.00 crores by the end of 1985. During the last 5 years the growth of the deposits of the Bank has been as much as 128% rising from Rs. 89.00 crores in 1980 to Rs. 203.00 crores in 1985, the growth rate being well above the national average. More than 50% of the total incremental deposits has been mobilised through our rural and semi-urban branches during the year under review.

The advances of the Bank during the year also increased by Rs.14.00 crores and the credit-deposit ratio at the end of the year stood at 60.5%. During the last 5 years the advances increased from Rs. 54.00 crores at the beginning of 1981 to Rs. 123.00 crores in 1985. The credit expansion has, therefore, been 128% during the last 5 years.

With the industrial growth visualised in the Seventh Five Year Plan, supported by progressive industrial and fiscal policies, the pace and pattern of growth will change. We are making concentrated efforts to improve profitability of the Bank and, with structural adjustment accompanied by preference to foreign exchange business and Merchant Banking, we hope to improve the earning ratio gradually. Our added attention to increase the foreign exchange business is highlighted by the fact that in the year 1985, the turnover of our foreign exchange business amounted to Rs. 68.00 crores as compared to Rs. 47.00 crores in 1984. This helped us in a big way to increase our earnings.

We are conscious of our role to play in improving the lot of weaker sections of the community and our advances to priority sectors have increased from Rs. 29.33 crores at the end of 1984 to Rs. 32.91 crores at the end of 1985.

The strength of the Bank is its people. Proper development of human resources has also been engaging the attention of the Bank management. Training programmes are being designed to groom the staff in various disciplines and prepare them to meet the present day challenges. During the year 1985, 124 employees were trained at the Bank's own Staff Training College. The Bank also utilised the training facilities offered by Reserve Bank of India, National Institute of Bank Management and such other Institutions.

In the perspective of what I have said so far, 1985 was treated as a year of consolidation. Our corporate objective and policy of consolidation essentially aimed at improvement of loan assets, strengthening the system of internal control measures and improvement in the profitability through cost effectiveness.

'Reconstruction and Counselling' cell has been set up in the Central Office to monitor the functioning of the assisted sick units. We have also started assessing the quality of individual advances through classification of our advances into different categories with a 'health code' assigned to each borrowal account.

Banking is a "service" industry. Therefore we are keen to provide the best possible service to our customers. With this end in view, we have created a special cell to look into the grievances of the customers.

We welcome the appointment of the high powered 'National Finance and Credit Council' by the Reserve Bank of India for taking overall views of the flow of finance and credit to industry, agriculture and trade.

I take the opportunity of making some suggestions which are as follows:—

a) All scheduled Banks may be allowed the privilege of having 'Currency Chests'. It is a well known fact that remittances of funds is becoming more and more difficult and this effects profitability of the Banks.

b) In the process of recovery of sticky advances, Banks have to take recourse to legal action. Such legal proceedings under the present system are a long drawn process. It is felt that if the Government considers setting up separate Cells in the District as well as High Court level, speedy disposal of bank cases may be possible.

c) The Government may also consider the feasibility of suitable statutory provision in the line with the provisions extended to all India or State level Financial Institutions to enforce charged securities for recovery of Bank's dues. Suitable amendments may also be considered in the Law of Limitation to extend the period of validity of documents executed by the borrowers in favour of the Banks.

In 1986, the Bank faces a big challenge and it should be our duty to take it up in right earnest. With cooperation from the members of the staff, it will be possible to overcome the hurdles and discharge our social obligations to the community, especially to the poor and neglected sections of the society. I am quite confident that, with the goodwill of everybody associated with the Bank, we shall forge ahead from strength to strength and play a laudable role in our assisting the process of planned development of the country.

Let me now place on record my appreciation to all members of the staff, our constituents, the Government of India, the Government of West Bengal, the Reserve Bank of India, members of the Board of Directors and to you—our valued shareholders.

Thank you.

Note: This does not purport to be the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

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PRASHANT PANJIAR

MIZORAM

Quest for Peace

IN THE house of India there lives an unhappy man. His name is Mizo," wrote Laldenga, the Mizo leader, more than a decade ago. But last fortnight the Mizo emotion could not have been more different. Twenty years of war between the Mizos and the Indian Government had been ended by a peace accord, Laldenga had returned to his ancestral hills and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had brought to the Mizos the goodwill of the nation through his 72-hour tour of the Union territory.

It was a fortnight of celebrations that had begun with the signing of the Mizo accord on June 30—flashed to the Union territory on Doordarshan's national network. "It was like an armistice for us," recalls Bualaranga, a bookseller who had been in the underground till 1971. The next day, Aizawl and the surrounding villages resounded to the sound of bursting crackers and jubilant singing."

The most spectacular celebrations, of course, were reserved for Laldenga. There were cheers when Laldenga recounted how his party, the Mizo National Front (MNF), had negotiated to ensure that their beloved land got special status; Laldenga himself was to be the chief minister of an interim government.

"People are happy not only because Laldenga has returned but also because peace has returned," says Liangunga Ngente, headmaster of a school in Kolasib village. Indeed, the euphoria showed little sign of abatement even as Laldenga returned to London briefly, and Rajiv Gandhi arrived to felicitate Mizoram and its 4.9 lakh people in the celebrations.

More important than the surface goodwill generated by the prime minister's tour is the fact that the mood in Mizoram has undergone a dramatic change.

"Welcome Rajiv Gandhi, apostle of peace" and "We have confidence in Rajiv", proclaimed hundreds of posters by the highways, stuck on houses, boards and even the rocky hillsides. Aizawl's populace trooped out in droves to hear Rajiv Gandhi's translated speech on the "dawn of peace" in Mizoram and how the first step would be the surrender of arms by the MNF guerrillas. "There can be no slowing down of this process or any compromise on this," he declared, adding that "only after this could statehood be granted to Mizoram along with the expansion of the Assembly to 40 members, the introduction of Mizo as an official Indian language and ultimately the revival of Mizo economy worn by years of strife."

But more important than the surface goodwill generated by the prime minister's tour is the fact that the mood in Mizoram has undergone a dramatic change. The bloody battles of the past two decades seem to have vanished. Former home minister Rualchhina, is expected to

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Mizos welcome Rajiv and Sonia in Kawnpui (left); and Laldenga meeting MNA men at Turial: confetti time

start bringing out the former rebels from July 24. They will first arrive at two camps at the Indo-Bangladesh border—Parva near the main MNF headquarters and Marpara near the MNF tactical headquarters—and from there, after surrendering their arms and ammunition, go to the rehabilitation centre being constructed at Luangmual on the outskirts of Aizawl.

SAYS 31-year-old Mizo National Army (MNA) lieutenant Anthony Vanlaltluanga: "In Mizoram, peace will be complete and nobody will continue fighting from the jungles like in Nagaland because in the MNF we all accept our president Laldenga's leadership." In Mizoram, all MNF members, loyal to Laldenga remained underground while his rivals either surrendered or negotiated a pardon from the Government. The 750-odd MNA guerrillas, who remain in Bangladesh, also appear to have realised the futility of battling indefinitely against a vastly superior and better equipped foe. "This kind of struggle, leading to suffering and ill health compelled us to seek a solution," admits Rualchhina. "Since armed struggle alone could not achieve our aims it is better to get freedom through non-violent means," he adds.

MNF leaders like Rualchhina have come around to accepting the right to free speech, to political activity and to travel freely around the country, which to them constitute "one kind of freedom". The other kind of freedom, they explain, is to live without fear of being swamped by cultures and people alien to the Mizos—a freedom the accord specifically provides for. The inner-line regulation for restricting entry of outsiders into Mizoram will be retained after the accord is implemented.

The Centre had made it incumbent upon the MNF to first prove its bonafides by laying down arms. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, as Laldenga himself pointed out, did not personally sign the accord, as the MNF is still an outlawed party. The Mizo accord also does not specifically confer general amnesty on MNA guerrillas; it also does not state anything about handing over power to Laldenga—the agreements are tacit and dependent on MNF actions.

That the Government would come down with "extremely heavy hands" in the event of fresh MNF violence was a message the prime minister repeatedly hammered home in his speeches. The point stressed also in the preamble of the accord is that the Centre agreed to negotiate with Laldenga because he agreed to fulfil the basic conditions of ending violence and to accept the Constitution.

Rajiv Gandhi has also kept his political options in Mizoram open by deliberately ensuring that the Mizoram unit of his party does not go the Assam Congress(I) way. "At one time we were afraid that Rajiv would ditch us in Mizoram like he did in Assam," confides a Congress(I) MLA. "But now we are confident he will not." The party high command made sure its state unit remained in the reckoning by consistently refusing to accede to Laldenga's demand for a total transfer of power to the MNF. It was therefore agreed that although Laldenga would be appointed chief minister, his nine-member interim government would contain five Congress(I) ministers, including the present Chief Minister Lalthanhawla, who would be appointed deputy chief minister.

The accord's critics believe that Laldenga in power will mean a turbulent Mizoram. Already, he has raised a storm by demanding a greater Mizoram.

The only hurdle was Chief Minister Lalthanhawla, who unexpectedly announced on July 6 that he did not want to be the deputy chief minister. But Union Home Minister Buta Singh is reported to have forced Lalthanhawla to reconsider his decision. The chief minister's sudden change of mind, Congress(I) insiders disclosed, was because of Laldenga's refusal to give Congress(I) the three key portfolios of home, public works and education.

Lalthanhawla, who made no secret of his displeasure had publicly objected to Laldenga's insinuation that the last assembly elections, in which the Congress(I) came to power, was a sham. A furious Lalthanhwala came out against Laldenga in a press conference, accusing the MNF leader of harbouring anti-national sentiments.

The Congress(I) would easily win the next assembly elections, the outgoing chief minister declared. Over the last 12 years, Lalthanhawla claimed, his party had won over different political groups. Besides, the furious chief minister remarked: "His party had signed the accord not for Mister Laldenga but for the sake of

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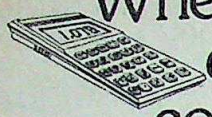

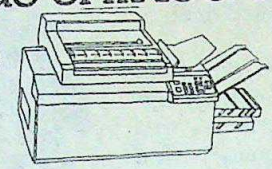

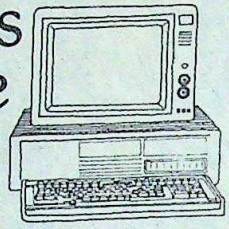

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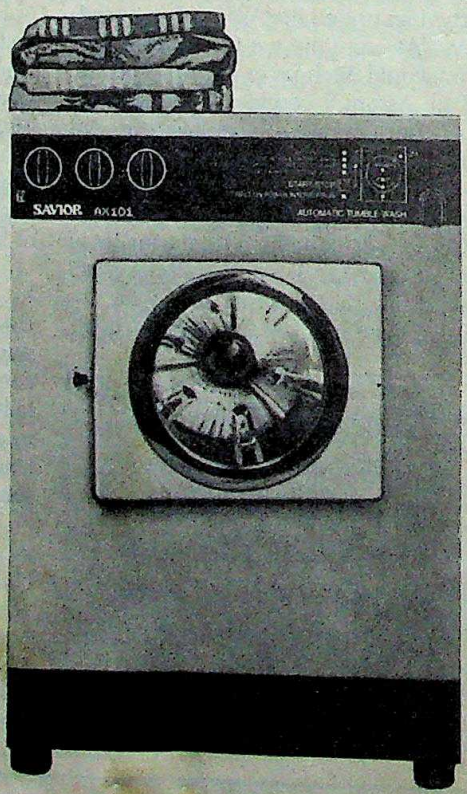

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the Mizos and the country."

Lalthanhawla's ruffled feathers were smoothed by the prime minister, who missed no chance to point out the sacrifices Lalthanhawla and his party colleagues had made for ensuring peace. The Congress(I)'s image was further boosted by Rajiv's reiterations on peace being the direct fulfilment of his party's 1984 assembly election promise.

Whether all this bolstering will prevent an MNF victory in the next assembly elections is the question uppermost in the minds of Mizoram politicians. "Laldenga might be a legend but fighting an election is another thing," says former MNF member Bualranga. In Selling village, an astute labour Khuang Dawal says: "We once voted for Brigadier Sailo because he promised peace in Mizoram. When he could not bring peace we voted for the Congress but this time I will have to hear them all to decide whom I will vote for." Intelligence sources estimate that none of the three contenders for power appears to be in a position to get a majority.

The accord's critics believe that Laldenga in power will mean a turbulent Mizoram. Already, it is pointed out, the MNF leader has raised a storm by demanding a greater Mizoram. For the Mizos who believe that their land was arbitrarily divided into three sections by the British—with parts going to Burma, East Bengal and Assam—way back in 1889, the greater Mizoram issue has powerful emotional undertones.

But equally emotional can be the question of Mizo lands now with the states of Assam, Manipur, and Tripura. And the question uppermost in the minds of Mizoram's bureaucrats is whether the laying down of arms will not herald another kind of disquiet in this hilly land to which peace has finally come after a wait of two decades.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE in Mizoram

LALDENGA

Living Legend

FEW PEOPLE become legends in their lifetime: Laldenga, the 60-year-old Mizo leader is one in Mizoram. When he returned to Aizawl on July 5, after signing the peace accord with the Centre, tens of thousands of Mizos lined the streets, singing panegyrics recounting the years of strife, and hoping that he would take their land to glory and progress. Many Mizo National Army (MNA) volunteers, most of whom had never seen their leader, donned their uniforms as a mark of respect.

Laldenga had left Mizoram in 1966, moving into what was then East Pakistan to orchestrate the battle in the jungles of Mizoram, which was then Lushai Hills, a part of Assam. Though Laldenga had to move to Karachi after 1971, he remained the unchallenged leader of the Mizo National Front—which he founded on October 22, 1961—and its armed wing, the MNA. But after five years of attempting to influence events in Mizoram from Pakistan, he was ready to negotiate for peace.

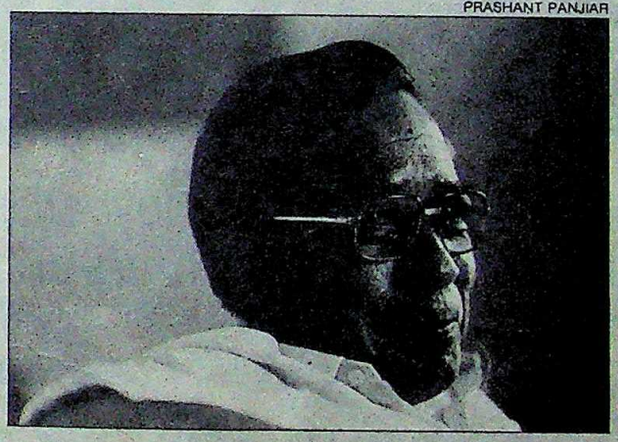
Most Mizos today do not care that Laldenga's promise of a sovereign Mizoram has not been fulfilled. Laldenga too is content with statehood and a special status that will ensure that outsiders do not swamp the tiny 21,000 sq km Union territory, although in 1965 he had told the then prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri that Mizoram could never be a part of India. To him, peace is obviously more important than sovereignity, as he told Principal Correspondent INDRANIL BANERJIE *last fortnight in an exclusive interview. Excerpts:*

Q. *How does it feel to be back in Mizoram after your long exile?*

A. Well, a home-coming is always good. There has never been as big a gathering in the history of Mizoram as there was to greet me.

Q. *How valid are the fears that all MNF guerrillas might not want to come overground and accept the accord?*

PRASHANT PANJIAR



A. All these fears are only in Indian newspapers. All MNF supporters have spontaneously welcomed the accord. I can assure you there will not be a single man remaining in the jungles after the accord is implemented.

Q. *How could you settle for statehood when you had been fighting for sovereignity?*

A. Our fight was against the domination of the Mizos by the Government of India. Today we have signed an accord that gives special status to Mizoram. We always wanted a political settlement of the Mizo problem but we were forced into violence. How long could my people fight the army?

Q. *Why does Lalthanhawla seem unhappy with the accord?*

A. I don't know how he feels. But in any case, now I read that he has been persuaded by the home minister to take part in the interim government.

Q. *Didn't you ask Lalthanhawla what his problem is?*

A. I had dinner with Lalthanhawla but we did not talk about all this. After all, when one is in power it is not easy to step down. What Lalthanhawla did was a very noble step for peace in Mizoram.

Q. *Don't you expect opposition from Brigadier Sailo and his People's Conference?*

A. I have not met Sailo; but he will pose no problem. He is a spent force.

Q. *Your remarks about a greater Mizoram have caused great consternation. Why did you raise the issue?*

A. We have never abandoned the demand for a greater Mizoram but it was kept in abeyance for the agreement. Article 3 of the Constitution says that all affected states have to be consulted in any boundary dispute. If we had taken up the greater Mizoram issue with the three states—Manipur, Tripura and Assam—we would never have managed to reach an agreement with the Centre.

Q. *Do you anticipate any problem in the accord's implementation?*

A. I don't think there will be any problems. I hope the implementation will go smooth as silk and (this accord will) not end up like the Punjab and Assam accords.

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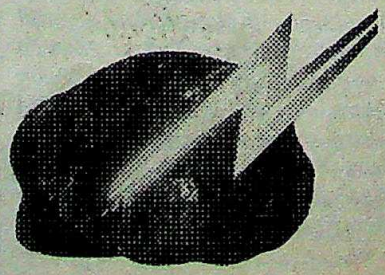

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JAGJIVAN RAM

A Disputed Legacy

JAGJIVAN Ram's life was as eventful and chequered as any successful politician's can be: an almost unbroken record in office from 1946 till 1979, heady political drama when he quit the Congress(I) in 1977, an admirable track record in several key ministries, a rare degree of respect from the bureaucrats he worked with, and the mantle of India's most famous Harijan since B.R.Ambedkar. If his last years saw a stalwart in decline, troubled by family squabbles, his death too was far from peaceful: unseemly controversies followed his body from the hospital to his home and to his funeral pyre in Bihar.

The growing split in the family of Babuji, as Ram was widely known—between his daughter Meera Kumar and his granddaughter Maydhaavi Qirti—burst into the open, the Government's Principal Information Officer, Ram Mohan Rao, was sent home under a cloud and Lok Dal leader Ram Bilas Paswan opened a potential pandora's box by questioning the date of death.

It started at Delhi airport early in the morning of July 4 when assorted VIP's, assembled to see Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi off to Mauritius, were startled to see Gandhi's cavalcade head out of the airport no sooner than it arrived. Gandhi had barely alighted from his car when his cousin and security in-charge, Gautam Kaul, whispered something into his ear to set Gandhi off again.

Puzzled reporters button-holed Rao who, after confirming it from an as yet unnamed cabinet minister, told them that Ram had died. AIR put the news out in its 6 a.m. bulletin and the news agencies followed suit. AIR corrected itself soon after, as did the agencies, and a day later Rao was sent on leave.

There was no official comment on how the blunder happened. Some blamed the staff of Saroj Khaparde, Union minister of state for health and minister-in-attendance for Ram, who was to have been taken to London the previous evening, but Khaparde denied this. C.P.Bahl, additional medical superintendent of Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, maintained that the hospital had not given the information: "How could we? His cardiac functions only stopped at 10.20 a.m. on July 6." Kaul also declined to comment.

Paswan and people close to Qirti, the 26-year-old daughter of the late Suresh Ram, had a simple explanation for the faux pas. Said Paswan, issuing a statement demanding an official inquiry into Ram's death: "Babuji definitely died on the morning of July 4: there is no other explanation for Rajiv delaying his departure and rushing to the hospital. All of us who saw his body at his home on July 6 were surprised by the unusual amount of swelling on his face."

Sources close to Qirti quoted hospital doctors as telling them on July 4 that

His death was far from peaceful: unseemly controversies followed his body from the hospital to his home and all the way to his funeral pyre in Bihar.

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Ram had "collapsed" the previous night. When Qirti had gone to see him on July 4 she was shocked to see her grandfather with cotton wool over his eyes and fingers. She tried to touch him but Meera Kumar, who was sitting there, stopped her. Said Qirti: "The last I saw my grandfather alive was on July 3."

Meera Kumar, who took premature retirement from the Indian Foreign Service to contest and win a parliamentary by-election from Bijnore on the Congress(I) ticket, was not available for comment. But Bahl maintained that while it was true that Ram had been put on artificial respiration on the night of July 3-4, Ram's heart had stopped beating only on the morning of July 6.

Most people, disinclined to credit the Government with Machiavellian designs, tended to look askance at Paswan's sensational assertion, but the Lok Dal general secretary argued that there were perfectly logical reasons for this: while Gandhi did not want to postpone his already rescheduled trip, he did not want to miss out on the political advantage to be gained from honouring Ram in his death either. Said Paswan: "The whole thing was a farce calculated to impress the Harijan voter."

After Ram's death, the Government pulled out all the stops, declaring three-day state mourning (normally reserved for a head of state or government who dies out of office) plus an official holiday, and a funeral with full state honours. AIR and Doordarshan cancelled their scheduled programmes. These were replaced by bhajans and miles of tributes by leaders of the ruling party. At Patna, his body was taken to the local Congress(I) office.

Before that, a furious battle raged at Ram's house about the site for Ram's funeral. His widow, Indrani, and Meera Kumar insisted that Ram's body should be taken to Chhandwa, his village 3 km from Arrah, because Ram had apparently desired this in his will. But Qirti and other vocal supporters of the Congress(J) insisted that considering Ram's stature his funeral should take place in Delhi so that a *samadhi* could be built on a site near that of Gandhi, Nehru, Shastri and Indira Gandhi.

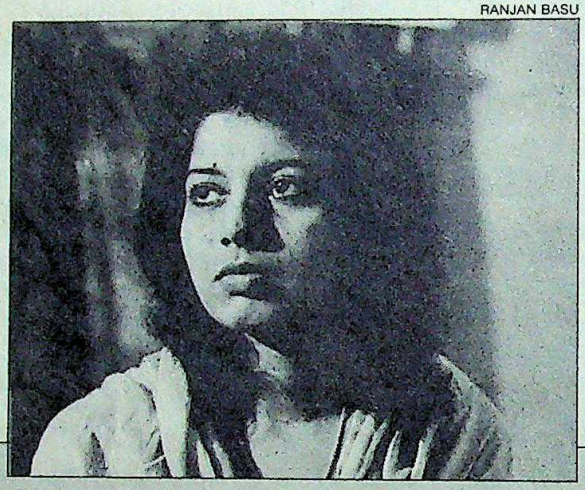
Thus, even as Ram's body lay in his house, with mourners filing past, over 100 Congress(J) workers led by Qirti were raising slogans outside. Seeing that her aunt, being a Congress(I) MP, was likely to have her way, Qirti and her supporters submitted a memorandum to the prime minister and president. Rajiv did not meet them personally but Zail Singh did and heard them out.

THERE was further drama before Ram's body was taken to Patna. After spending the whole night outside the house, Qirti—who has not been allowed inside Ram's house since she was thrown out in late May—and 76 Congress(J) workers tried to physically prevent the body from being taken away. They were promptly arrested. Qirti then rushed to the airport to try and join 30 of her relatives accompanying the body in a special aircraft to Patna, but was disallowed by security personnel because her name was not on the list they had been provided.

Even as the VVIP's were winging their way to Patna, another controversy was raging in Chhandwa when it was suddenly announced that Ram's last rites would be performed there. The confusion was about whether Ram was to be cremated or buried. His relatives and the villagers wanted him to be buried: like his father, and according to the rituals of the *Sheonaraini* system of the Kabir Panth of which Ram was a member. But Meera Kumar and other members of the family wanted Ram to be cremated. Both a grave and a pyre were kept ready. Ultimately, Meera Kumar settled the issue a few minutes before Gandhi landed in a helicopter.

Qirti was still en route to Chhandwa—her Patna flight was late by three hours and landed minutes after the funeral was over—but others were present to voice their protest against the decision. Said Bihar's Minister for Jails, Mahabir Paswan, who was close to Ram: "This (the cremation) was against the wishes of Babuji." Lamented Qirti, who reached Chhandwa only after it was over: "My grandfather had made me perform the last rites of my father and had told me then that I should do the same for him. But Meera Kumar and others are determined to see that I don't have any role in my family."

RANJAN BASU



"Meera Kumar and others are determined to see that I don't have any kind of role in my own family."

MAYDHAAVI QIRTI
Ram's grand-daughter

The "ritual" controversy apart, opposition circles in Bihar alleged that Ram's funeral was performed at Chhandwa instead of Delhi to belittle him even in death. "Babuji remained a Harijan and untouchable even after his death," said Devender Prasad Yadav, an opposition MLC. Gandhi tried to appease their anger by announcing that a memorial to Ram would be erected in Chhandwa.

The real battle, of course, is for the right to be called Jagjivan Ram's political heir, or heiress. Qirti has fired the first salvo by declaring that she would contest the by-election to Sasaram on the Congress(J) ticket. Meera Kumar's masters in the Congress(I) cannot be viewing this with any composure. Her swift absorption in the Congress(I) was obviously on the assumption that she would be seen as Ram's political successor and bring the 2 to 3 per cent votes he commanded to the Congress(I). Any increase in the popularity of the Congress(J) is a possible political challenge in parts of the country.

But what eventually could dwarf everything is the battle for Ram's estate—believed to be outsized, and the tussle for it is bound to reach the courts unless the family stops feuding, which seems unlikely considering the high stakes involved—political and financial. Ram's twilight years were of increasing sadness, but even after his death his soul is not destined to rest in peace.

—AJAY KUMAR with FARZAND AHMED in Chhandwa

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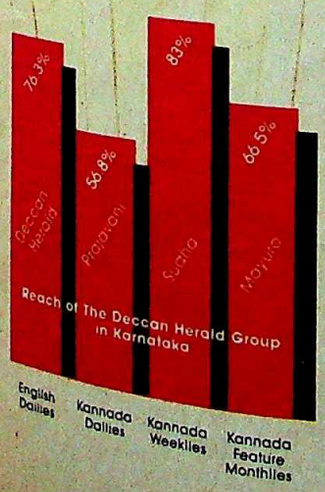

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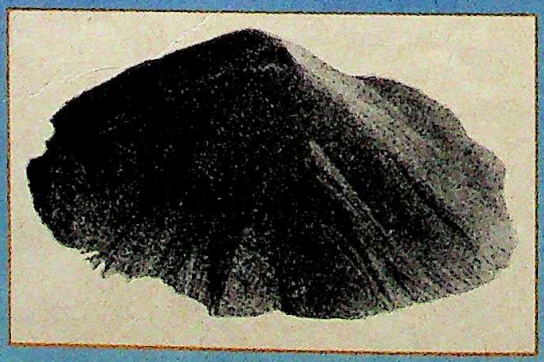

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PUNJAB

Militant Poses

BARNALA is a traitor. He is a tyrant worse than the Moghuls. Even Mrs Gandhi's despotic regime pales before his misdeeds. At the behest of the Centre, he is finishing the Sikh youth and attacking the Sikh holy shrines. Neither God nor Sikhs shall pardon him." This is no Punjab extremist spouting venom. It is former chief minister Prakash Singh Badal, speaking at last fortnight's convention of the breakaway Akali Dal that chose him as its president. And all the others—Gurcharan Singh Tohra, Sukhjinder Singh, Prem Singh Lalpura and Surjan Singh Thekedar—raise the same battle cries against Barnala.

Five months ago, these leaders had vowed to fight foreign-inspired terrorism and separatism. Shockingly, but predictably, the Badal faction has now shifted to a stand of straight and total confrontation: Sikhs versus the Centre.

"We shall not allow Sikh interests to be bargained away by power brokers," declares Tohra as he praises the brave deeds of Mrs Gandhi's killers, Beant Singh and Satwant Singh. But it is Badal, once the most moderate of Akalis, to bring up the climax by declaring: "The Delhi *darbar* is out to finish the Sikhs. We must fight back." He does not mention Punjabis, only the Sikhs and turns down any compromise on Chandigarh.

If the speeches leave anything unsaid, the resolutions fill the gap. "The Sikhs are convinced that the Anandpur Sahib resolution is a panacea for all ills. There is no accommodation of our view that Sikhs are a separate cultural and religious entity in India...The massacre of Sikhs and the repression has fortified our belief," says one resolution.

Fuelled by personal ambitions, the Akalis have a distressing capacity to split. Right now there are six Akali Dals. "Akali splits are ruinous to the peasants, whom they claim to champion," says Punjabi writer Sant Singh Sekhon.

But for Punjab as a whole, the split has even more ominous overtones. The Badal faction has made it clear that its sympathies lie with the militants. Declared Badal at the convention: "I shall go to each Sikh youth's house killed by the security forces, visit Sikhs detained in jails. We shall do everything possible to stop the massacre of Sikh youth."

Within a week, he joined his party colleagues Kuldip Singh Wadala and Sukhjinder Singh in the Damdami Taksal-and-AISSF-sponsored 'Antim Ardas' of Balbir Singh and Ajitpal Singh at Raipur village in Hoshiarpur. The two had been killed in an encounter with the police in Jalandhar. Barnala had called them "dreaded terrorists" but the Raipur congregation called them martyrs.

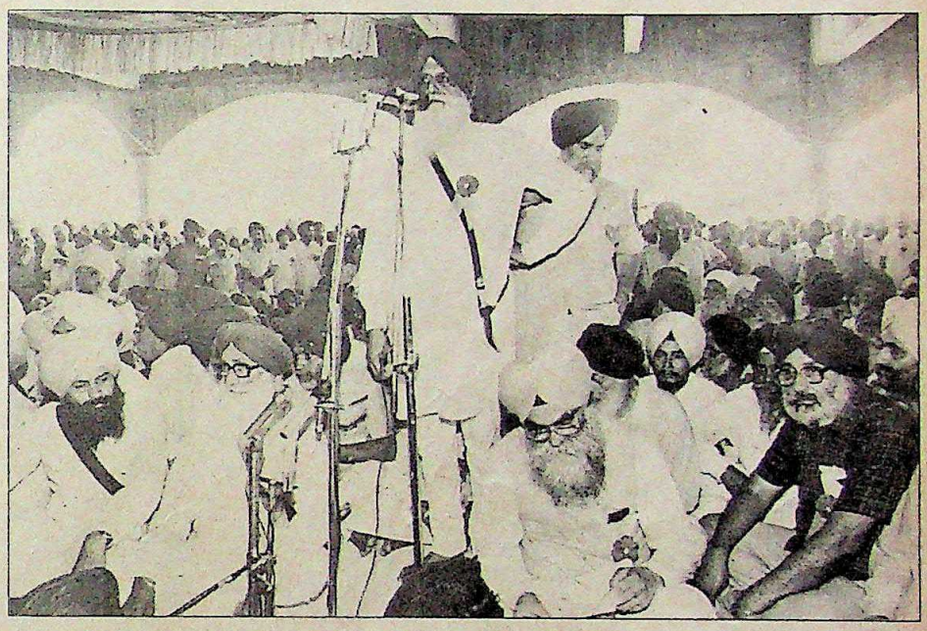
The Badal camp's militant posture, though attracting the Sikh peasantry, is yet to convince the militant leadership. "We know their real fight is for power and not the Sikh cause. They shall have to prove their worth," warned Kuldip Singh Malli, an AISSF leader at Phagwara. Now the AISSF and the Taksal are pressing them to resign from the Assembly to prove their bona fides.

In Chandigarh, Barnala minced no words in retaliation against the Badal faction's diatribes: "They are now clearly supporting efforts to disrupt national unity, build terrorism and the forces of secession. They want to destroy the Dal, create conditions of military rule and destabilise Punjab. They are providing political cover to the heinous designs of foreign powers." Referring to the killing of "innocent Sikh youth" by branding them as Naxalites in Badal's days in power, Barnala added: "Today, a devil is turning into a champion of civil liberties. His only problem is that he is not the chief minister." Barnala's strategy is clear: to isolate the Badal Akali Dal through a campaign that they are supporters of terrorism and secession.

For the moment at least, Barnala seems to be winning the battle of wits. Badal had claimed that two-thirds of the 440 delegates that make up the full general house of the Akali Dal would attend the Anandpur Sahib convention, but barely 100 turned up. So no separate 'delegates session' was held to elect him leader: the 6,000-odd Akalis who attended chose him the president. And as long as Barnala is in power, it may be difficult for Badal or Tohra to muster greater support for their militancy.

—GOBIND THUKRAL in Anandpur Sahib

Tohra at Anandpur Sahib congregation



"Barnala is a traitor. At the behest of the Centre, he is finishing the Sikh youth and attacking the Sikh shrines. Neither God nor Sikhs shall pardon him."

PRAKASH SINGH BADAL
former chief minister

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TERRORISM

Turning the Tide

FINALLY, the concerted offensive launched by the police and the paramilitary forces against Punjab's terrorists seems to be yielding results. In the last fortnight alone, the security forces killed a dozen hardcore terrorists, raided 17 major hide-outs in the trouble-torn districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur, and captured over a hundred extremists, including a dozen hardcore elements. They have now eliminated 10 of the 38 top-ranking terrorists who figure on the police 'hit list'. These breakthroughs suggest that the security forces, long on the receiving end in Punjab, could have arrested the tide.

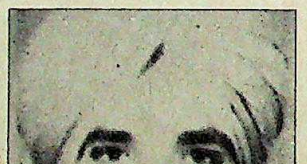
Says Punjab police chief Julio F. Ribeiro, exuding a new-found confidence that is just about beginning to be shared down the line: "We have succeeded in drawing them out and engaging them in encounters. Our combing operations are resulting either in elimination or arrest of some of the front-ranking terrorists." The morale of the security forces is definitely higher than before. But intelligence sources caution against any impression that the tide has turned against the terrorists.

Between March and July 10, the police have killed 36 hardcore terrorists: 20 in Amritsar, eight in Gurdaspur, six in Jalandhar and two in Ludhiana, besides arresting over 600 of them. The police also claim to have solved 290 terrorist killings, including the one in Jalandhar in which six police officials were killed and four terrorists freed from court premises, the Krishna Nagar massacre of 11 people in Amritsar, the killing of nine Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) workers in Ludhiana, and of four government schoolteachers in Guru Ki Wadali village in the district of Amritsar

The arms seized from the terrorists give an idea of the fire-power confronting the security forces: 120 revolvers, 14 Sten gun carbines, 23 rifles and 10 HE-36 grenades, besides 2,000 cartridges. "We are wrongly maligned by the public and the politicians alike without any critical appraisal of our total achievement," says Puran Chand Dogra, the Jalandhar Range deputy inspector-general (DIG).

It all began late last month when, during an hour-long encounter at Kali Bahmni village near Batala, the police killed Ranjit Singh, the self-styled chief of the 'Khalistan Armed Forces', who carried a reward of Rs 1 lakh on his head, and two other front-line terrorists, Gurmej Singh, alias Geja who carried a similar reward, and Makhan Singh Chhit. "These three terrorists had struck terror in the Batala sub-division and were responsible for over two dozen incidents of violence," said Gurdaspur police chief J.P. Birdi.

The face-off was an example of the superior kind of intelligence now reaching the Punjab police. Reliable sources told the DIG of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Inderjit Singh Sandhu, and Additional DIG A.A.Siddiqui that the Ranjit Singh gang was plotting a fresh crime near a tubewell in Kali Bahmni village. The security forces rushed to the village, threw three concentric rings around it and told the terrorists to surrender. They didn't, and died in the shoot-out that followed.



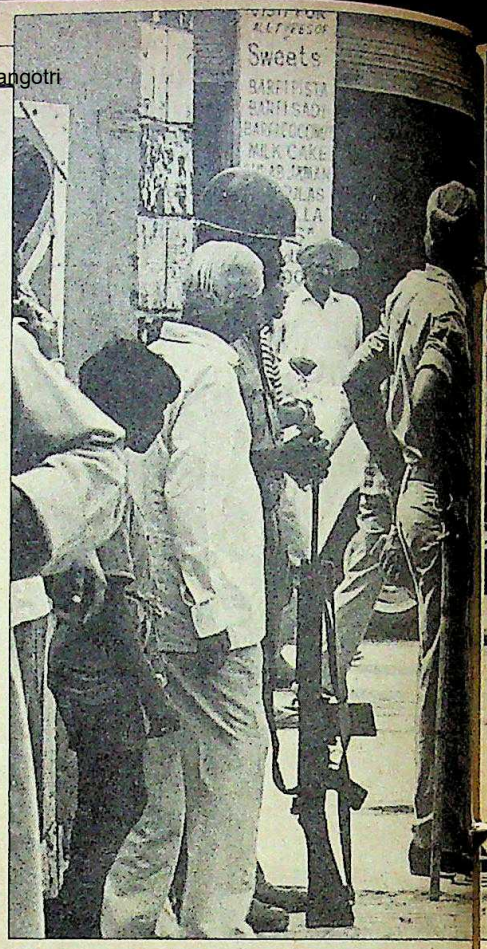
Avtar Singh (left) acting chief of the Babbar Khalsa; and Ranjit Singh killed in an encounter near Batala

A week later, the security forces notched up another success when they eliminated a gang of five terrorists led by Balbir Singh Billa, who too carried a reward of Rs 1 lakh. The gang is suspected to have killed 20 people, including a constable, in the last three months, mostly in the Tarn Taran sub-division of Amritsar district. It had killed six people, including a Communist Party of India (CPI) worker who had organised a protest march against the terrorists.

The police then averted a major catastrophe in Putlighar Chowk, an industrial suburb of Amritsar, with the arrest of Avtar Singh, the acting chief of the Babbar Khalsa. Described as a "devilish killer" by S.S.Virk, DIG in the CRPF, Avtar Singh was planning a communal carnage in Putlighar Chowk. The terrorist, who used to travel in a car disguised as a railway police officer and who has been known to commit several murders and robberies in a day, was the leader of the gang that killed 11 people in Amritsar's Krishna Nagar.

The raid on Avtar Singh's hide-out was led by Virk himself. The security forces had earlier raided three of his hide-outs in Amritsar and Tarn Taran and collected firm evidence that he was hiding in Putlighar Chowk. When Virk took the terrorist by surprise, the killer of at least 20 people offered no resistance at all, even though Virk had only a small contingent of policemen with him.

The last of the 'list of 38' to fall last fortnight was Balbir Singh, who carried a reward of Rs 50,000. Along with his associate Jeetpal Singh, Balbir Singh had gone on a scooter to Model Town in Jalandhar to kill Punjab Qaumi Ekta leader Baldev Krishan Khullar. Khullar was not in but when the terrorists opened fire at Khullar's shop, his gunman returned the fire. Two constables of the Punjab police, who happened to be pass-



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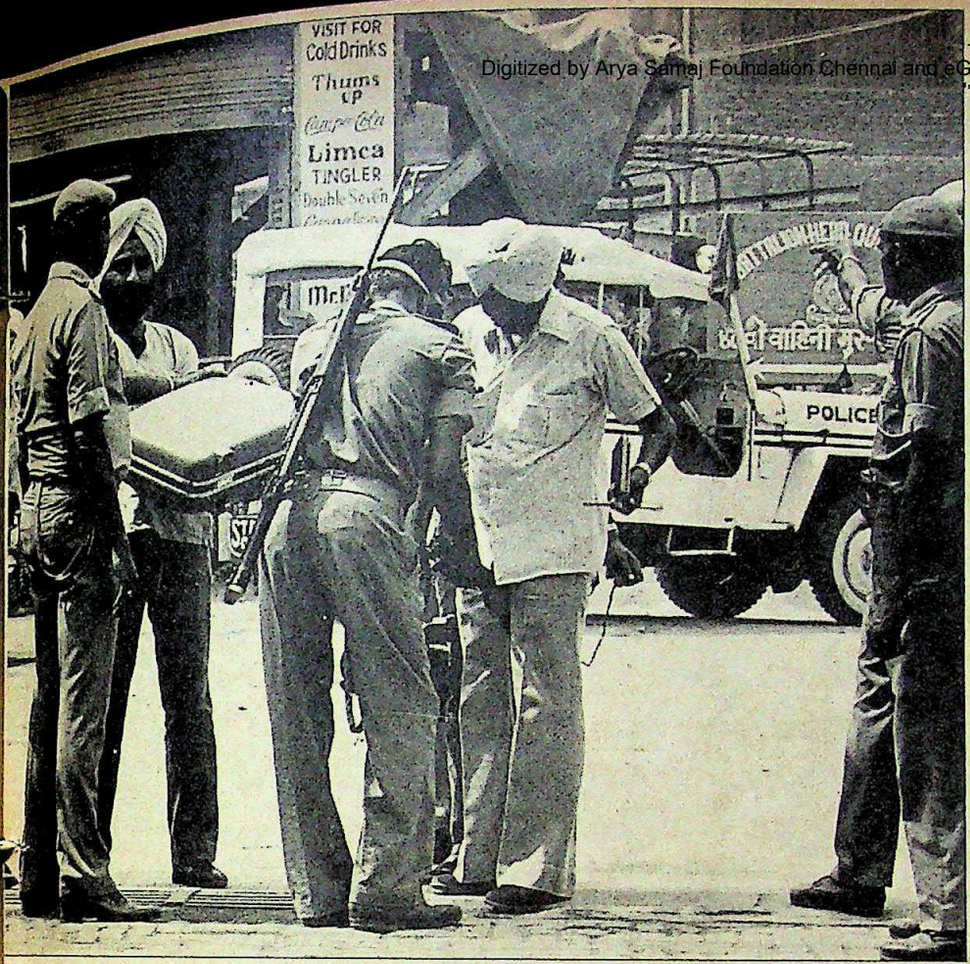

Security check by armed police in Tarn Taran: new confidence

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

"Our combing operations are resulting either in elimination or arrest of some of the front-ranking terrorists."

JULIO F. RIBEIRO
Punjab police chief

ing by, also joined the gunman in the counter-attack. Balbir Singh died on the spot while his associate died later. In earlier times, neither the gunman nor the policemen would have dared to return the fire.

That day turned out to be the best Punjab's security forces have had in recent times. Six terrorists, who had set fire to a flour mill, were arrested in Gurdaspur. Four more were captured near Sidhwan-Biharipur road. Hira Singh, alias Sukhwant Singh alias Sukha, who tried to escape from the custody of the CRPF, was killed near Beas in Amritsar. Ten Sikh youth surrendered to the Border Security Force (BSF) near Dera Baba Nanak after crossing over from Pakistan.

But the major police catch which has raised a lot of controversy was the arrest of Harinder Singh Kahlon, convenor of the All-India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF). He was arrested from his village, Dakoha, in Jalandhar district. But though he carried a reward of Rs 1 lakh, he is not involved in any terrorist crime and was wanted on a sedition charge and for inciting a mob. For five months now he has been a nightmare for the police: holding press conferences, addressing congregations and meeting prominent people.

Informed political circles, however, say that there is more than meets the eye in Kahlon's arrest. The Centre is said to be keen to hold talks with him. "Kahlon will soon be shifted from Amritsar to a place near Delhi where he will be available for meetings with bigwigs," said an Akali minister who did not want to be identified.

SUCH political issues are far from the mind of Ribeiro, who has quickly distributed award money and promotions to his valiant officials and is currently working on plans to further improve the cohesion between the Punjab police, the CRPF and the BSF, all three of which he heads in the state. "Minor differences have been removed but we shall keep up the offensive till we capture the last terrorist," he asserted.

The reorganisation and augmentation of the security forces have contributed greatly to their recent success. The two worst-affected districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur have been split between the CRPF and the BSF, respectively, with Punjab police to assist them. Further, each sub-division has been divided into three sectors with a committee of three—comprising one officer of the Punjab police, one of the paramilitary force and one intelligence officer—in charge of each sector. Besides, 16 more companies of security forces—taking their total to 70—have been deployed in the two districts in the last two months. The result of this show of strength and their coordinated use, says an intelligence officer in Amritsar, is that the quality of intelligence has improved dramatically as also the credibility of the security forces.

But the forces continue to face several major hurdles. There is little attempt to isolate the militants and terrorists. On the contrary, the Badal Akali Dal calls every encounter fake and is planning public protests against them. More importantly, over two dozen top-ranking terrorist leaders are still at large. Warns a senior intelligence officer: "The present lull is temporary. Those terrorist leaders, who have the backing of Pakistan, will not let their ranks get demoralised. Again, the first rankers who were trained in sabotage and the killing of VIP's, have not come into action. When they do, there could be another upsurge in terrorist violence."

The security forces know that they cannot afford to be complacent. For one, their success has not been without a personal price to pay. Since September 1985, 28 police officials have fallen to the bullets of terrorists. They know that the war against terrorism will be long and bloody but at least they have started winning a few battles.

—GOBIND THUKRAL

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KARNATAKA

Shuffle Bungle

KARNATAKA'S shrewd Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde was finally trapped in his own political web last fortnight. The reshuffle of the ministry—in the pipeline since February—had been billed as an exercise that would cleanse the state Janata Party's body politic of all its ailments, take Hegde's popularity to an all-time high and give the people a government that will finally work more and talk less. Instead, the reshuffle turned out to be a comic opera that left its performers unhappy and the audience bored, and afflicted the party with an unprecedented bout of dissension. Though Hegde was compelled to put off the final reorganisation of the ministry for four months, he still claimed that the operation had been a success since the patient was still "hale and hearty". But a minister close to Hegde summed it up more aptly: "It was a Hegde-type political gimmick but without the Hegde-type finesse."

The exercise was totally off the mark, both in content and style. Instead of sacking more of his cabinet-rank ministers, many of whom are inefficient, he chose the ministers of state as the proverbial scapegoats. While only three out of 14 Cabinet ministers were dropped, 14 out of 15 junior ministers—including the efficient and the inefficient, the humble and the arrogant—were shown the door. Said one of the dropped ministers of state: "If Hegde was really interested in improving the image of his government he should have asked the senior ministers to quit. We were just implementing the directives of our seniors."

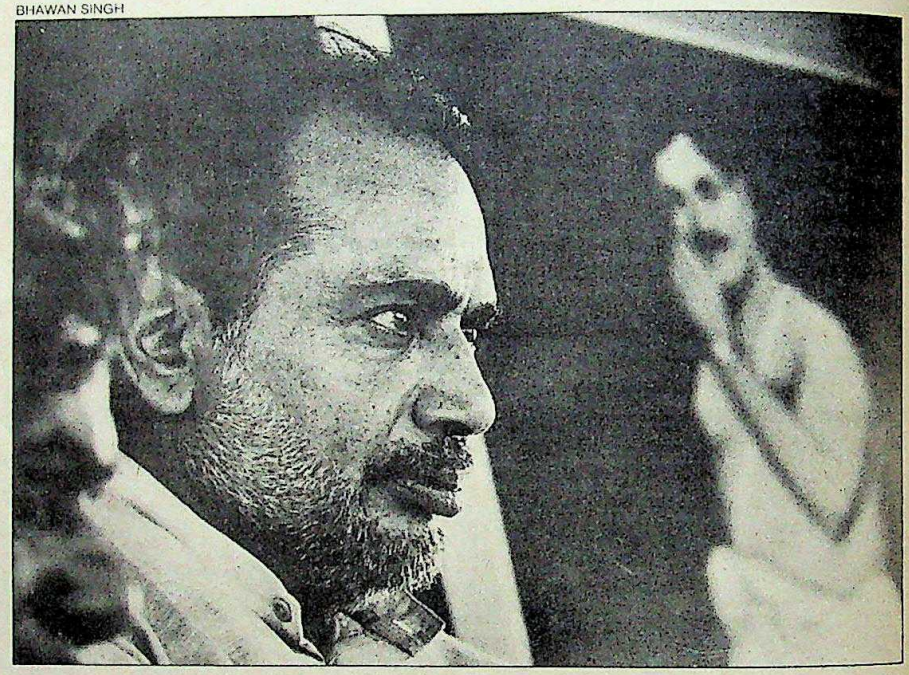
The ministers who have been dropped feel that Hegde has not followed any guideline in pruning his team from 30 to 16. In Hegde's previous council of ministers, nine of the 15 were definitely lacklustre but six of them were retained. These include Home Minister B.Rachaiah, who even his dropped colleagues say has been totally ineffective in arresting the decline in the law and order situation. Surprisingly again, though G.Basavanappa did very well with the food department, in the reshuffle his portfolio was changed to social welfare.

Even the buildup to the reshuffle was hackneyed, predictable and clumsy. First an orchestrated campaign was started by some MLA's requesting the chief minister to improve the Government's image, culminating in a memorandum signed by 91 of 139 MLA's saying cryptically: "The functioning of some ministers is not up to the expectations of the people of Karnataka." Hegde then wrote to them individually asking them to identify the 'bad' ministers and suggest replacements. But they wrote back to say that this was the prerogative of the chief minister. Hegde then held prolonged meetings with legislators and cabinet colleagues, to realise that removing only some ministers would label them "inefficient".

So, in a repeat of what happened two years ago, the entire council of ministers of 33 was persuaded to give in their resignation. Hegde-loyalist Jeevraj Alva was chosen to administer the pill to the junior ministers. They were called en masse to Alva's residence and told that they would be bearing the brunt of the coming reorganisation. Three of the ministers questioned Alva, and furiously, as to why they were being singled out, but when the realisation dawned that Alva was merely being his master's voice, they kept quiet.

Ramakrishna Hegde: off the mark

BHAWAN SINGH



RETAINED

S.R. Bommai

B. Rachaiah

J.H. Patel

Deve Gowda

Hegde then proceeded to announce that none of the ministers had been "dropped", they had all "opted out" so that they could work for the party for the November zilla parishad and mandal panchayat elections. Explained Hegde: "The cabinet has been reshuffled to draft junior ministers for party work. As for the administration, I am experimenting with a small team."

But nobody believed Hegde, and the ministers dropped were soon at pains to

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publicly defend themselves and their record in office. Said B.Somasekhar, ex-minister of state for horticulture: "I was not inefficient. I doubled the department's farm revenue and had prepared a unique scheme to plant coconut trees on banks of all irrigation canals and give them over to the landless. When everything was ready, I was dropped." Many of the dropped ministers also felt that they could have been far more effective in the local elections had they continued to wield ministerial power.

The ire of the junior ministers even spilled over in the lunch that Hegde hosted for all the ministers, both the dropped and the retained. When M.P.Prakash, a no-nonsense minister who had made a mark in the Agriculture Ministry, stood up to ask why only junior ministers were axed and the senior ones spared, five others joined in. Hegde clarified that the decision had been taken in consultation with the party president and other senior leaders. But H.D.Deve Gowda, irrigation minister and a senior leader of the party, denied that he had had anything to do with the wholesale pruning of junior ministers. He said Hegde had indicated to him that he would be reducing the ministry's size to 16 but added: "I didn't know that this was how it was going to be done."

Deve Gowda, in fact, has particular reason to be unhappy with the whole exercise. Hegde has long wanted to prune the lobbies of the dominant Vokkaliga and Lingayat castes and in cutting his team almost by half, he saw a godsent opportunity to carry out his plan, though only partly. In keeping with the style of the whole operation, the caste leaders, Revenue Minister S.R.Bommai—of Lingayats—and Deve Gowda, were not touched but five of the latter's men were axed. The Lingayat lobby was spared because it is hopelessly divided among various factions. Hegde tried to appear evenhanded and impartial by also dropping his own loyalists like Jeevraj Alva and P.G.R. Scindia, but Deve Gowda and his men were not convinced and are today even more bitter than ever.

The process to clip the wings of the Vokkaligas and the Lingayats began last year when Hegde demoted both Bommai and Deve Gowda from being number one and number three and replaced them with Rachaiah, a Harijan, and Rural Development Minister Abdul Nazir Sab. Bommai, lacking support in the ministry, was soon resigned to his demotion but Deve Gowda continued to privately complain that he was being isolated and accused Hegde of using Alva, another Vokkaliga, to counter his influence in the community. After this reshuffle, Deve Gowda himself offered no comment but H.L.Thimme Gowda, a confidant and former health minister, said cryptically: "If NTR goes, there is no Telugu Desam but if Hegde goes the Janata Party will still be there." Thimme Gowda declined to elaborate but it is clear that the Deve Gowda camp is not prepared to accept Hegde as the unquestioned leader of the Karnataka Janata Party.

WORSE still for Hegde, even MLA's and ministers from the backward classes were just as upset by the reshuffle. They have always felt that they have been the real victims of the Vokkaliga-Lingayat power game being fought in the Janata Party since 1983. Even when the 91 MLA's submitted their memorandum in March, ministers from the backward classes felt that they were the real targets of the petitioners, though 25 of the signatories belonged to the backward and scheduled castes.

Echoing the sentiments of the backward communities, former Education Minister, M.Raghupathy, one of the three Cabinet-rank ministers to be dropped, shot off an angry eight-page letter to Hegde accusing the Government of adopting "double standards" in implementing the party's oft-repeated election promises with regard to the backward classes and of "compromising" with the Vokkaligas and Lingayats.

In fact, the dropping of Raghupathy was a consolation to Bommai and Deve Gowda. While Raghupathy was in Europe with his film actress-turned-politician wife Arathi for a fortnight-long honeymoon, both the leaders had been pressurising Hegde to drop him. Their complaint against him was that he was "arrogant" and had pushed through some populist schemes like supplying free textbooks, uniforms and extending financial concessions to backward classes' institutions without "proper discussion" in the Cabinet.

Hegde does not concede that his government's performance is on the slide. Argued he: "If that was the case, the recent Congress(I) agitation would not have flopped and the Janata Party would not have won all the four council seats in the elections." That may be so, but he still faces major problems with his ministry and partymen. To start with, how to improve the performance of his ministry now that he is saddled with many lacklustre senior ministers and deprived of many of the efficient junior ministers.

He is also likely to run into trouble in distributing party work among the ministers who have been dropped. Raghupathy has already hinted that unless he is given some "responsible" assignment, he will do something that could greatly embarrass Hegde. Hegde might not face any threat of being toppled by the Congress (I) but trouble is in store within the party. Notwithstanding the comfortable majority his government enjoys in the Assembly, Hegde will have to continue to walk the tightrope. But if he does not show a greater finesse when he next reorganises his ministry, he could slip and fall.

—SRINIVASA PRASAD

NEW FACES

Krishna Reddy

B.P. Anwari

H.T. Krishnappa

DROPPED

M. Raghupathy

Jeevraj Alva

M.P. Prakash

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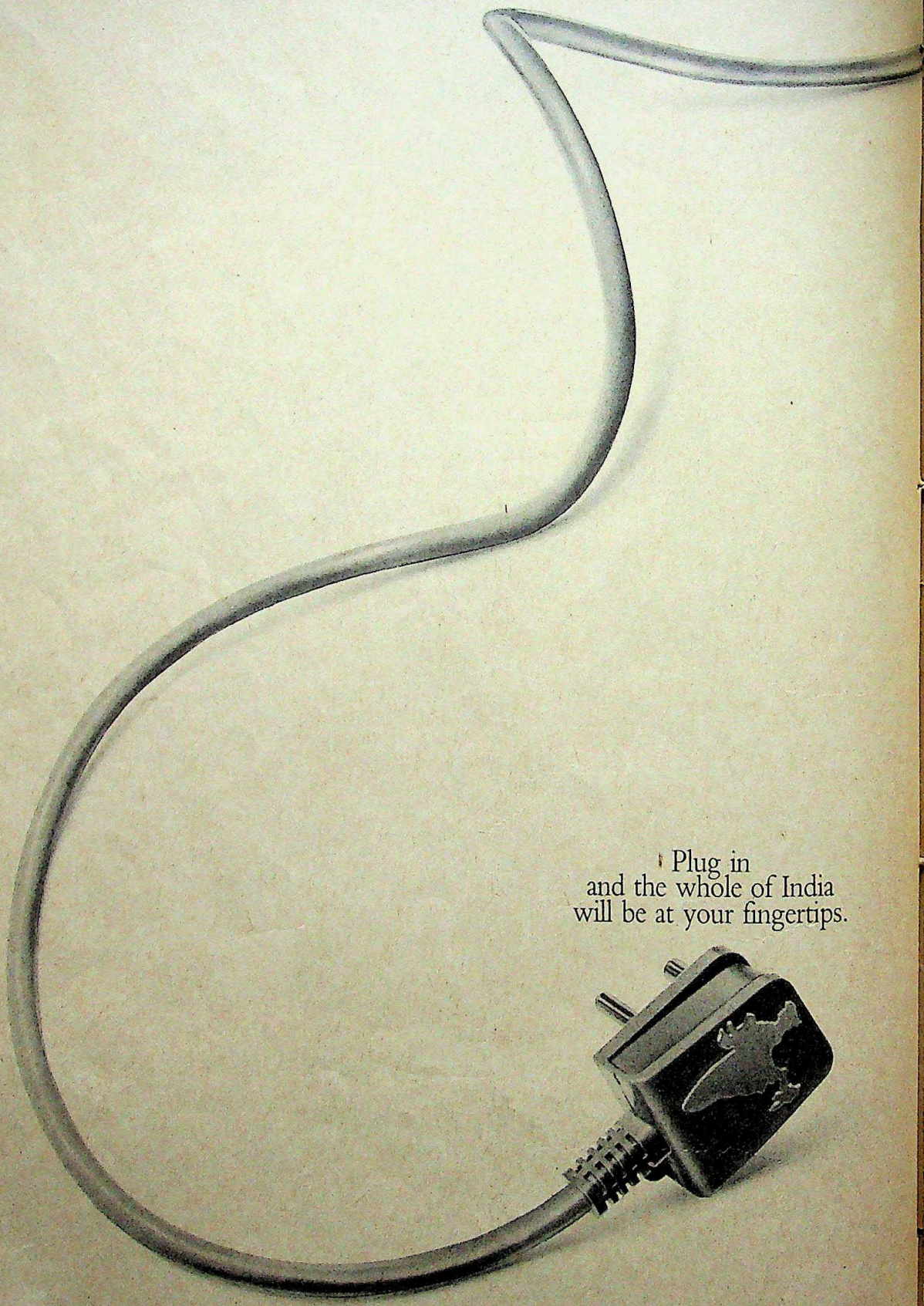

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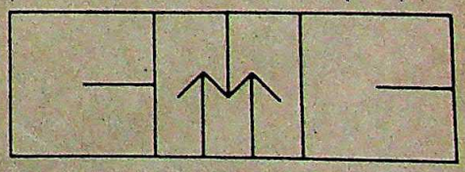

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GURBRINDER BRAR

Capital Target

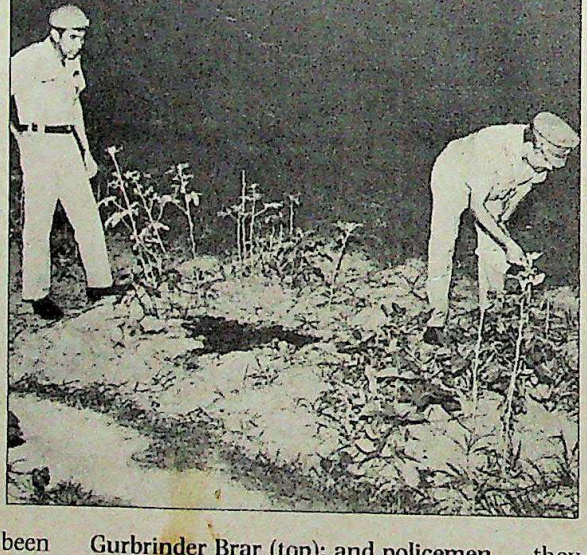
ON THE morning of July 5, newspaper headlines gave residents of the capital something to worry about. In bold, screaming type, the dailies announced that Sikh terrorists had attacked the Lodhi Estate house of Gurbrinder Kaur Brar, Punjab Congress(I) veteran and the leader of the Opposition in the state Assembly, killing one of her guards and wounding another. Among the impressive list of VIP's to have visited her house was Lt-Governor H.L. Kapur who stated that the attack had finally confirmed recent fears that several Punjab extremists had entered the capital. He added for effect: "This is the terrorists' way of showing their presence. They may not have been after any particular target."

A couple of days later there were plenty of red faces in the Union territory administration and in the police headquarters where the incident was being discussed in hushed tones. But there was also a feeling of relief that Punjab extremists were not behind the outrage. Investigation had revealed the startling fact that Mukhtiar Singh, more an odd-job man than a guard at Mrs Brar's house had indeed been shot by none else than Inder Pal Singh her Delhi Armed Police gunman. Even more startling was the discovery that the bullet lodged in Inder Pal Singh's thigh had been fired from his own pistol. There was no evidence of any other bullets having been fired. No footprints were picked up from the loose soil in the backyard of the house where the incident had taken place. And police dogs confirmed that no outsider had come in even from the direction of the next bungalow, belonging to Congress(I) MP Murli Deora along which the fence was broken.

All this adds up to a curious picture. Two guards, one dead and one wounded, found lying barely three paces away from each other in a huge blotch of blood. Five empty bullet shells—each one confirmed by ballistics experts to be from Inder Pal's Belgian-made Fabrique Nationale 9 mm automatic--recovered from the spot. Three bullet holes in a wall and one that pierced the air-conditioner in the Premier Padmini car parked next to the wall. It was obvious that all the bullets had been fired from the same pistol. But who had fired these and why?

RAMINDER SINGH

MOHAMMED AKBAR Patriot



Gurbrinder Brar (top); and policemen looking for clues

Inder Pal Singh, recovering in a ward of the Ram Manohar Lohia hospital after surgery still sticks to his initial version that, while on a patrol in the dark kitchen-garden area in the backyard he saw three intruders, two Sikhs and one clean-shaven who began to fire at him. He took position and fired back and does not remember anything else. Police officers, however, have no faith in his version and are working along two theories on the basic presumption that his own injury is self-inflicted. "The bullet has hit his inner thigh and travelled downwards taking a vertical course," says B.K. Gupta, deputy commissioner of police, New Delhi, implying that only he himself could have fired at his leg in that fashion. Besides, he points out there is very heavy tattooing round the bullet's entry point confirming that it had been fired at point-blank range.

The first theory is that Mukhtiar Singh, who had returned after a month's leave on that very day, tried to surprise Inder Pal by perhaps thumping him on the back or shouting at him from behind while he was patrolling the dark area next to the servants' quarters where Mukhtiar lived. "It really could have been a sick joke. Our gunmen are trained and instructed to fire back at the first sign of danger which is what Inder Pal could have done in such a situation," says Gautam Kaul, additional commissioner of police incharge of VIP security in the capital. According to this theory, on realising his mistake Inder Pal may have shot himself in the thigh and begun shouting that the extremists had come. At the same time he may have shot two more bullets in the wall to confuse the investigators. Mrs Brar and her family members confirm that they first heard the two shots and then, after a few seconds, three more, before they all left their dinner on the table and locked themselves inside one of the bedrooms.

Yet, it is not being dismissed as an accident. The police are investigating into the antecedents of both the guards to see if they had any enmity and the possibility that Mukhtiar Singh could have been victim of premeditated murder is not being ruled out. "For the moment we are keeping our minds open and waiting for all the forensic reports," says DCP Gupta.

In any case the weird discoveries in the case will set at rest the fears that Punjab extremists were prowling in Delhi openly challenging sentries in the most highly protected areas. Yet the incident underlines an equally worrying situation: there are too many guns in the hands that are trigger-happy.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA

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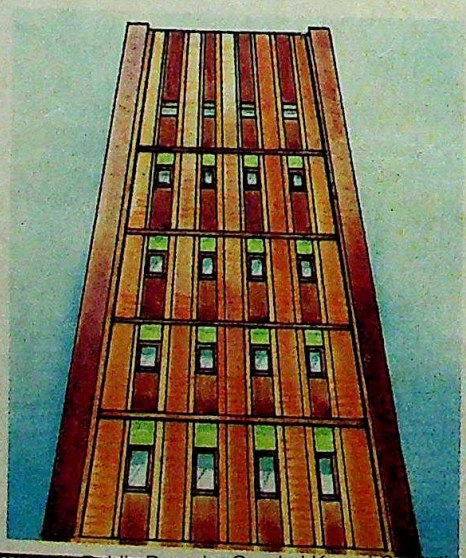

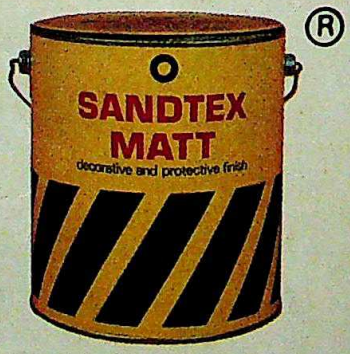

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RAJASTHAN

Land Plot

NORMALLY, the suspension of an official as junior as an assistant registrar of cooperative societies would have passed unnoticed. But last month's suspension of Suresh Charan by Rajasthan Cooperative Minister Ram Deo Singh, aroused public ire in Jodhpur, the state's second largest city. Charan had incurred Singh's wrath as 24 hours before his suspension, he had been responsible for suspending the executive members of a Jodhpur Cooperative society.

And Singh's compulsions were evident: the Naveen Griha Nirman Sahakari Samiti, the cooperative society which Charan had tried to discipline, had laid claims to 1.80 lakh square yards of prime land in the city whose market value today would be over Rs 4 crore. Ostensibly formed to provide houses to scheduled castes and tribes, plots have instead been allotted to a sitting legislator, a former minister, doctors, advocates, lecturers, relatives of an IAS officer and a judicial officer. Within days of Charan's suspension, Singh stayed his order suspending the executive committee although the society's office-bearers have been charged with offences ranging from violating its own by-laws to fraud and forgery.

The land in question was sold in November 1971 by a company acting on behalf of the former ruler of Jodhpur, Gaj Singh, to Jai Marwar Co Pvt Ltd, for a mere Rs 9.60 lakh. During the Emergency, the Government tried to take possession of the land as its records showed that it had been government-owned agricultural land since 1882. Jai Marwar won a favourable decision in the lower court. The state Government appealed to the high court, where the matter still rests.

When the Urban Land (Ceiling and Regulation) Act came into force in 1976 restricting land holdings in towns—in Jodhpur the maximum permissible limit was 1,500 square metres—Jai Marwar sought exemption from the new act on the plea that the land was intended for housing the poor.

In May 1981, five years after the act had come into force, the Naveen Griha Nirman Sahakari Samiti, registered as a cooperative society in 1970, while filing its returns claimed that the disputed land had been bought by the samiti from Jai Marwar as early as October 1974. This was an incredible claim, particularly as it came from a cooperative society which, like several others across the state, had seemed defunct for a decade. A number of peculiar facts soon emerged:

► The stamp paper with the sale deed was in the name of Naveen Rai Dangi, a director of the State Bank of Bikaner and Jaipur. The stamp paper is bought by the buyer or seller. Dangi was neither.

► In 1979, Jai Marwar was writing to the authorities as if it still owned the land.

Charan had incurred Singh's wrath because he had himself suspended the executive members of a cooperative society in Jodhpur.

Ram Deo Singh

Suresh Charan

The disputed land claimed by the samiti

► Though the samiti claimed to have bought the land for Rs 24.45 lakh, its bank balance over the years has been a few hundred rupees.

When the Government decided to get the matter reviewed by a senior officer, the samiti got a court order directing that the sale deed of the land should be registered in its name but the status quo should be maintained with regard to everything else. For the samiti, however, this was open sesame and it soon started collecting money from buyers of plots. Soon, complaints started flooding the Cooperative Department.

Charan, who had come to Jodhpur in September 1985, filed a police complaint on March 11, 1986 against the directors of Jai Marwar Co, Naveen Dangi and the president of the samiti, and Kundanmal Jain, a businessman, accusing them of fraud and forgery. In May, he issued notices indicating his intention to dissolve 159 of Jodhpur's 1,400 cooperatives for not submitting their accounts for several years. This upset many local interests. On June 11, 1986, Charan issued an order dismissing the executive committee of the Samiti and appointing a government administrator. Charan was suspended because the state Government suddenly found substance in a charge of corruption levied five months earlier against Charan.

Singh claims the suspension's timing is a mere coincidence. He also says his fiat staying Charan's order was in response to an affidavit filed by the executive committee of the samiti that it had received no warning from Charan before it was suspended. Yet Singh also admitted that he had not even read Charan's order before he issued his diktat! If the minister had not been in such a rush to wrong a right—he issued the order personally—he would have found that Charan had issued notices to the samiti on March 24 and April 28.

The cooperative sector in the state is already in disrepute because of the scandals that keep surfacing from time to time. And the Charan case is just one more prime example of the kind of wrong-doing that brings no credit to Ram Deo Singh or his department. But the stormy reaction to the Charan case does indicate that this time at least, Chief Minister Harideo Joshi will have to intervene—if he has any concern for the reputation of his Government.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR in Jodhpur

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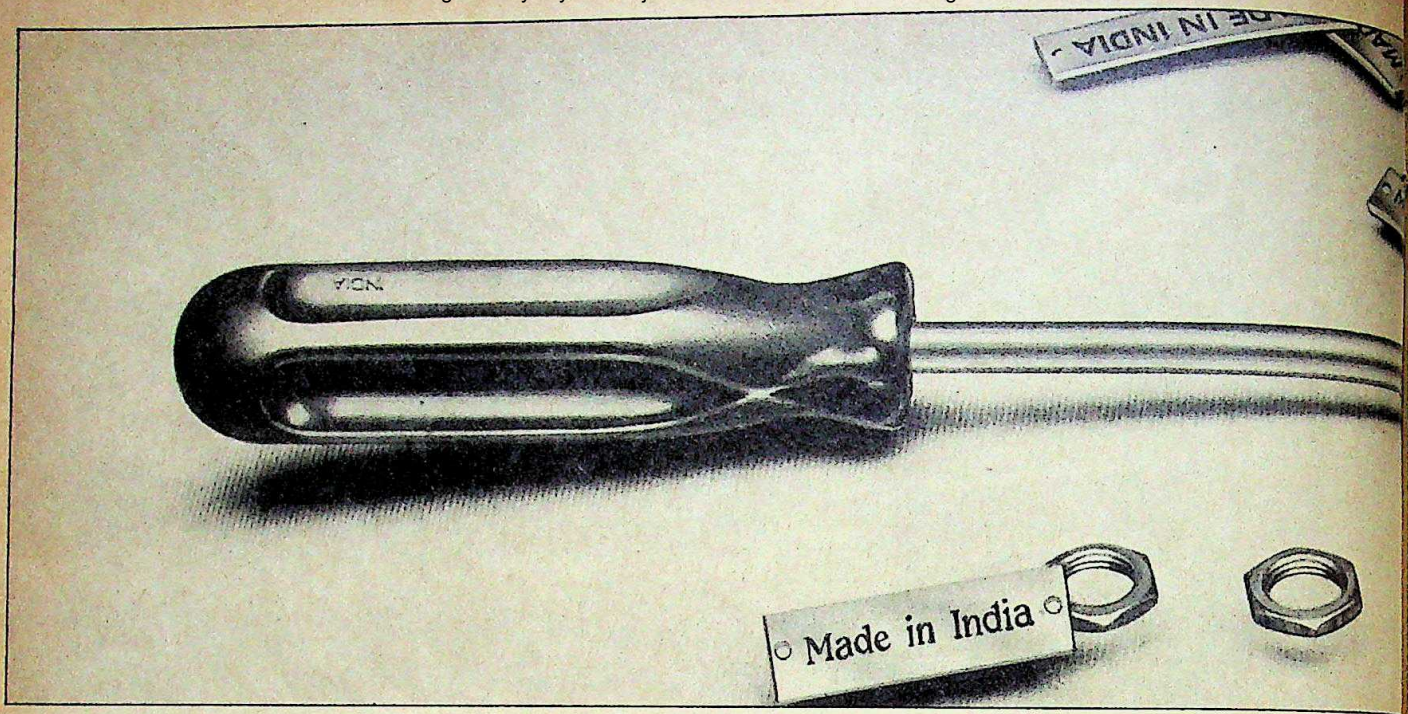

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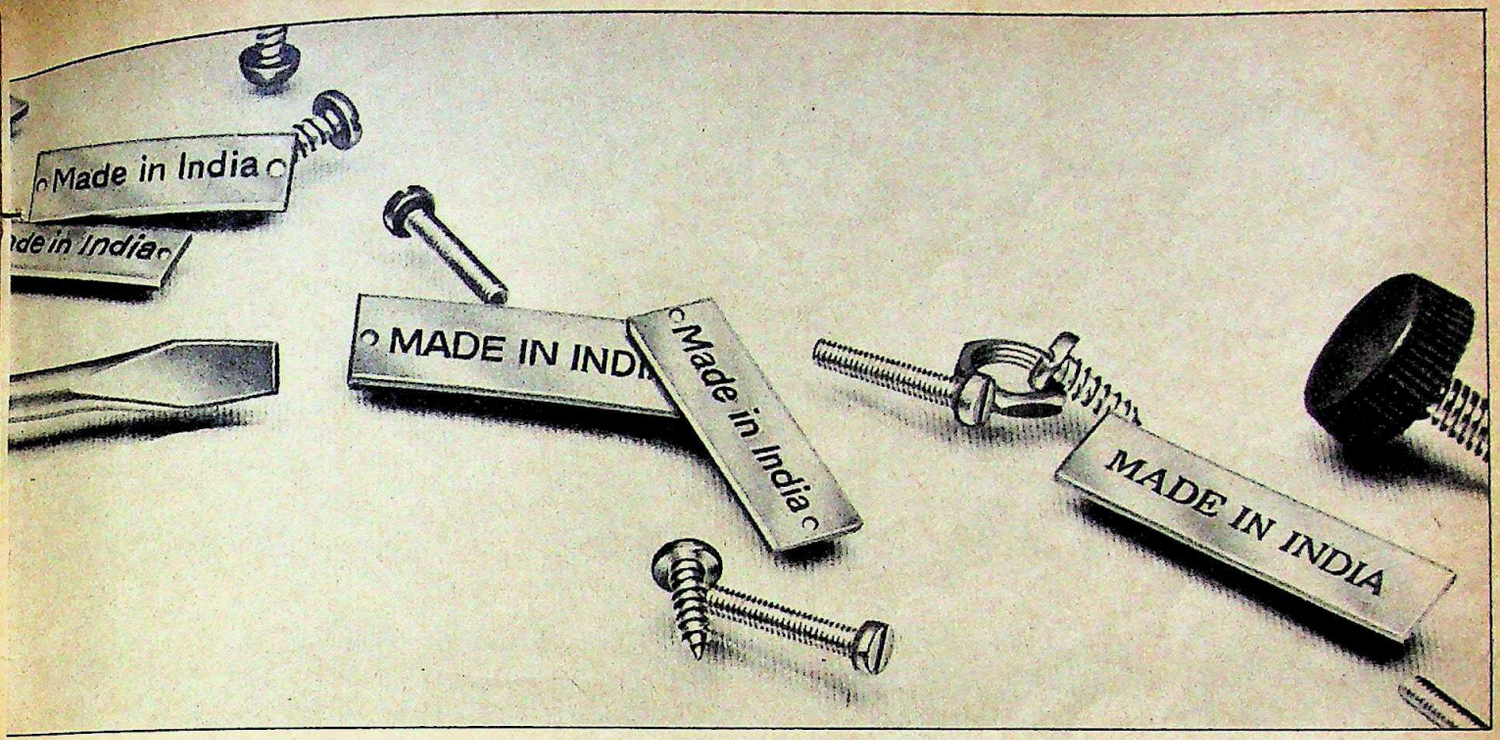

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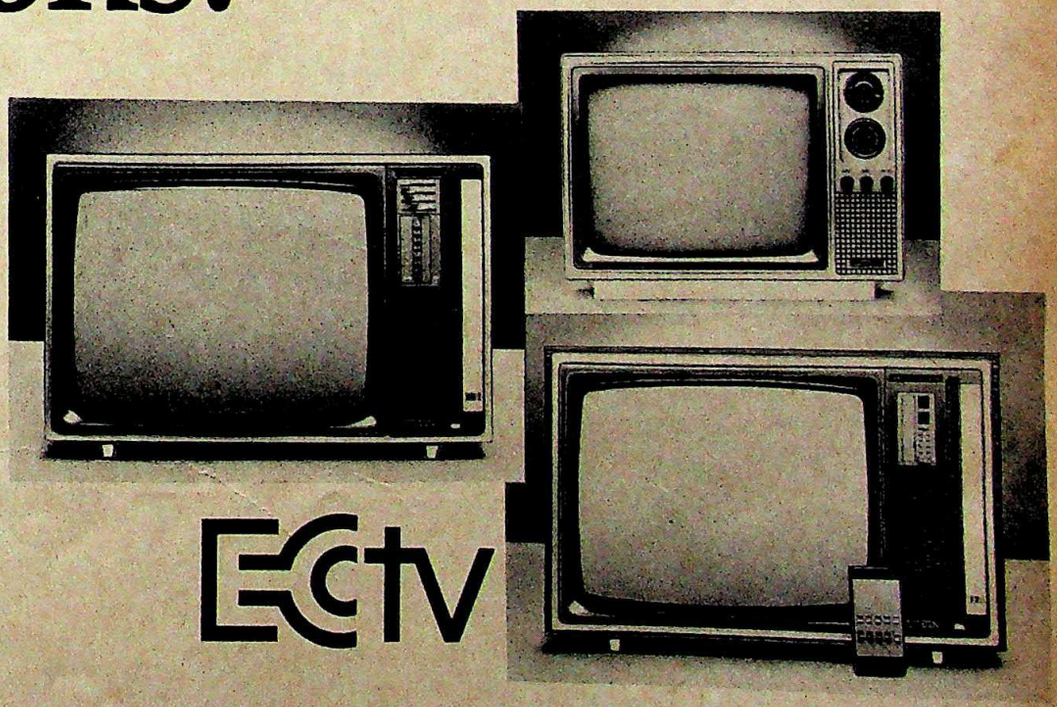

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WEST BENGAL

Pranab's Ploy

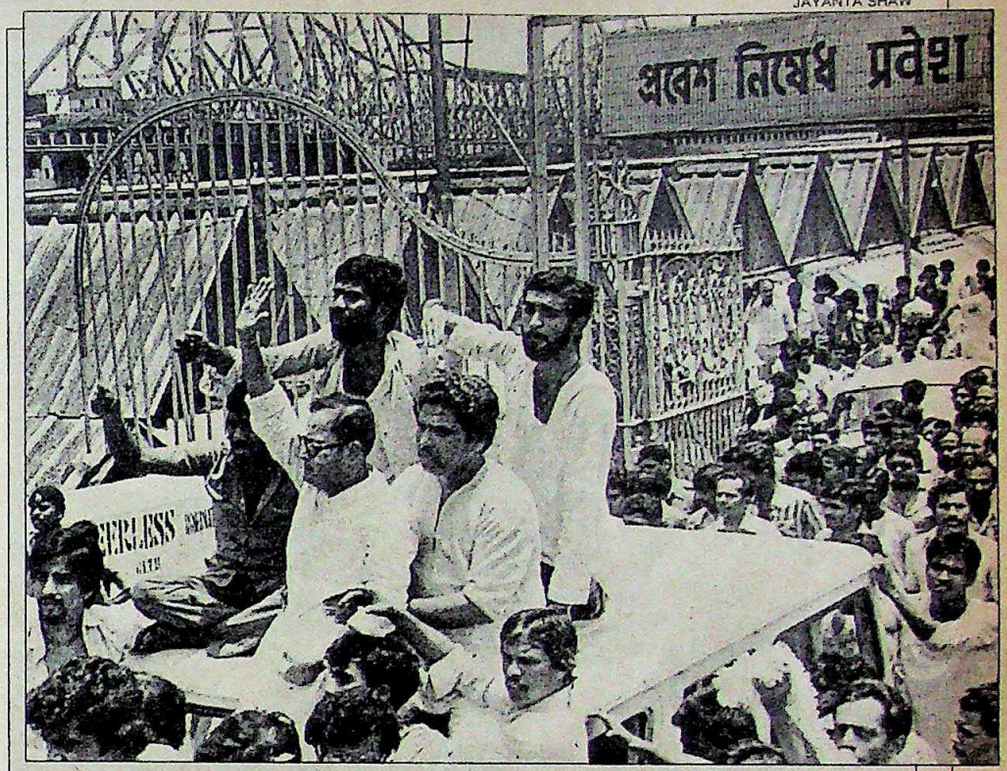
FOR THE first time in nearly three decades in politics, West Bengal's politically savvy populace is giving the 51-year-old Pranab Mukherjee a hearing. Reviled mercilessly by his political opponents as the man who could not win even a municipal election, the diminutive former No. 2 in Mrs Gandhi's cabinet has been drawing increasingly larger and appreciative audiences at the 107 meetings he has addressed in 10 districts of the state after his return to a rousing welcome at Howrah Station in early May.

Travelling in a Maruti van, followed by a jeep-load of supporters, Mukherjee has been preaching the gospel that the end of the Congress(I) is near and single-mindedly pursuing his two immediate objectives: explaining the reasons for his expulsion and consolidating his support among the state's 35 per cent committed Congress voters.

Shrewdly, he does not pose the issue as one affecting him personally. "The destruction of the Congress (I) is a matter of concern for the entire country," he declared to crowds huddled in a wet field in Barasat town last fortnight. And added: "I supported Indira for the ideals she stood for but Rajiv Gandhi threw me out because I challenged his decisions to reverse Mrs Gandhi's policies, because I disagreed with his style of functioning which is destroying the Congress (I)." Next month Mukherjee plans to cover all the state's 16 districts—making him the most widely travelled politician in West Bengal's recent history.

Mukherjee's assault on the Congress(I) received an unexpected boost last month when Sisir Bose, Congress(I) MLA and nephew of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, roundly lambasted the party and declared his open support for Mukherjee. Along with Ananda Mohan Biswas and Samar Mukherjee—who have always been with the expelled leader—three out of the Congress(I)'s 54 MLA's are now with Mukherjee. "But," claimed Bose, "50 per cent of the party machinery—which means district office-bearers and workers—is already with us. Soon 75 per cent will be in our control. And the remaining 25 per cent we do not want." The proposed mid-August convention of state-level Congress workers will be the first test of Bose's boastful claim.

JAYANTA SHAW



Mukherjee has been preaching the gospel that the end of the Congress(I) is near and is consolidating his support among the state's 35 per cent committed Congress voters.

Bose had first met Mukherjee in early May but the two did not get together till, in response to newsmen's queries about the reason for the party's debacle in the municipal elections last month, Bose stunned his partymen by blaming Rajiv Gandhi's leadership and policies for it. Said Bose: "Rajiv Gandhi's manner of functioning has become disastrous for the party organisation as the state-level leadership is not allowed any initiative in any manner." State party chief P.R. Das Munshi scurried to Bose to confirm if he had been rightly quoted. After Bose accepted responsibility for the statements, it was decided that Munshi would acquaint the high command with Bose's criticism and the two would meet again.

But a couple of days later when Das Munshi sent him a stiff letter virtually amounting to a show-cause notice, an enraged Bose sent back an even stiffer letter reiterating his right to freely criticise the party since it was "being run arbitrarily and undemocratically". Further, said Bose, Das Munshi, as an "undemocratically appointed ad hoc president of a PCC" had no right to question him. Later Bose agreed to join Mukherjee's campaign against the party's Central leadership.

In Delhi later, to meet leaders of opposition parties, Bose maintained that his outburst was not really sudden. He had said much the same thing at a stormy meeting of the Congress(I) Legislature Party in April where more than 35 MLA's had threatened to resign from the party in protest against the arbitrary functioning of Das Munshi. His impatience at the "feudal" manner in which the party was being run was building up—letters to Rajiv Gandhi were unanswered, Arjun Singh was inaccessible—and the defeat in the municipal elections came as the last straw. Now, Bose is going the whole hog with Mukherjee and says contemptuously: "What is known as the Rajiv Congress will soon become irrelevant."

The state party leadership, stupefied at the turn of events, could not even resolve to expel Bose or the other two MLA's who were openly working for

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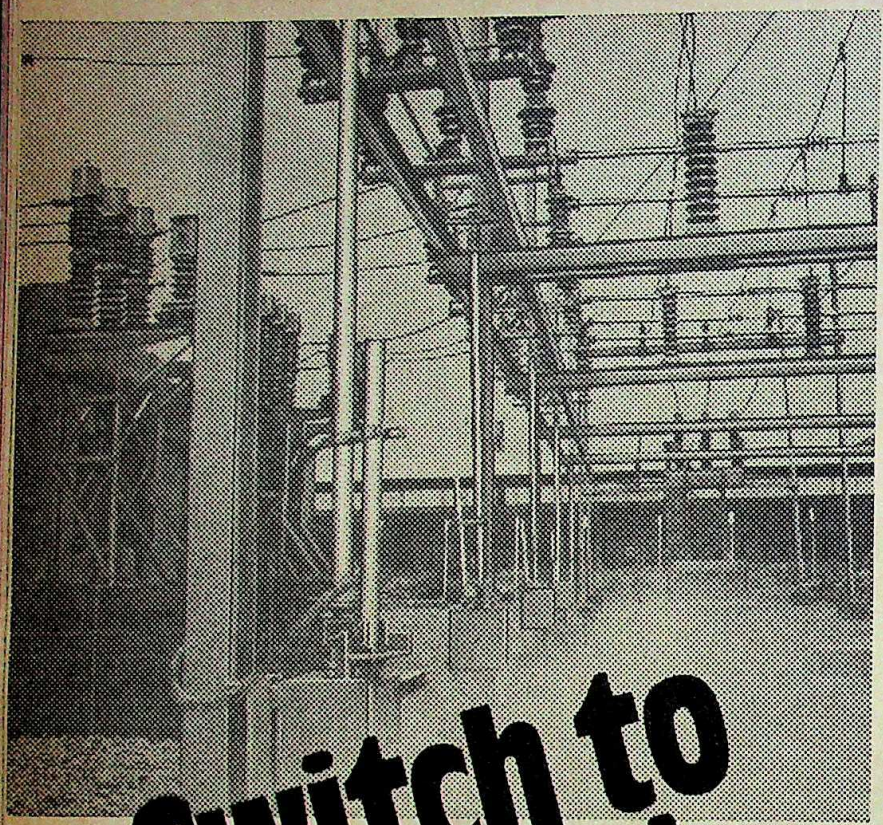

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Mukherjee. Instead, Das Munshi announced that he would tour the districts to clear the "confusion" among partymen caused by Mukherjee's "deliberate lies". Scoffing at Mukherjee's claims of increasing support, Das Munshi said: "Even if he was still the No. 2 man in the Union Government he cannot become an alternative to the Congress(I) in his own district of Birbhum." Alleged PCC(I) Executive Member Saugata Roy: "Pranab is working for the CPI(M). The Marxists are packing his meeting with their cadre."

Though there was no direct evidence to support Roy's charge, Mukherjee's diatribes have certainly gone to the CPI(M)'s advantage. The CPI(M), on its part, has aided Mukherjee's credibility by claiming that the rank and file of the Congress are already with Mukherjee and "if the process goes unchecked the WBPCC(I) and its followers will be in a minority within a short while." This kind of favourable assessment for somebody who was anathema for the Marxists till recently, along with the conspicuous absence of criticism of the Left Front in Mukherjee's speeches, have lent credibility to Roy's charge.

Though plans for a new party are only expected to crystallise after the proposed convention of dissident Congressmen in September, Bose concedes that they are working with the objective of capturing the Congress vote in the next assembly elections, tentatively scheduled for February next. Says Bose: "Our intention is to create a base in West Bengal and then launch an all-India party with a leftist bias." Mukherjee knows that if he cannot become the second political force in Bengal he has "no chance" and like the Bangla Congress, where he started his career, will fade into oblivion.

The odds, according to political pundits, are against Mukherjee and Bose. Explains the West Bengal Socialist Party Chief Biman Mitra: "Pranab *babu* is doomed. His ideology is no different from the Congress(I) and he will lose out to Rajiv Gandhi in the politics of benefits." Mukherjee himself does not expect spectacular returns in the immediate future, as his sights are on the Centre. "There is a possibility of a mass exodus from the Congress (I) in mid-1988 and till then Rajiv will keep losing elections and whatever mass support he has." For the moment, he is content to jog along. "After all, I don't consider this a 100-metre race but a marathon," he says.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE with bureau reports

K.M. KISHAN

Pipariya accused: caste rivalries

BIHAR

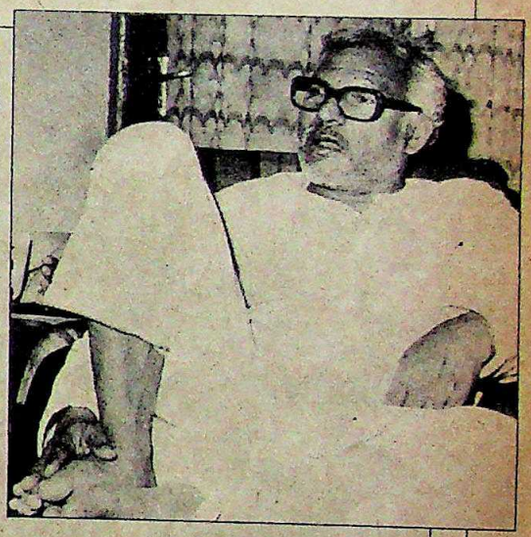
Letter Bombs

BIHAR'S politicians have more skeletons in their cupboards than most others and last month, skeletons came tumbling out of several unexpected cupboards. It all started with the disclosure that state Lok Dal strongman Karpoori Thakur had written to Chief Minister Bindeshwari Dubey asking for withdrawal of cases against the perpetrators of the ghastly 1984 Pipariya massacre. Barely had the consequent ripples abated, when it was revealed that the state CPI leader Sunil Mukherjee had also written a similar letter to Dubey.

Suspicion that an orchestrated campaign was afoot was confirmed when Congress(I) MP D.P. Yadav sent a memorandum to Dubey with the same demand. Nine children, and two others, mostly Yadavs, were killed in Pipariya, Munger district, in January 1984.

Thakur's letter of April 26 quickly became the focal point of the controversy because he has cultivated the backward castes and was in the forefront of the campaign to demand speedy trial of the 24 accused. All of them, now serving life terms in Munger jail, are awaiting the outcome of their appeals in the Patna High Court.

Ram Bilas Paswan, party general secretary and a committed opponent of Thakur who was denied a Rajya Sabha ticket by him, said: "Such a move (to withdraw the cases) will bring back jungle *raj*." And P.K.Sinha, former state general secretary, commented sarcastically: "The same Thakur who found landlord's terror prevailing on April 2 now finds peace and harmony."



"Only those who are enemies of peace and friendship amongst different communities can oppose the withdrawal of the criminal cases."

KARPOORI THAKUR

Waking up to his predicament, Thakur explained that it was up to the Government to decide on the merits of his letter. Added Thakur: "Only those who are enemies of peace and friendship amongst different communities can oppose the withdrawal of the criminal cases born out of caste rivalries."

Sunil Mukherjee's letter of May 5, claimed that 25 people belonging to the backward Yadavas, Dhanuk and Bind castes had been murdered over the past five years and argued that even the 200,000 people of the *diara* (land near

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the rivers) around Pipariya want the legal proceedings to end.

Thakur and Mukherjee also pointed out that socialist leader Sewak Yadav had convened a meeting where the people had pledged to fight caste tensions. Enclosing a memorandum purported to have been signed by 400 villagers of Pipariya seeking withdrawal of the cases, Mukherjee added: "You (Dubey) should take personal interest to get the case withdrawn. If not withdrawn, caste tensions will escalate."

While Dubey maintained a mysterious silence, Lok Dal leader and Sarvodaya worker Jabir Hussain led a team to Pipariya to find out the truth.

The real reason, the team discovered, for the letters was the opposition leaders' desire to woo the powerful Bhumihar landlords in the area: even the 2,500 bighas mentioned in Mukherjee's letter mostly belongs to Bhumihars. The Bhumihars, alarmed by the growing prosperity and increasing political influence of the backward castes, have long been playing one backward caste against another. Though the main accused in the Pipariya carnage is a Dhanuk—a backward caste—the police believe that he had been instigated by the Bhumihars.

After the law caught up with the murderers, Bhumihar leaders have been promising the area's backwards that they would get the cases withdrawn if they voted for their candidates. Gradually, these leaders brought other caste leaders around and finally in April chalked out a plan to mount pressure on Dubey from all sides. The letters followed, proving yet again that in Bihar the politician-criminal nexus is all-pervading. The perpetrators of the Pipariya carnage are unlikely to gain, but for Thakur and Mukherjee the letters will long be a source of embarrassment.

—FARZAND AHMED

LAW

Just Terms

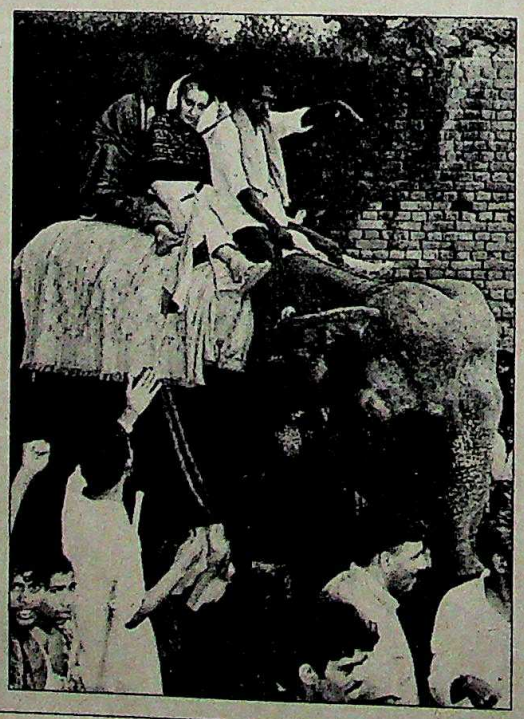
WHILE a bizarre political controversy was going on to save the killers of the innocent Pipariya victims, the law took its own course in the macabre Parasbigha case in which 13 Harijans and backward caste people were shot dead or burnt alive by an armed mob on the night of February 6, 1980.

Last fortnight, a division bench of the Patna High Court comprising Justices P.S.Sahay and R.N.Prasad confirmed the life sentences passed on the four accused and enhanced the punishment of 33 others from 10 years' rigorous imprisonment to life. Describing it as a unique case in which "a minister, MLA's, a member of the Board of Revenue and eminent doctors" appeared on behalf of the defence, the judges observed: "It is unfortunate that after so many years of independence we have not been able to get rid of class hatred and protection could not be given to persons belonging to weaker sections of the society, in this case, at a place just 50 km from the capital town of Patna."

Parasbigha, and now the controversial Pipariya, are not the only ghastly spots in the blood-stained map of Bihar. Since May 1977, the state has witnessed a series of mass killings of the poor. The list is unending: Belchi, Dharampura, Bishrampur, Chainpur, Kaila, Pipariya, and Parasbigha. Though in many cases people with enormous political clout were involved, in none of them had politicians of different hues come out in the open to save the accused as they did in the Parasbigha case. Fortunately, however, justice if delayed in some cases was never denied. Some examples:

► Belchi(Patna district): A mob of backward class landlords raided the village on May 27, 1977, and burnt alive 11 landless including eight Harijans. Three years later, the additional sessions judge of Patna sentenced two of the accused to death and 15 others to life imprisonment. The guilty went in appeal to the high court where the sentences were confirmed except in respect of two accused whose appeal against life terms was allowed.

Mrs Gandhi in Belchi after the killings



► Bishrampur (Rohtas district)): A Harijan village was attacked and set ablaze by a mob of over 500 people on March 25, 1978. Three Harijans were killed. Justice came three years later when 27 of the 31 accused were sentenced to life imprisonment.

► Kaila (Nalanda): Landlords and their henchmen descended on this Harijan village on December 9, 1978, and killed three of its inhabitants. Two years later, three accused were sentenced to life imprisonment and eight others were awarded various terms of rigorous imprisonment.

► Pipra (Patna): On February 25, 1980, villagers from six neighbouring villages surrounded this Harijan settlement. They resorted to indiscriminate firing, killing fourteen persons including six children. A case was registered against 39 named and 300 unknown persons and a month later 62 of the accused were charge-sheeted. A year later 50 accused were awarded life terms.

The then Mishra government had claimed that the cases were settled so expeditiously due to fortnightly monitoring of the trial by senior officials. Says Mishra: "All this had served notice on potential trouble-makers that retribution can be quick in the face of depredations against the weaker sections of society." But the controversial demand by politicians to get the Pipariya case withdrawn has underlined the growing power of the criminal element in Bihar.

—FARZAND AHMED

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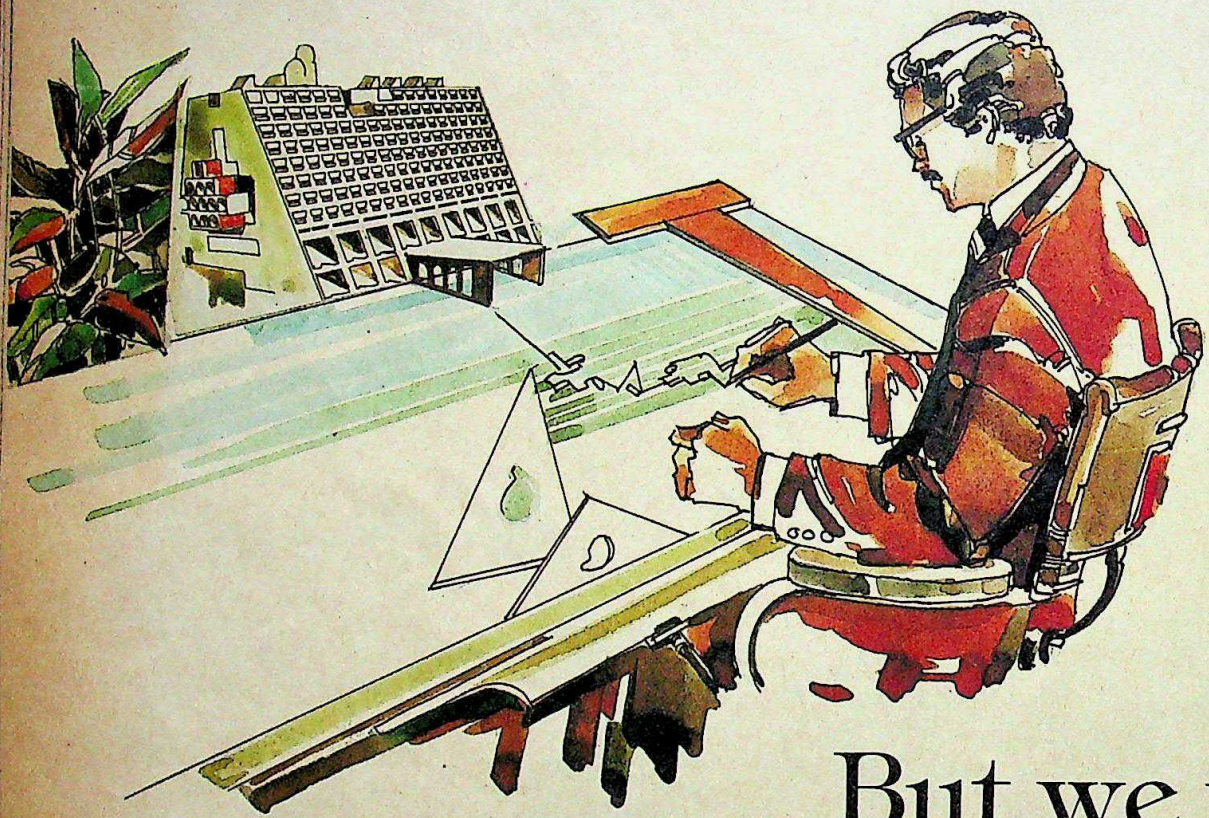

But we would ra about our contribution to Railway ca

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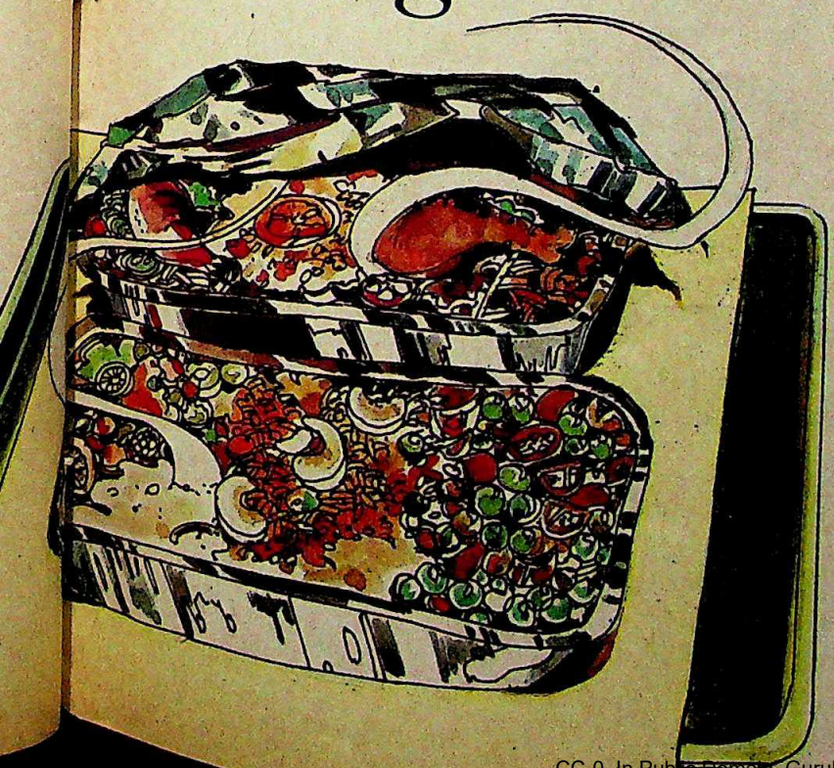
rather talk to improving catering.



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GUJARAT

Wall of Suspicion

WHEN communal violence flared once again in Ahmedabad last fortnight leaving 18 dead and over 140 injured in a short and deadly span of 24 hours, nobody was really surprised. Tension was conspicuously present even when the annual Rath Yatra had set off on July 9. The busy streets of Relief Road and Gandhi Road, the virtual lifelines of the city, through which the procession was to pass, were less crowded than usual as most people were anticipating trouble. The administration had requisitioned 10 companies of the State Reserve Police (SRP) to patrol various sensitive areas of the city.

But communal violence erupted suddenly in Shahpur, Dariapur and Kalupur—all sensitive localities within the walled city. After setting off from the Jagannath temple in the morning, the Rath Yatra procession had swelled to over a lakh of people and as it wound its way through Muslim-majority localities, some pro-Hindu slogans were voiced. When the procession was stoned by some miscreants at Jordan Road, hell broke loose. Shops were looted and burnt, vehicles were set on fire and damaged and over 50 people were stabbed in a matter of minutes.

Curfew was immediately imposed in the trouble-torn areas and within a span of four hours the police fired 18 rounds and 85 teargas cannisters but with little effect. Mobs gathered at places where there was no curfew and went around setting fire to kiosks, shops and vehicles. Late in the night the entire 5 km stretch from Gandhi Road to Kalupur was dotted with blazing objects.

Fears that a lot of illegal arms had been smuggled into Ahmedabad by communal elements were confirmed when gunshots rang out from several quarters. Their target was the security forces. One home guard was killed while seven others were admitted to hospital with bullet injuries.

Ahmedabad has seen several major communal disturbances since the holocaust of 1969 but never has the situation been as tense as it is now. In the last 12 months, some 170 people have been killed in 10 communal incidents. Obviously, the wounds inflicted by the five-month-long agitation last year, which started off as an expression of anger against the backward castes and turned communal later, have yet not healed.

Knowing this, police officials went around Muslim localities before the Rath Yatra, organising meetings between community leaders and cajoling Muslims to participate in the procession. But the wall of suspicion between the two communities proved insurmountable. Many irate Muslim youth asked policemen why the Government was allowing the Rath Yatra to take the same route as last year despite the violence that had erupted, taking seven lives.

The police were caught in a dilemma. If they changed the route it would amount to admitting that the Government did not trust the minority community and was incapable of tackling any law and order contingency. But what finally decided the issue in favour of the original route was the realisation that they could well fail in persuading the organisers of the procession to change it. Last year they had banned the procession and imposed a curfew and yet the procession had come out. Lamented Narayanlal Kalma, assistant commissioner of police: "We tried to do our best but despite all our attempts at a human level, a communal riot broke out."

The latest flare-up has only increased the bitterness between the communities. Muslims allege that processionists shouted abusing slogans while V.A.Vanikar, vice-president of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, maintains that the sudden stoning of the procession and the precise way the violence erupted in several parts of the city showed that the attack was pre-planned.

In this atmosphere of growing hatred, housewife Jayanti Gadadhah reflects the pain shared by the declining number of secularists in the city when she says: "It scares me to admit that hatred cannot be wiped out in the erstwhile amiable Ahmedabadi." Even as Chief Minister Amarsinh Chaudhary tried to contain the violence by airlifting 12 CRPF companies from Delhi, he was yet to show that he has any cure for the city's worsening communal malaise.

—RAMESH MENON

Riot-torn Dariapur: communal divide

Ahmedabad has seen several major communal disturbances since the holocaust of 1969 but never has the situation been as tense as it is now.

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M.G. RAMACHANDRAN

The Glitter is Gone

EVER since he stormed into power 10 years ago, M.G. Ramachandran, the dark-glassed and fur-capped chief minister of Tamil Nadu, has been the most enduring symbol of the state's hero-worshipping and cinema-crazy populace. But the charisma now seems to be fading and the frenzy usually associated with MGR-sponsored extravaganzas missing. Factionalism and dissension are raising their ugly head within the party and ominous signals of MGR losing his grip over the state's political destiny have started manifesting themselves. Last fortnight MGR's reign entered a record tenth year, but much of the gilt was missing from the celebrations. Senior Correspondent S.H. VENKATRAMANI *with Assistant Editor* PRABHU CHAWLA *report:*

CELLULOID glitter doesn't last long in the more realistic world of politics. This point was driven home quite forcefully last fortnight in Tamil Nadu even as Chief Minister Maruthur Gopala Ramachandran (Menon) entered his 10th year in power, setting a record in the political history of the state.

As a motley crowd of AIADMK activists carrying the party's red, white and black flags assembled at Anna Nagar in north-west Madras for a cycle rally to mark the onset of year-long celebrations, something seemed amiss. The size and trappings of a typical AIADMK show of strength were all there, but the hoopla and frenzy usually associated with MGR-sponsored shows was conspicuous by its absence. And later, when 5,000 cyclists peddled through the arterial Mount Road, there were neither attempts at self-immolation nor crowds cheering the AIADMK activists from the roof-tops.

Normally, the dark-glassed and fur-capped *puratchi thalaivar* (revolutionary hero) would have at least made one appearance on such an occasion, his mere presence sending the frenzied crowd into dizzy raptures. But, understandably, the near-septuagenarian leader—he is (officially) 69—chose to be absent. His speech is still slurred as a result of the paralytic stroke he suffered two years ago, the fluctuations in the haemoglobin content of his blood necessitates occasional blood transfusions and he has suffered frequent bouts of epileptic fits. Confessed a prominent AIADMK activist: "The rally was just a formality to satisfy the ego of Propaganda Secretary Jayalalitha Jayaram who had chalked out the programme."

Cycle rally: the hoopla was missing

If the rally symbolised the decay which has overtaken the ruling party, there have been numerous other ominous signals of MGR's loosening grip over the state's politics. Nothing could have illustrated this more powerfully than the two paid advertisements issued by the chief minister in the local newspapers last month. The first stated that MGR did not relish the interference of his wife or close relatives in administrative affairs and directed civil servants not to entertain any requests from his wife, V.N. Janaki, or other close relations regarding official matters. The provocation for this advertisement was the appointment of a police constable on Janaki's recommendation.

The second advertisement was equally startling in what it sought to address. Denying the existence of a "personal and confidential cell" in the Chief Minister's Secretariat, it asked officials to be wary of letters arriving on that letter-head.

After his paralysis, MGR is known to have become peevish and moody. But that he had to resort to advertising was as near to a confession of loss of command as is possible. Remarked noted satirist Cho Ramaswamy: "There is no doubt that MGR has lost control over his executive."

The major setback for MGR last fortnight, however, was the fresh evidence, in the Rajya Sabha elections, of open defiance from his own partymen. Instead of trying to get as many of his own men through—at a pinch the AIADMK could have clinched a fourth seat—MGR concentrated on seeing that DMK candidate T.R. Balu was defeated. And to show his dominance of state politics, he had the retirement of the fourth candidate, Ankapathur Ramalingam, announced at the last minute and persuaded state Janata Party President Era Sezhiyan to file his nomination. The Janata has a strength of three in the Assembly but MGR assured Sezhiyan that he would get through on the basis of surplus AIADMK votes.

But to MGR's utter shock not only did Sezhiyan fail, but Balu polled four votes more than the DMK's strength of 31. While Balu won in the first count itself, Sezhiyan lost by one crucial vote which was invalidated by the returning officer because the ballot-paper was deliberately marked in green ink instead of the ink provided by

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GOVERNOR

In the Dark

THE administrative drift in Tamil Nadu has even prompted the state's Governor, S.L. Khurana, to deal himself a hand in the issue by officially reprimanding Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran in a series of letters. Khurana had earlier been sending favourable reports to the prime minister about MGR's ability to govern the state but changed his tune after he realised that the chief minister's style of functioning was throwing a spanner in the administrative works. Assistant Editor PRABHU CHAWLA *during his visit to Madras managed to obtain the confidential letters exchanged between Khurana and MGR. Two of the most pertinent letters are reproduced below.*

Khurana with MGR: the warmth is gone

"Of late I find that I learn about major policy decisions mainly through the newspapers. Unfortunately, I have been kept in the dark."

S.L. KHURANA

"I have been under the impression that everything has been going according to the rules. If there has been any omission, these could have been averted had I been properly advised."

M.G. RAMACHANDRAN

Khurana's letter dated May 20, 1986:

"My dear chief minister,

Of late, I find that I learn about the policy decisions through the newspapers. If legislation is involved, I know only when the governor's message is sought. Article 167 of the Constitution indicates the role of the chief minister regarding the furnishing of the information to the governor. Article 166(3) says that the governor shall make rules for convenient transaction of the business of the state. Rule 35(2) gives the classes of cases that shall be submitted by the chief minister to the governor before the issue of the orders. Clause 2 of this rule lists the cases pertaining to the questions of policy. Where change of policy or practice is involved the governor has to be kept informed. Even the minutes of the Council of Ministers relating to a meeting held on October 28, 1985, were received by me in March 1986. No meeting of the Council of Ministers seems to have been held after December 3, 1985, except a meeting held on March 11, 1986, to consider the budget. None of the policy decisions taken recently seemed to have been discussed in the Council of Ministers as visualised in Clause 16 of the Second Schedule of the Business Rules. You may examine this so that major items of policy do come up before the Council of Ministers and minutes are sent to me immediately thereafter as visualised in Article 167(1) of the Constitution. Frequent contacts and frank exchange of views between the chief minister and the governor are the essence of the Constitutional requirements. I presume that you would have inferred that my role as head of the state has throughout been constructive and in the best interest of the state. Unfortunately in the recent past when a number of major decisions have been taken I find that I have been kept in the dark. I do hope that this position will be rectified."

MGR's reply ten days later:

"Dear Governor,

I received your letter of May 20, 1986. I learn that you have not been informed about some of the decisions taken recently. I have been under the impression that everything has been going on according to the rules and procedures prescribed in the Business Rules. If there has been any omission, I feel, these could have been averted had I been properly advised by the chief secretary in such matters. I assure you that they are absolutely unintentional. The chief secretary and the senior officials in the secretariat have, therefore, been instructed suitably to strictly adhere to the rules and procedures and the constitutional requirements that are already in vogue. I fully agree with you that frequent meetings between the chief minister and the governor are very much imperative and useful in the interest of the state and I can assure you of my fullest cooperation in this regard. In fact, I have always deemed it a pleasure to meet you often and discuss with you all important matters. I am proud to say that in all the meetings I had with you, I felt as if I had met a personal friend from home. I have always got valuable advice and guidance. I have got the highest regard for you and great admiration for a constructive role you are playing as head of the state."

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the election office.

Obviously, MGR had been unable to prevent cross-voting from his own party, though an official spokesman maintained that Balu's unexpected votes could have come from the AIADMK's ally, the Gandhi Kamraj National Congress. MGR has ordered an inquiry into the episode, the latest challenge to his authority.

OTHER instances of recent indiscipline by ministers and partymen have been no less significant. Early last month Agriculture Minister K. Kalimuthu defied his leader and got into a slanging match, despite MGR's directive not to do so, with Union Minister of State for Personnel, Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances P. Chidambaram. Taking umbrage at some critical remarks made against the state Government by Chidambaram, Kalimuthu dubbed him a "tout of the Central Government".

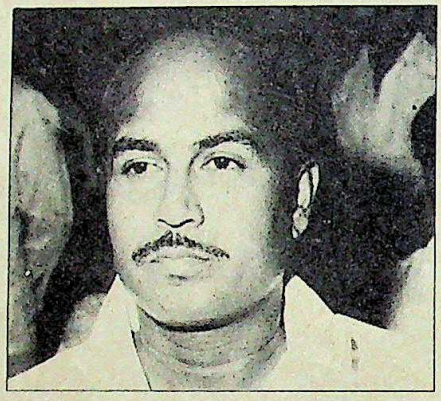
When local Congress(I) leaders protested against Kalimuthu's outburst, MGR asked him to apologise, but Kalimuthu flatly refused to do so and finally MGR himself had to express regrets to the Central minister. The episode further soured the already none-too-happy relationship between the AIADMK and the Congress(I). Remarked Tamil Nadu Congress(I) Committee President M. Palaniyandi: "How long can we tolerate this disrespectful way of talking?"

It is not only against Kalimuthu that MGR has been helpless. At the AIADMK general council meeting Finance Minister V.R. Nedunchezhiyan threatened, on chief minister's behalf, to drop 10 or 11 AIADMK ministers and draft them for party work. Much water has since flown down the Cauvery, but the plan remains where it was.

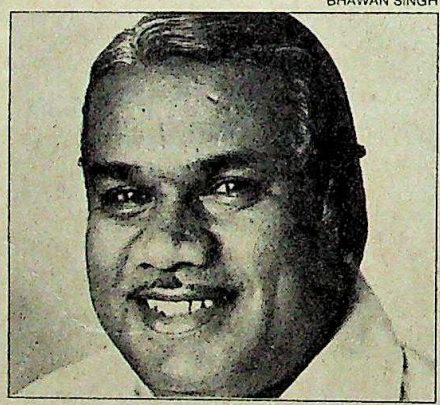
Even the little salvo the chief minister fired, by way of depriving former minister K.A. Krishnaswamy of his labour portfolio, boomeranged badly. Before he could be fired, Krishnaswamy resigned from the Cabinet in a huff. And even the most concerted of attempts by MGR's emissaries at getting him to withdraw his resignation did not work.

Kalimuthu (below); and (bottom) Krishnaswamy: open defiance

GEORGE FRANCIS/Scorp News



BHAWAN SINGH



Not just ministers, but the MLA's also do pretty much what they will. With MGR's appearances in the Assembly getting rarer, party MLA's also are seen less frequently. Earlier, they used to attend in order to catch the chief minister's eye. But, according to official figures, only 13 of the 234 MLA's were present during the 60 days on which the Assembly met in 1985. And even when MGR was present for some of the debates, the attendance of ruling party's MLA's was very thin.

Concerned with the diminishing interest in the Assembly, Tamil Nadu recently became the first state in the country to introduce a scheme of prizes to ensure the presence of MLA's in the Assembly. For 100 per cent attendance Tamil Nadu MLA's will henceforth get a prize of Rs 300. Concluded a Congress(I) MLA: "It is obvious that MGR's writ no longer runs in his own party."

Nine years ago when he took over the chief ministership, his word was a command and his filmi-style nod a directive. His movements charted the destiny of the state and the ruling party. Thousands of people would flock to his public meetings as if it was the first show of his films. Party MLA's, ministers and civil servants would shudder to speak to him unless encouraged to do so. Even during his second term, after 1980, village women used to sleep on his portraits and blow-ups. Any government official or party leader who questioned the supremo was sent into political wilderness. Recalled Nanchil K. Manoharan, the DMK assistant general secretary who was number two in MGR's first cabinet as his finance minister: "MGR

SUCCESS FORMULA

Populist Ploys

TRUE to his cinema background, MGR believes in heavy make-up and make-believe. He will never appear before anyone, however close he might be, without his dark glasses for fear of exposing his deeply-sunken eyes. He will never show up without his wig and fur cap for fear of showing his bald pate. And he will not open his mouth in knowledgeable company since his official bio-data lists his education as elementary.

No wonder his style of functioning has been highly secretive right from the very beginning. He has never believed in the merit of open discussion of issues with his cabinet and other party colleagues. He has always relied on a coterie, the composition of which keeps changing from time to time. He plays a balancing trick with faction leaders of his party, which not just safeguards his own position as the ultimate authority within the party but also prevents anyone else from taking him for granted.

Says a former AICC (I) executive member who has been a close MGR-watcher over the decades: "MGR is at once very shy and very authoritarian. He will never look at you straight but at the same time will be harshly authoritarian and vindictive." This was also confirmed by DMK Assistant General Secretary K. Manoharan who was once MGR's number two: "Even in cabinet meetings he and I would be sitting while the other ministers would be dutifully standing to attention. The chief minister would deliver a sermon and everybody would have to listen." After his speech impairment, however, he was not able to deliver sermons anymore but only issued slurred and staccato orders after other ministers had made their formal presentation. The final decision on every issue is still left to him.

After his illness, MGR has been operating through his secretary and personal staff, getting his intelligence from them and using them as conduits for communicating his instructions. The key man is MGR's IAS Secretary M.

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used to beckon cabinet ministers with a twist of his little finger."

But after nine years in office, the situation has turned around almost totally. Crowds are missing from his meetings, as if the film has overrun and the hero over-exposed to his audience. It is no longer true, as Annadurai used to say, that even brandishing MGR's fur-cap was enough to get the votes into AIADMK ballot-boxes. While the party is divided into various factions, MGR is powerless to stop them from feuding openly. Said Vai Gopalasamy, a DMK Rajya Sabha member from Tamil Nadu: "People want progress and this is precisely what MGR has failed to give to Tamil Nadu's four crore people."

IN FACT, the state has slipped badly in virtually all spheres. The rice-bowl of Thanjavur was once considered a show-case success story but the state has seen no new cases of farming breakthroughs. The growth areas in the national economy—petrochemicals, automobiles, small-scale industries—have all but passed the state by. In the early '60s, Tamil Nadu used to rank third in the country's industrial map but now it has slipped to the 13th position. The state's rich culture has been vulgarised and the administration, once among the best in the country, has become supine.

More damaging for MGR, the halo of incorruptibility with which he stormed into power has all but vanished in the spate of scandals that have engulfed the ministry in the last six years. Though none of the charges of corruption have been proved before commissions of inquiry, the people of Tamil Nadu are convinced that even if MGR himself is not corrupt, he condones large-scale and widespread corruption among his ministers.

With growing dissension and factionalism in the party, it is widely believed in Tamil Nadu political circles that the ailing MGR will not be able to ensure the electoral success of the AIADMK-Congress(I) alliance in any future election.

Veerappan (top); Jayalalitha (below): faction leaders

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

BHAWAN SINGH

Congress(I) leaders expect that after MGR the AIADMK will split into three different factions and the Government will collapse. While a faction led by Jayalalitha is likely to join the Congress(I), along with Electricity Minister R. Ramachandran, the R.M. Veerappan-K. Kalimuthu group will try to retain its original identity and may rally behind Nedunchezhiyan as the original AIADMK. Other splinter groups may join D.S. Somasundaram, the expelled former vice-president of the party who had now formed his own party, or the DMK.

But the Congress(I) has decided to play it safe till a clear picture emerges about MGR's ability to run the administration. So far, it has either supported MGR or, where it disagreed, maintained a policy of non-interference. Though it was opposed to the abolition of the state legislative council, it did not vote against the bill, choosing to abstain.

Still, the Congress has made up its mind on one question: it will strive to stage a comeback in the state where it was last in power nearly two decades ago. Younger elements in the party have been pressurising the party high command to give up its policy of latching on to one or other of the Dravida parties to retain its vote in the state. But a powerful section led by AICC(I) General Secretary G.K. Moopanar holds the view that the Congress(I) cannot win on its own. Should it try this after MGR, DMK leader K. Karunanidhi could surprise them all by grabbing power by playing to regional anti-Hindi and anti-north sentiments. But with MGR still holding the fort, however precariously, Tamil Nadu's political future is as wavy as MGR's health graph.

Paramasivam. Vying with him as the chief minister's closest confidant is the deputy secretary in the chief minister's office T. Pitchandi; and Under-Secretary T.S. Sivakolundu is another member. MGR's wife, V.N. Janaki, is also a crucial figure in his household; after his illness, MGR has become totally dependent on her.

Those not under his command were bound at some stage to be upset by MGR's style and so it was that Tamil Nadu Governor S.L. Khurana wrote to him last month objecting to his practice of taking unilateral policy decisions without discussions with his cabinet colleagues. Khurana refused to elaborate on what else he wrote in the letter. Khurana had characterised MGR's process of decision-making as defective and desired the chief minister to adopt a more democratic and participative system of functioning. (*see box*)

But, if, in spite of his idiosyncrasies and secretive style of working, his personal popularity has proved to be so resilient, it is because he tries, however outlandishly, to address the poor man's problems. While the mid-day meal scheme for children has been the bedrock of his popularity, he has got away with several fantastic promises made publicly. He once promised to make a cyclone-ravaged Rameshwaram into a world-famous beach resort like Miami—he had just come back from a visit to the US. On another occasion he announced, amidst thunderous ovation at a public meeting in Madras, a government programme to give a rupee a month to every family living below the poverty line in the state.

Again, during the campaign for the 1980 assembly elections, MGR assured voters at a meeting in a remote corner of the state that, if they voted the AIADMK to power, he would reduce the price of a postcard, because postcards were the poor man's vehicle of communication. But the very nature of these blunders explains his success: the fact that he is always, however unrealistically, talking about the problems of the poor. And that in a hero-worshipping, cinema-crazy state is just the formula calculated to click.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

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GUNDU RAO

"I feel suffocated in the party"

HE IS yesterday's politician in search of a future, angry and frustrated that he counts for little in the present. After having risen to the top in both the state and the party, Ramarao Gundu Rao finds it difficult to adjust to a situation where he is virtually irrelevant. Once a member of both the Congress Working Committee and the Congress Parliamentary Board, and chief minister of the state of Karnataka to boot, he had unobstructed access to the late prime minister Indira Gandhi. But now, he has been dropped unceremoniously from all party forums, and his letters and telephone calls to the prime minister remain unacknowledged for months.

Gundu Rao spoke last fortnight to Assistant Editor PRABHU CHAWLA *at his 20 acre farmhouse outside Bangalore on the state of Congress (I) and on national issues. Excerpts:*

Q. *What do you do these days?*

A. I meet people every day. I address public meetings. Recently over 15,000 people came to listen to me. People are upset about the poor state of the Congress(I). The people in Delhi are living in a fool's paradise. For the next decade and a half, Congress(I) cannot return to power in Karnataka without Gundu Rao. It will become another Tamil Nadu.

Q. *Why don't you take charge of the party in the state?*

A. This is for the high command to decide. Hundreds of people come to me every day. They don't find active leaders to whom they can relate.

Q. *But surely there are district and block Congress committees.*

A. None of them are active. Our leaders say these will be reconstituted after the party elections. But I am sure the elections will never be held. Genuine Congress workers cannot win party elections. Money will flow like water and power brokers will take over.

Q. *Have you told the high command what you think on party matters?*

A. Yes. I have met the prime minister, Arjun Singh, Arun Nehru, and Arun Singh. But they are not keeping their word. I have written three letters to the prime minister, which have not even been acknowledged. I have also been denied appointments with the prime minister. Now I have stopped meeting them.

Q. *What promises did they make to you?*

A. They promised that my services will be used for the party. But I haven't heard from them. People have been misleading the prime minister right from the 1984 parliamentary elections.

Q. *Do you mean that everything changed after the parliamentary elections?*

A. Yes, in Karnataka we won 24 out of 28 seats. Rajiv Gandhi changed nine candidates at my advice, and all of them won. But six weeks later we lost the assembly elections because I became a bad person and they did not consult me.

> **"Where is the forum in the Congress to protest against wrongdoing? We are not allowed to meet the prime minister. I was not allowed to speak at the AICC meeting in Bombay. Representations are not acknowledged."**

The people of Karnataka punished the Congress for humiliating Gundu Rao.

Q. *What about the other states? Do you agree with Kamalapati Tripathi's views on loyalists being ignored?*

A. It must be happening in other states too. Whenever I go to Delhi, they talk about Indira loyalists being ignored for party and government work.

Q. *Do you think newcomers are being imposed on party workers?*

A. Yes. The policy of rehabilitating retired officers politically is totally against democratic norms. They can become ordinary Congress workers and serve the party. They enjoyed power and perks for 25 years, and now they want to enjoy political power. What is their contribution to the party? What have they done in life to supersede hard-core Congress workers? They cannot be imposed from above like this on the workers, who have given their life and blood to the organisation. The people, who went to jail and faced lathi-charges and humiliation for Indira Gandhi at a time when these officers were in power, are suffering even now. It can't go on like this.

Q. *Don't you need new talent, good people, and expertise for party work?*

A. We need them, but not as ministers and Rajya Sabha members. We require partymen and not five-star experts who have no clue about reality and the misery of the people.

Q. *But they can be useful in some ways.*

A. If that is the trend, then you can make all the chief secretaries and secretaries chief ministers and ministers after their retirement.

Q. *Who are these civil servants you talk about?*

A. People like Romesh Bhandari, L.K. Jha, K.R. Narayanan, Natwar Singh and Jogi should not have been nominated to the Rajya Sabha or to party posts. Bhandari was the foreign secretary and he has now become chairman of the AICC(I) foreign affairs cell—a post meant for a Congress worker. Jha and Natwar Singh may be good for a government job, let them do that. It is not good to impose Natwar Singh on a constituency which could have been won by a committed Congress worker. Are Congressmen meant for shouting 'Congress zindabad' and organising public meetings so that these people can come and enjoy power over our heads. Did any of the bureaucrats participate in the freedom movement? Did they suffer in any way? Why should they be allowed to rule over Congressmen? If Jha is good let him continue as adviser to the prime minister. Natwar Singh, if he is so efficient, can be sent as the envoy to the UN.

Q. *Have you protested against what is happening?*

A. Where is the forum in the Congress to protest against wrongdoing? We are not allowed to meet the prime minister. I was not allowed to speak at the AICC meeting in Bombay. Representations are not acknowledged.

Q. *Do you find any change in Congress popularity between now and the*

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1984 parliamentary elections?

A. The 1984 victory was mainly due to a sympathy vote in favour of the party. They exhibited their loyalty to Mrs Gandhi and protested against her assassination. Had she died a natural death, the victory would not have been so massive.

Q. *But after that you lost in a lot of places.*

A. That proves that sympathy does not last long. After a point of time it is your performance which matters. Whether we agree or not the results show that our popularity has suffered a setback. All those who opposed Indira Gandhi are occupying important posts. They were rejected by the people, who had chosen Indira Gandhi and not them. Siddhartha Shankar Ray was defeated by the people. Our workers fought against him and now he is imposed on us and the party workers are told to obey and respect him. You know when Indira Gandhi came back to power in 1980, she took only Gundu Rao in her car to Rashtrapati Bhavan for the swearing-in ceremony. When we returned home she offered me laddoos at her house. She knew the value of commitment and loyalty.

Q. *What differences do you notice between Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi?*

A. You can't compare the two. Mrs Gandhi was brought up in politics. She suffered a lot and saw many splits in the party. She knew the difference between loyal and selfish people. She knew over a thousand Congress workers in every state. She was accessible to all and we knew that we could meet her when we wanted to. But now they can't meet the prime minister. In a way they want to reduce him to a captive prime minister.

BHAWAN SINGH

Q. *What do you think of the various accords signed recently?*

A. All accords seem to be going against the interests of our party. Wherever we have signed accords the Congress(I) is finished there.

Q. *What should be done to improve matters in the party?*

A. The loyalists, whatever his opinion, who stood by Mrs Gandhi in 1969, 1978 and 1980, should be rehabilitated.

Q. *But the high command thinks that most of the Indira loyalists are corrupt.*

A. Was Indira Gandhi corrupt? Was she a leader of corrupt Congressmen? Has anybody got the guts to say that? If the loyalists are corrupt, then they are indirectly dubbing Indira Gandhi as a corrupt politician. This means that those who were with her have a bad image and those who were not with her are clean.

Q. *Is it true that you have lost out because of the removal of R.K.Dhawan?*

A. He is my best friend even now. I am proud to be his friend. I do not drop friends just because they are out of power.

Q. *Do you think that after Dhawan's exit it is Fotedar who is influencing Rajiv's mind?*

A. Fotedar was always against me and other loyalists. I don't know why. Rajiv should beware of people who can misguide him.

Q. *Is Oscar Fernandez unsuitable for heading the Karnataka* PCC(I)*?*

A. He is a good person. But he has no rapport with the grassroot workers. He is not a good leader.

Q. *What do you think of the Hegde Government?*

A. He is in office because of the weakness of the Congress. We can throw him out if our party is united and strong.

Q. *People think that Hegde's Government is cleaner than Gundu Rao's.*

A. It is absurd. My government was much cleaner than Hegde's. No government is above corruption.

Q. *What will you do if things don't go in your favour?*

A. I have to make up my mind soon. It will not be long. I feel suffocated in the party and there are others who feel the same way. I have to find a way out. We expect the environment to change in favour of the Congress(I). I represent the silent majority. Iam the only batsman. All the others are bowlers in Delhi trying to bowl me out. Even if the umpires (Rajiv's advisers) want to give a biased decision, I cannot be bowled easily. And the audience is with me so they are afraid of passing judgement.

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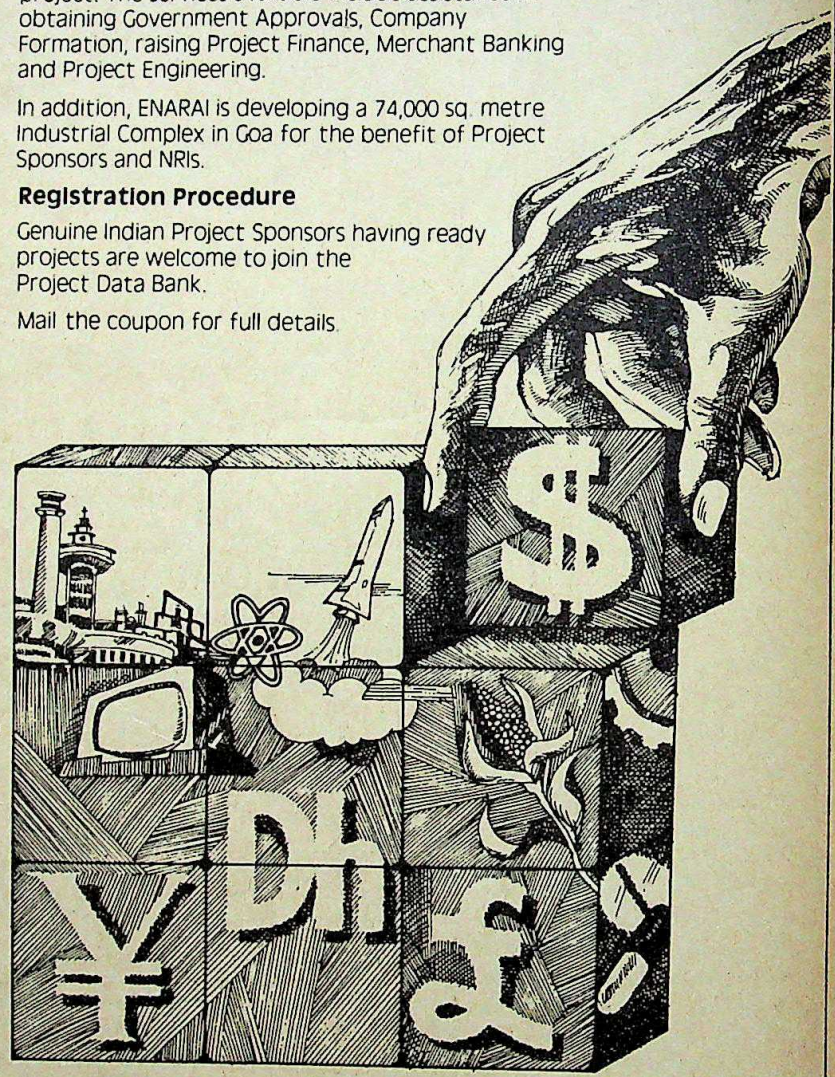

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SALARIES

How much are

SUDDENLY it is the season for salaries and heart-burn. Everyone from cabinet secretary to clerk, from general to jawan, from corporate high-flier to the scrounging scribe and schoolteacher, from airline pilot to railway driver and from the public sector chairman to the peon at his doorstep is peering over his shoulder at the next man's pay slip. The question uppermost in everyone's mind: How much am I worth? Am I abreast of the Joneses?

When the chips are down, there is no more fundamental question for any wage-earner. As costs of living increase, taxation levels change, the job market opens up and ways of spending money multiply in an increasingly consumerist society, does the monthly pay packet contain enough?

Pay commissions skew the graphs, periodic pacts between public sector employers and employees up the ante further, unionised power creates high-wage islands, and companies anxious to buy talent build in new perquisites and think up novel ways of feather-bedding covenanted managers who exploit the increasingly greater mobility in the job market. Airline pilots, oil industry technicians, bankers, computer software experts and a host of other specialists find they have a market abroad as well—in the oil-rich Gulf, in fields where the natural ingenuity of the Indian commands a premium, or with non-resident Indian businessmen who want to fill key posts with people of their own nationality. Said a former finance chief of Hoechst, who now works for an Indian entrepreneur in Dubai: "I have saved more in three years in Dubai than I could have in an entire lifetime in India."

Amid a general revolution of rising expectations, the salary earner has come into his own. In private companies, the public sector and in the Government, in that order, the last decade has seen a money-spinning surge that has brought wage-earning professionals a new, prominent status. Sons rake in sums that their fathers never dreamt of, as salaries outpace inflation in several sectors. Public sector companies like Maruti Udyog hand out allowances unheard of before in staid government circles, like an annual entertainment allowance of Rs 25,000 for a director and anything up to Rs 10,000 for a senior manager. And even though there is a vast sea of unemployment and low-wage troughs, those fortunate enough to have scrambled up some employer's

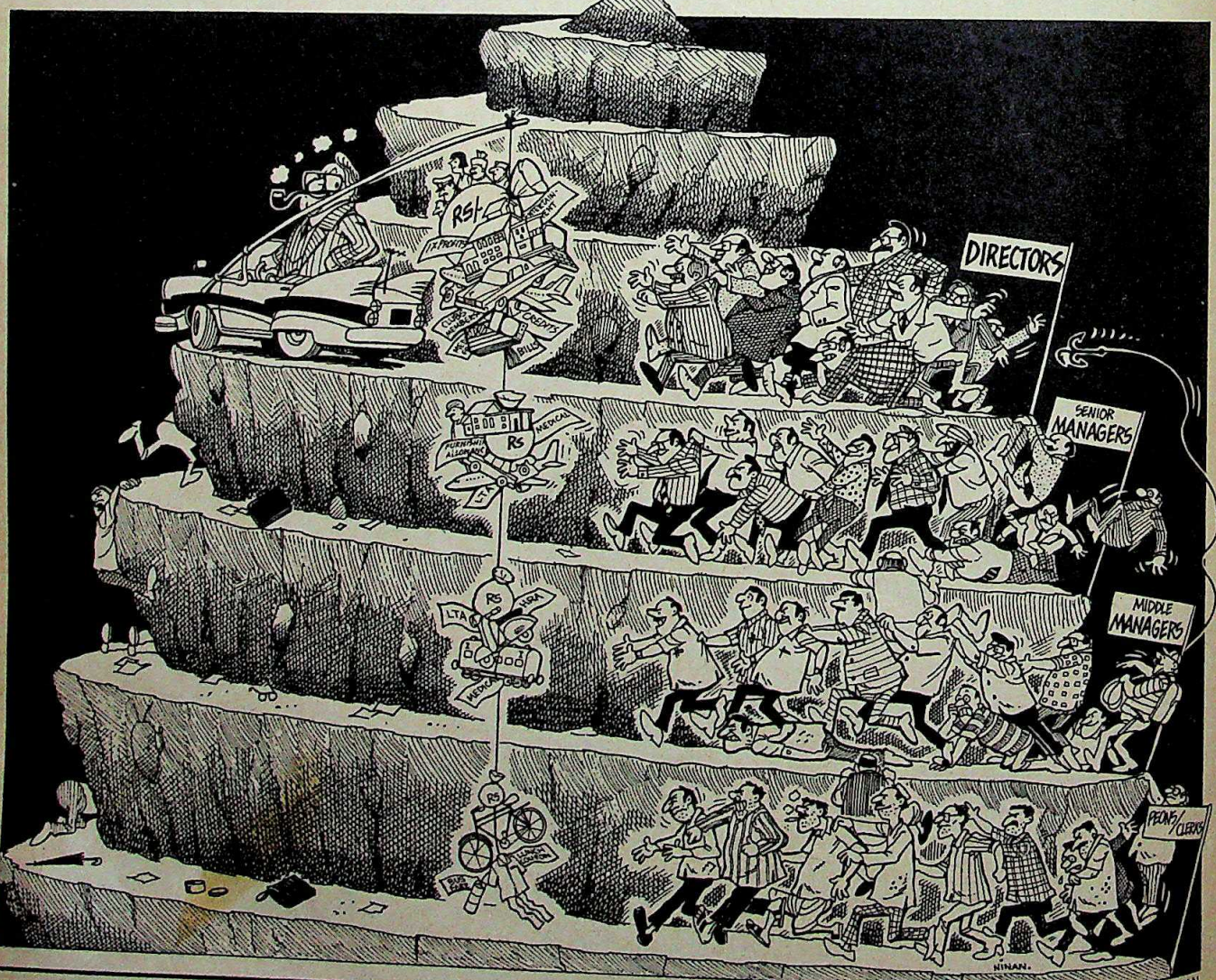

Illustration by AJIT NINAN

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you worth?

gangway are increasingly able to dictate terms, move from lower to upper deck, and a few eventually—with a little luck and a lot of effort—work their way towards the bridge.

Always, there are the winners and the losers. A production expert who runs a textile mill in return for Rs 35,000 a month in Madhya Pradesh was recently offered a total monthly package of Rs 50,000 to switch to a new polyester unit planned further east. But an impeccably qualified lecturer in a Bangalore college, who sticks with academics because of her love for history, gets no more than Rs 2,500 after more than a decade of dedication to a declining profession: teaching. That's less than what an unskilled workman makes in Roussel Pharmaceuticals in Bombay. Wages and salaries in Bombay have been rising 15 per cent annually, well ahead of the inflation rate of 10 per cent. But in New Delhi, *Indian Express* Chief Sub-Editor Kedar Nath Pandita, who began with Rs 125 in 1953 and now barely manages with his Rs 3,200 a month, confesses: "I have always been broke, and though I have withdrawn nearly all my provident fund, I will retire in debt. God will take care of me."

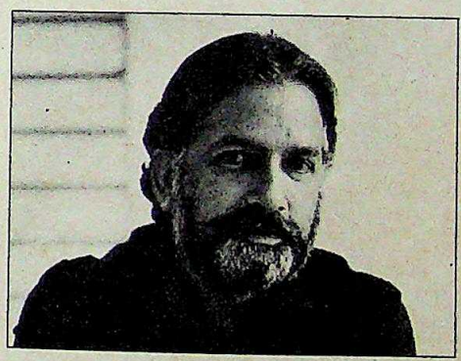
If some regions prosper, others don't, and the same holds for broad swathes of industries. Those caught in the textile depression find their counterparts in growth areas like electronics and petrochemicals getting more generous pay hikes. Money is easier to come by in the commercially expanding west and north, to the envy and despair of those trapped in the declining industries of the east or the relative backwater of the south.

But for those who are moving up, up and away, the sky is not the limit. Hindustan Lever's balance sheet has a list of people earning more than Rs 36,000 annually, and it runs into 43 pages of fine print. And the sums mentioned do not include the perks hidden between the lines. The stories of success and prosperity are legion. Ashwini Windlass studied journalism in 1976 but decided to go into management and today, eight years after he got a management degree, makes more than Rs 10,000 a month with an Indian pharmaceutical company. Alok Kapur earns Rs 9,000 thirteen years after he graduated from the Indian Institute of Technology at Kanpur, and Kavin Sethi—no more than a graduate—grosses Rs 7,000 plus perks after 12 years in the Lufthansa sales office in New Delhi.

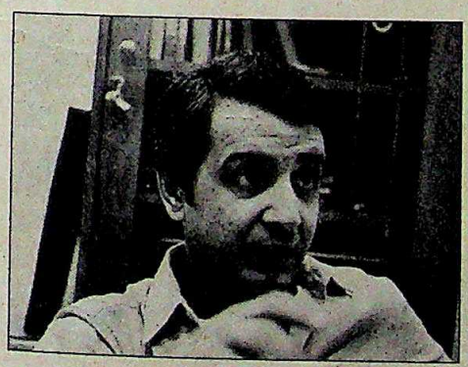
Lionel Coulter, 36, front office manager at New Delhi's Taj Mahal Hotel, began in 1968 as a Rs 60-a-month receptionist at Srinagar's Nedou's Hotel. Today, after a series of job changes, he earns Rs 3,000 and has a fully-furnished, two-bedroom house in pampered south Delhi, free meals, telephone, hotel transport, generous bonus and leave travel allowance. Says he: "Once I waited for 10-rupee tips to put petrol in the scooter. Now I have money to spare."

Several changes are taking place simultaneously. There is the concertina effect as the salaries and perquisites at the very top come down, and the money available at the bottom increases. Says an oil industry expert: "The expatriate general manager of a foreign oil company in the 1960s used to get Rs 25,000 a month, and his peon Rs 350. Today, the company has been nationalised, the peon gets over Rs 1,000 and the general manager Rs 5,000." A fresh recruit at Metal Box in 1963 was paid Rs 750, today an MBA is offered a little over Rs 2,000 by most front-ranking companies: the increase is not enough to neutralise inflation. But subsequent growth is rapid and more than makes up.

And much of the brown sahib culture of the multinational corporations' Indian subsidiaries is fading away. Recalls someone who worked for Imperial Chemical Industries and Imperial Tobacco in the 1960s: "We used to get allowances to buy sherry glasses, and coffee sets and spoons. The premium was on style. Today, people will drink coffee in anything." Officers in Vazir Sultan Tobacco in Andhra Pradesh used to pack pink gin in their car trunks when they prepared for visits to the tobacco-growing areas. And the old Metal Box hand recalls that lunch at the office used to come from the Bombay Yacht Club, while the company secretary drove a Rolls. "Today he is lucky to have an Ambassador." Adds



"The new pay-scales have narrowed the gap. I would like my son to go into the IAS. I may have earned more but I also suffered a heart attack in 1978 at 38."
VINOD BAKSHI
executive director, Stallion Shox



"I can live well but there are no savings. If I did not have any company perks, we would be in very bad shape."
ASHOK MEHRA
branch manager with Tata Tea

"Things have changed for the better. Once I waited for 10-rupee tips to fill petrol in my scooter. Now I have money to spare."
LIONEL COULTER
front office manager, Taj Mahal

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Ivan Mathias, 46, vice-president of Oberoi Hotels: "It was the generation before mine that really had the perks. Every time I got a promotion I didn't get the perks my predecessor had got."

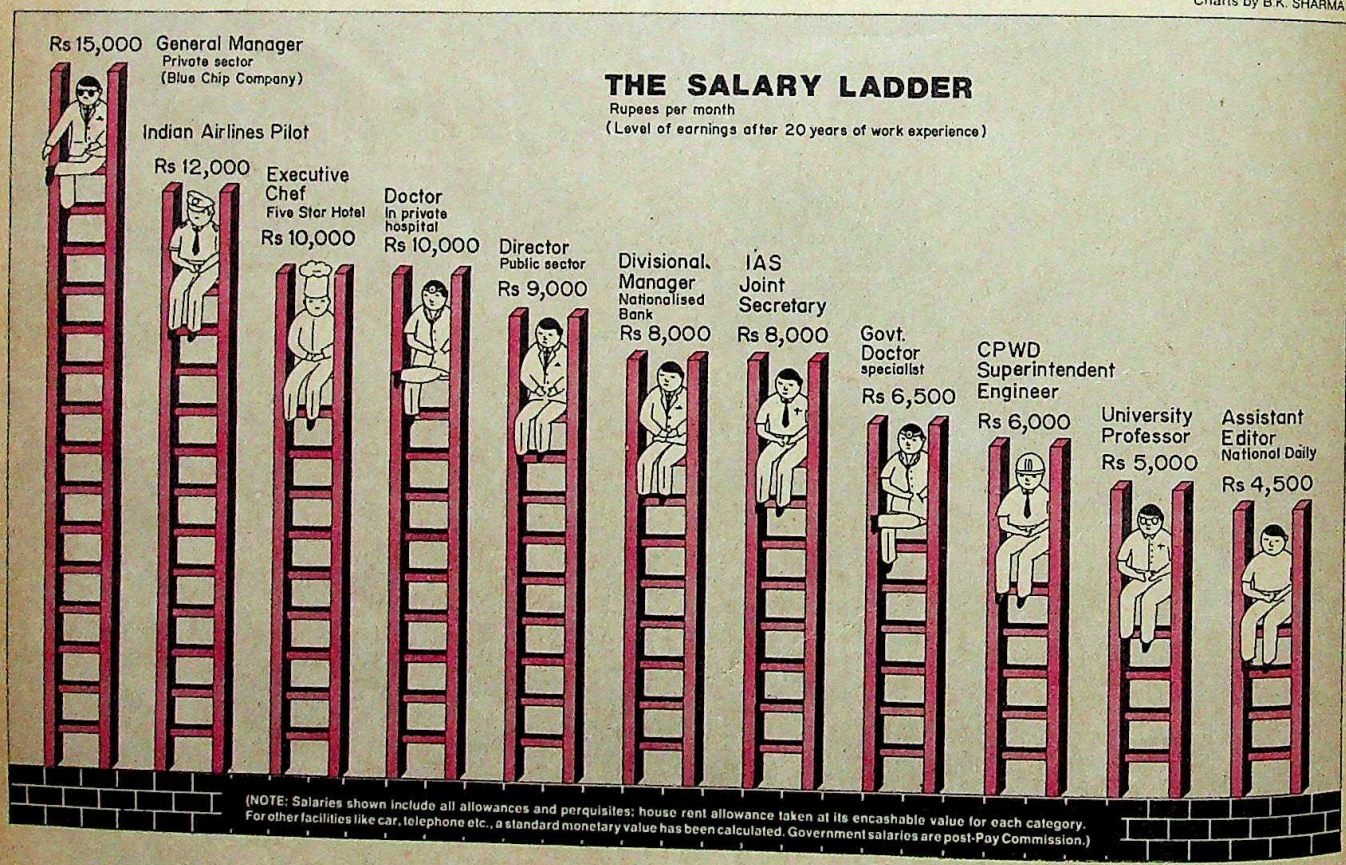
If the brown sahibs—and their companies, like Metal Box—have gone into decline, the new thrust up the salary and perks ladder comes from more *desi* outfits, like those of the Birlas—who were the first to break out of the pay restrictions imposed by the Government on managing directors (Rs 7,500 plus perks and a commission on profits) by switching to the American system of presidents and vice-presidents (who, not being members of the board, were unfettered by the pay ceiling). The Company Law Board is often bloody-minded about fixing the managing director's salary—which ends up being less than that of the men he hires. This means an invitation to corruption at the top.

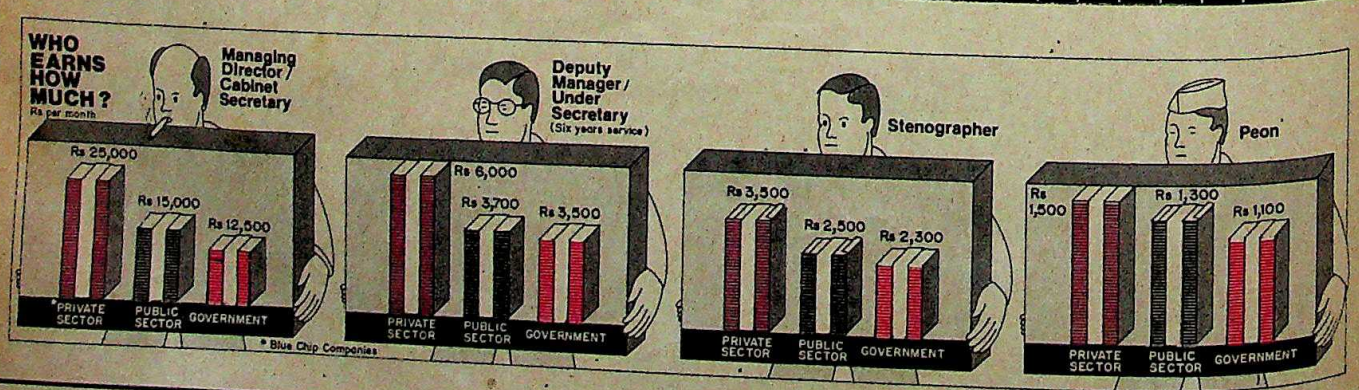
VINOD BAKSHI, a painter-cum-model-cum-executive, is a beneficiary of open-market system in the private sector. He started in 1963 as a trainee in a small Punjab government company without any professional qualification, at Rs 250 a month. Today, after moving through four engineering companies, his pay package exceeds Rs 18,000. This includes a basic pay of Rs 6,000, a house for Rs 8,000, two air-conditioners, two club memberships, a servant allowance and apart from everything else a starting, lump-sum furniture subsidy of Rs 25,000. Bakshi's employer: Stallion Shox, which hopes to start making shock absorbers very soon.

Then there is the constant hide-and-seek game with the taxman. Though the maximum income tax rate has come down from 97 per cent in 1970 to 50 per cent today, the game continues in myriad ways. Said an accountant: "It is a cat-and-mouse-game, but the mice are smarter." High-flying managers, well-looked after by any standard, constantly complain of a shortage of liquid cash. So what really matters today is not one rupee in the hand but two in the bush.

If interest-free loans are taxed, the companies give the loans to the wives. Companies run holiday homes in choice locations: one company charges Rs 30 a week at its pad in Mahabaleshwar. If taxes take away too much, money is paid to the wife for decorating the chairman's office, managing the company guest-house, or

Charts by B.K. SHARMA





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for just about any voucher reading: "Towards the cost of..." Said the personnel head of a large Indian company: "The effort is not to break the law, but to look for the grey areas." But there are those who hand out crisp notes in pay packets too. Said tax consultant and lawyer O.P. Vaish: "Many people these days negotiate dual pay packets." As Indian businessmen have bought into large foreign companies, cash payments have become increasingly common, sucking what was a "clean" section of society into the vortex of corruption.

In Calcutta, a large company owning several tea gardens gives a rose-growing allowance to its garden managers, and loans to its senior managers' wives to whom it then sells the company's debentures. In Bombay, a pharmaceutical company routinely gives loans to its executives' spouses to buy cars and then hires these as taxis at Rs 3,000 a month. In several companies, top executives take loans to build houses that are then rented back to the company and lavishly appointed under the camouflage of routine maintenance. Perhaps the employers take a cue from economist Paul A. Samuelson, who said: "The only way to have your cake and eat it too is to let it out on interest."

In several companies, including the middle-sized ones, executives sometimes run up entertainment bills of over Rs 10,000 a month. Home entertainment pays for much of the family's upkeep as no income tax officer has the time to go and check how many guests came on a particular evening, how much chicken was actually eaten and how many Scotch bottles still remained unmolested. There are other fiddles, on leave travel allowance (LTA) or on furnishing expenditure. A multinational consumer goods company pays its senior officers Rs 20,000 a year as LTA.

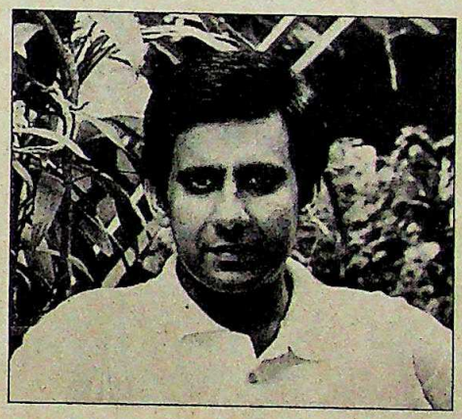
And, newest of all, there are the foreign junkets on "business trips", generous retirement benefits and even stock options. The finance chief of a synthetic textile unit in Bombay has made a fortune through stock holdings acquired when the company was in its fledgeling days. "If I did not have any company perks we would be in very bad shape," says Ashok Mehra, a Tata Tea executive.

THE TRUE jet set, however, comprises those who fly company planes: Russi Mody of Tata Iron and Steel, D.P. Mandelia of the Birlas, the head of IEL. Vijaypat Singhania flies his plane too, and the younger Modis commute 70 km from Delhi to Modinagar and back in their helicopter. These are the corporate maharajahs, men like A.N. Haksar, whom local executives were so much in awe of that when he visited Hyderabad as ITC boss they kept a spare air-conditioner in the adjoining room with an electrician standing by, in case the air-conditioner failed while the prima donna slept. When there is power over men and money, government regulations that speak of a pay ceiling of Rs 7,500 become meaningless.

Everyone, of course, does not reach these cool, cool heights. The pay packet of a public sector employee is an uncomfortable half-way house between the private sector and the government employees. After six to seven years of experience, an assistant manager in Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) would gross no more than Rs 3,800, while his course-mate in DCM Toyota draws over Rs 6,000 as deputy manager. "There is no comparison," says Kavin Sethi of Lufthansa. "In the public sector, at my age I'd probably be earning Rs 2,500, and that too if I had a godfather somewhere." Added Murad Ali Baig, general manager of Escorts, in the same vein: "The Government and the public sector may have the power. But I would still prefer the private sector for its value for go-getters. And, of course, for its money."

In fact, the latest Pay Commission has, perhaps for the first time, brought government salaries to a level where these could begin to worry the blue-chip professionals. For example, now an additional secretary's new salary of Rs 7,300, added to his under-valued government bungalow and transport, plus full medical cover, leave travel concession and other benefits like a pension, could very nearly compare with the average private sector salary in his age group: normally around 50. Says a company executive director: "The new pay scales have narrowed the gap. I would like my son to go into the IAS. I may have earned more, but I also suffered a heart attack

"In the public sector, at my age I'd probably be earning Rs 2,500—that too if I had a godfather somewhere."
KAVIN SETHI
deputy to sales manager, Lufthansa



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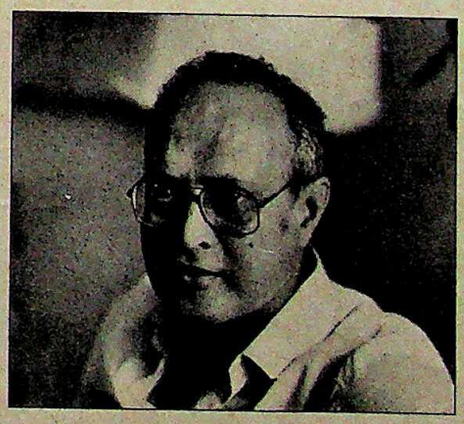

"I have always been broke and though I have withdrawn nearly all my provident fund I will retire in debt. God will take care of me."
KEDAR NATH PANDITA
chief sub-editor, Indian Express

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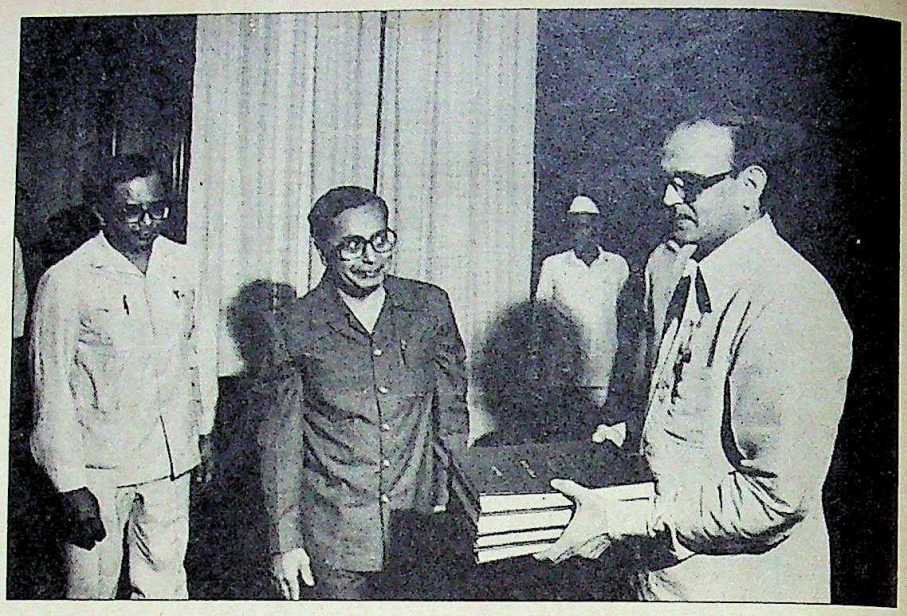
when I was 38."

Now the public sector has a further cause of complaint. The Pay Commission report places the salary of the cabinet secretary higher than any public sector chairman—even if the latter heads a unit twice as large as the largest private sector behemoth. "This is not fair. The man who produces the *roti* should not be paid less than the man who distributes it," protests Alok Kapur. And an irate public sector executive fumes: "What do these bureaucrats get paid so much for? Earlier, they sat on their back-sides for six days a week. Now they do it for five." Adds a middle-rung officer in the State Bank of India: "For years these IAS chaps have kept down banking sector salaries and benefits because they themselves did not get more. But do they do half the work that we do?"

But how much can salaries be kept down, even if people try? Despite the widespread unemployment—there were three unemployed graduates last year for every 10 that had jobs—and the turning out of 35,000 doctors and engineers every year, oddly enough, virtually every employer who can afford to do so is paying far more than would be the case if a totally free labour market operated. So the minimum wage keeps rising, the good professionals demand and get their price, and money flows into salaried pockets as a growing middle class asserts its buying power. A growing number feel, nevertheless, that a salary will never be enough and therefore end up trying to set up their own businesses.

Still, for those who prefer to stay with the security of a job, the rewards today—whether in the Government or the private sector—are better than they have ever been. In this new era of rapid growth, no ambitious entrepreneur can afford to count his pennies, be they black or white, and the good professional can virtually write his pay-packet. And now, with even the Government becoming conscious of the need to retain the right kind of talent before the private sector lures it away, the road to the top has suddenly become a multi-lane highway. So what if millions fall far behind somewhere in the race—for an open, competitive job market is the very essence of a vibrant economy. The fittest prosper, and go on to live by the maxim: you are always worth more than your last salary.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA and TANIA MIDHA with bureau reports



PAY COMMISSION

Lopsided Bonanza

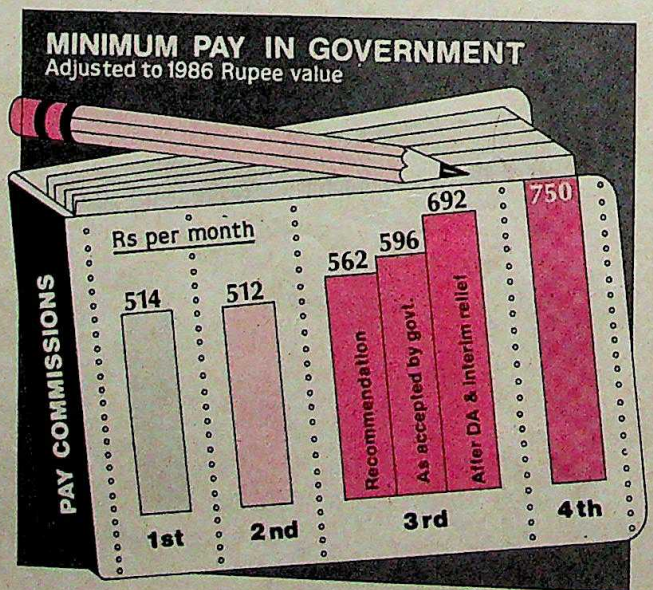
FOR THREE years, 5.2 million pairs of expectant eyes had remained riveted on a nondescript annexe to Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi's imposing convention centre, where five old men deliberated the fortunes of the world's largest bureaucracy. Over 8,500 memoranda were plodded through at 206 meetings, dozens of experts consulted and finally last fortnight, the Fourth Pay Commission pronounced its 711-page verdict, leaving the Centre the prospect of scraping the barrel to find another Rs 1,287 crore annually to feed the gangly dinosaur.

For several days, work in government offices came to a standstill as officers and menials pored over the report. On the day the Government closed its offices to mourn Jagjivan Ram's death, every office boasting a photocopier was open, churning out faint copies of what had for long been expected to be the document of deliverance for hapless wage-earners struggling against inflation.

But now, it was time to count the chickens. For the army's Captain Madan Suri, the report brought in Rs 300 a month, offsetting the expense of sending his daughter to school. For his chief, General Krishnaswami Sundarji, the gain was around Rs 2,000, besides the bonus of free rations.

His eyes gleaming, Charan Singh, a lower division clerk in the Commerce Ministry, could barely control his excitement. "*Hamara to hundred per cent fayeda hai* (my gain is a 100 per cent)," he said hyperbolically of the expected Rs 250 raise. But there was let-down too. Said Neeta Ghosh in the same ministry: "It is not enough when prices are shooting up." For Bimla Devi, a sweeper in the Parliament annexe, the gain was over Rs 150: "I do not have to wake up early morning and sweep the street to collect some money from the residents."

With enhanced non-practis-



Charts by B.K. SHARMA

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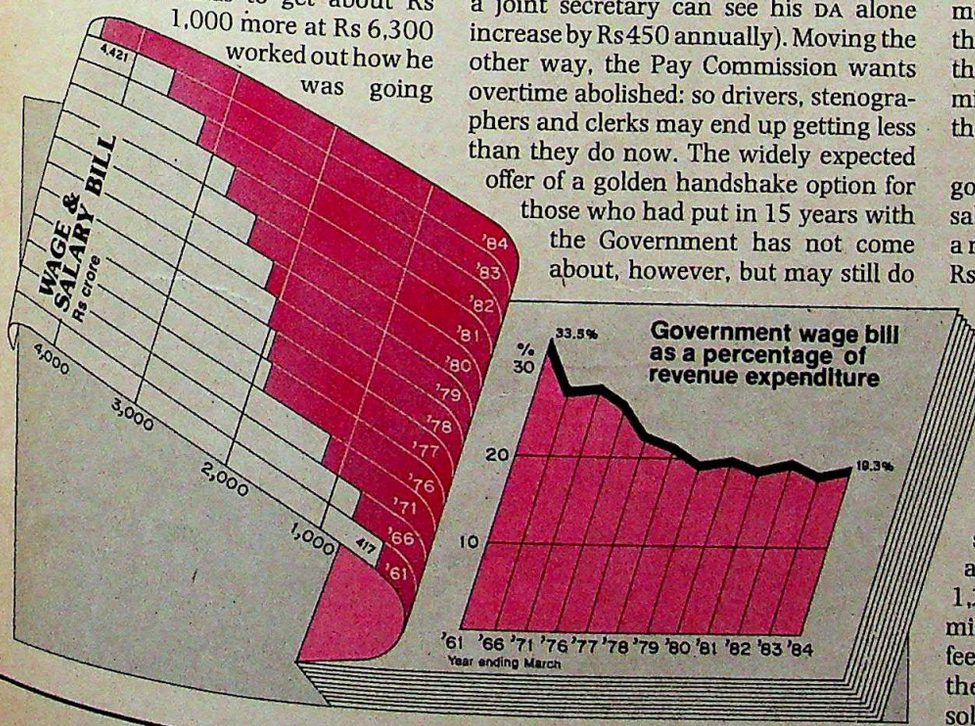
Majumdar presents report to Finance Minister V.P. Singh (left); and Central government employees protest

ing allowance and a higher basic pay, the report would mean another Rs 500 monthly for Leela Mathai, a government paediatrician, though this would not bring her much closer to what private practitioners earn. And for postman Narottam Lal, the report meant increasing his take-home pay of Rs 675 by 40 per cent to Rs 950, enough for him to think of giving in to pressure from his parents in far-away Banda to finally get married.

But there were also as many Cassandras as there were calculators. A joint secretary who stands to get about Rs 1,000 more at Rs 6,300 worked out how he was going to lose Rs 30 every month after higher income tax, house rent and provident fund deductions. But at the top a secretary due to retire shortly was making a different calculation. His pension would be based on the new basic pay, bringing a gain of over Rs 200.

The report is full of innovative concepts in wage planning. The number of pay scales has been reduced from 153 to 36, the annual increments are fatter, increments may be withheld from those who don't perform, and extra increments given to those who excel. Inflation-neutralisation through dearness allowance (DA) has been made particularly generous (at 10 per cent annual inflation, a joint secretary can see his DA alone increase by Rs 450 annually). Moving the other way, the Pay Commission wants overtime abolished: so drivers, stenographers and clerks may end up getting less than they do now. The widely expected offer of a golden handshake option for those who had put in 15 years with the Government has not come about, however, but may still do so when the commission submits its report on pensions.



The fair sex has got a particularly fair deal from the commission: priority allotment of houses, hostels for single women, extraordinary leave for family reasons, creches and special transport facilities.

But it is the DA recommendation that could end up as the biggest bonanza of the lot, far more than the immediate increases in basic pay. "We have tried to give government employees protection against prices. If this results in better productivity it will be money well spent," said A.K. Majumdar, the commission's member-secretary. Added H.D. Shourie, who runs Common Cause, which in the past has fought for government pensioners: "It is certainly a generous Pay Commission report, even if an elitist one."

However, many thought that the commission had been tight-fisted. Said George Fernandes, president of the Hind Mazdoor Kisan Panchayat: "A prisoner's diet in Tihar Jail is worth Rs 7 a day. For an average family of five, this adds up to Rs 1,050 a month. And this does not include shelter, clothing and medicines, all provided free in the jail." He added indignantly: "To call this a bonanza will require rewriting the lexicon." Others were equally dissatisfied. Rangarajan Kumaramangalam, president of the National Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers, said: "How I wish there were no Class III or Class IV employees. Then everyone would be happy. The secretary has gained 48 per cent while a peon has got only 8.5 per cent more." Pointed out B.B. Bhattacharya of the Institute of Economic Growth, whom the commission had consulted: "The minimum pay of Rs 750 is hardly above the poverty line of Rs 700 in Delhi."

But it is the defence forces which have got a carpet-bombing of goodies. Officers' salaries up to the brigadier's rank are now a running scale, and the starting point at Rs 2,300 (about the same as for someone joining the Indian Administrative Service) is no less than what someone with a management degree would get in a blue chip company. In addition, a rank pay ranging from Rs 200 for captains to Rs 1,200 for brigadiers puts them well beyond civilian earnings. The fliers' and submariners' special monthly allowance of Rs 500 has been raised to Rs 1,200 and similar gains have fallen in the military doctors' aprons. "It is a welcome feeling that the commission has accepted the special problems, role and need of us soldiers though we would have liked more

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for the technical men," said a recently retired general who had co-authored the army's approach paper to the Pay Commission. Inevitably, the technical men in the army feel cheated when the forces are short of technical hands. "There is no respect for education," grudged an engineer in the navy. Added another: "If all you can pay is peanuts, all you will get are monkeys."

Others in uniform felt even more cheated. The police constable has been considered unskilled labour and placed even below a cook or bearer. "Now, when a constable goes to serve a warrant, he will leave it in the letter-box," fumed Kiran Bedi, deputy commissioner of police in Delhi. Said an angry traffic constable: "The worst that can happen to a postman in Punjab is that a dog may bite him. I could get shot."

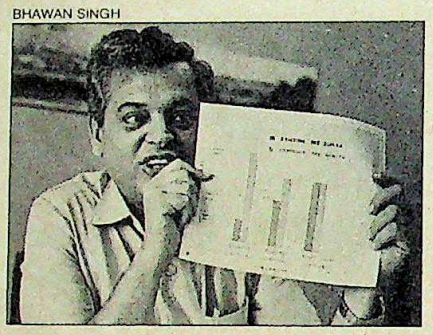
Police officers say they have been downgraded vis-a-vis their counterparts out of uniform. Said Gautam Kaul, secretary of the Indian Police Service Association: "From being the number three service, after the IAS and IFS, we have been reduced to the 43rd among the 45 Central services. Our moustache, the pride in uniform, is lowered." In Patna, the Bihar branch of the IPS Association called the report "discriminatory, invidious and unjustified from all accounts."

Also contentious is the commission's refusal to compare government pay scales with those in the public sector units, which have traditionally paid more. Said J.P. Chaubey of the All India Railwaymen's Federation: "The report unfairly rejects the demand for parity with the public sector." Argued Kumaramangalam: "Tell me, how is a sweeper in the public sector any different from a sweeper in the secretariat?"

As far as the unions are concerned, a *cri de coeur* has already gone up and protest demonstrations were held in New Delhi. "The recommendations on increased working hours and introduction of modern machines are retrograde," complained the General Secretary of the All-India Trade Union Congress, Indrajit Gupta. Protested Balwinder Singh, a driver in the Commerce Ministry, against the abolition of overtime: "If they want us to drive their cars after office hours they will have to give us overtime. We are not going to work for free."

The ripples are bound to spread to the state capitals, where employees want parity with their Central counterparts. Karnataka Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde said: "The financial liability, if the report is accepted, will be almost Rs 3,500 crore (for all states put together) and finding resources will be a very big problem. The prime minister should call a meeting of chief ministers before deciding on the report."

BHAWAN SINGH



"From being the number three service, we've been reduced to the 43rd in the 45 Central services. Our moustache is lowered."
GAUTAM KAUL
police officer

HARI OM GULATI

"If they want us to drive their cars after office hours, they will have to give us overtime. We are not going to work for free."
BALWINDER SINGH
staff car driver

In states like Maharashtra, the decision to follow the Central Pay Commission recommendations will add several hundreds of crores to the existing wage bill of Rs 1,800 crore for a million employees, including those of the zila parishads. July 3 was observed as protest day in the state, demanding implementation of the recommendations. In Karnataka, a senior official said the new wages would add Rs 100 crore to the Rs 450-crore wage bill.

There were, however, exceptions such as Andhra Pradesh where employees are comparatively better off. Their salaries are due to be revised a sixth time on the recommendations of a pay commission which was to present its report on July 14. Said G.M. Kasiviswanatham, president of the Andhra Pradesh Non-Gazetted Officers' Association: "This is the first time that our pay revision will follow the Centre's." Similarly, Bihar awaits the recommendations of its own Fifth Pay Commission.

A higher wage bill could spell financial disaster for a poor state like Uttar Pradesh, where the wage bill of 1,647.78 crore is already higher than the annual revenue of Rs 1,360 crore. "We are hard-pressed. We cannot absorb another Rs 450 crore which the pay commission recommendations will imply," said Minister of State for Finance and Planning Richaria. The state employees are threatening to launch a "Gujarat-type agitation" to press for a better deal. But government sources warned that any increase in salaries now would mean fresh taxation.

That option might be forced on the Centre too. "In making the projections for the Seventh Plan, no explicit account was taken of the wage revision though a general cushion was provided for higher non-plan revenue expenditure," explained Planning Commission Member Raja Chelliah. Similar signals came from the Finance Ministry, where a senior official warned: "We have no elbow-room for this kind of a wage hike. It will reflect in next year's budget." But opinions differed on the exact burden. Said economist Bhattacharya: "The burden will be between Rs 700 crore and Rs 800 crore, not the projected Rs 1,287 crore, as some money will come back as income tax and provident fund."

Finance Minister V.P. Singh has promised a decision within three months. But going by precedents, it is a reasonable presumption that the Government will more or less accept the report. Yet, a wage hike as substantial as this can only mean a massive resource-mopping operation. Also inevitable is further inflation, making the largesse a mixed blessing.

But these problems lie in the future. And despite the various criticisms, the basic remained that the world's largest bureaucracy was about to get the biggest pay bonanza ever. If the Government accepts the report by the next Diwali, the lights in millions of government employees' homes will shine brighter than they have in a long time.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA and TANIA MIDHA
with bureau reports

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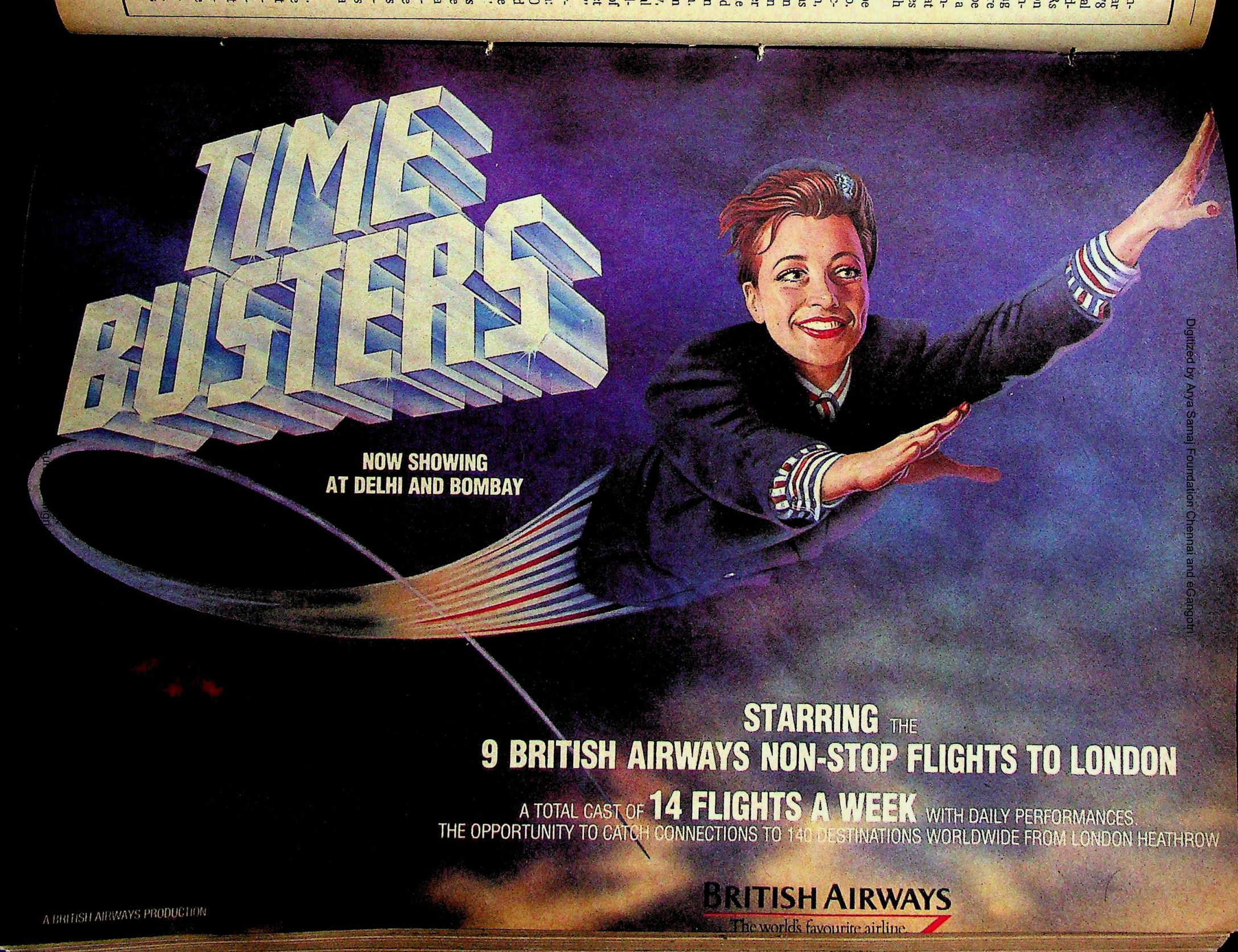

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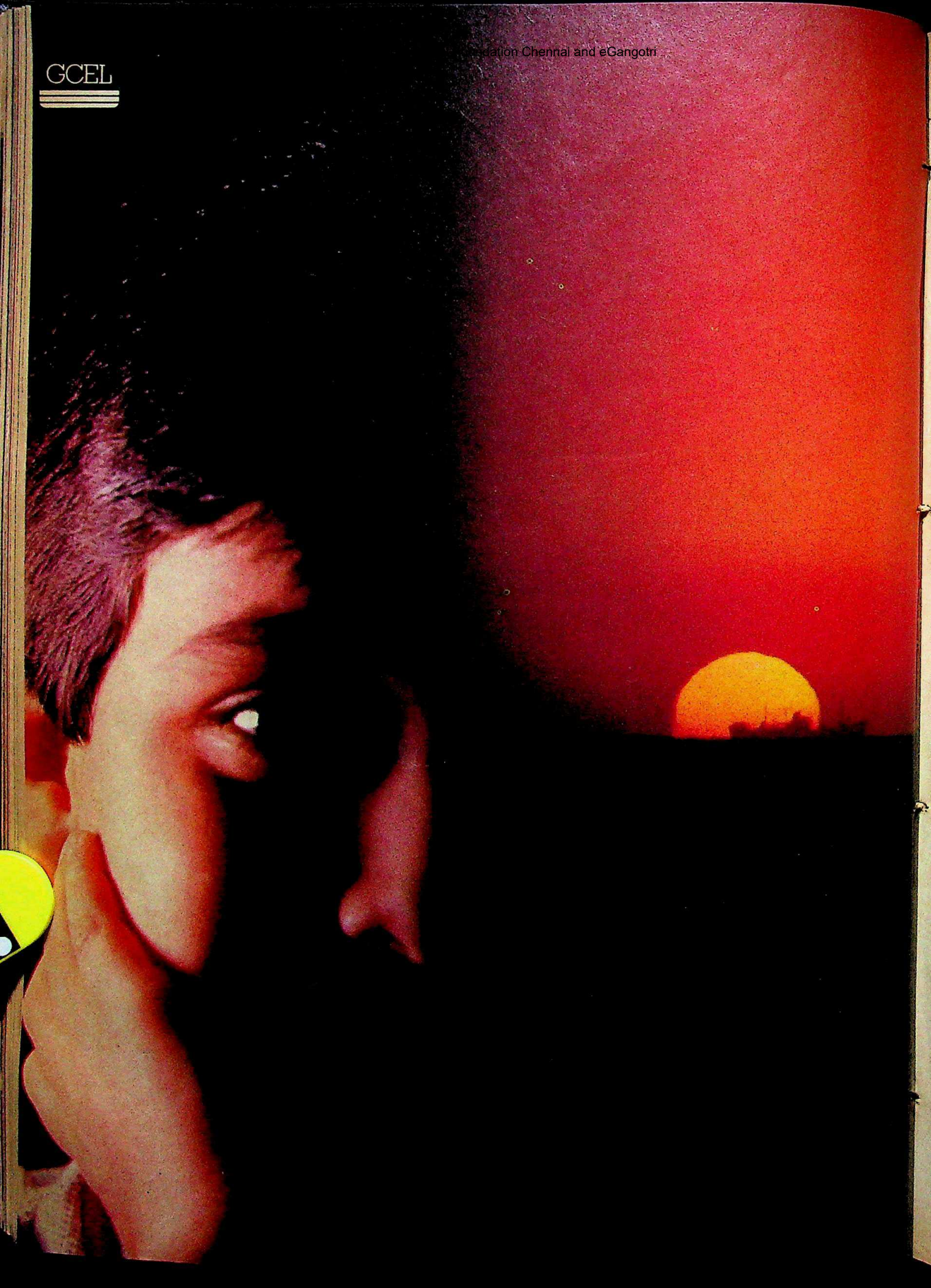

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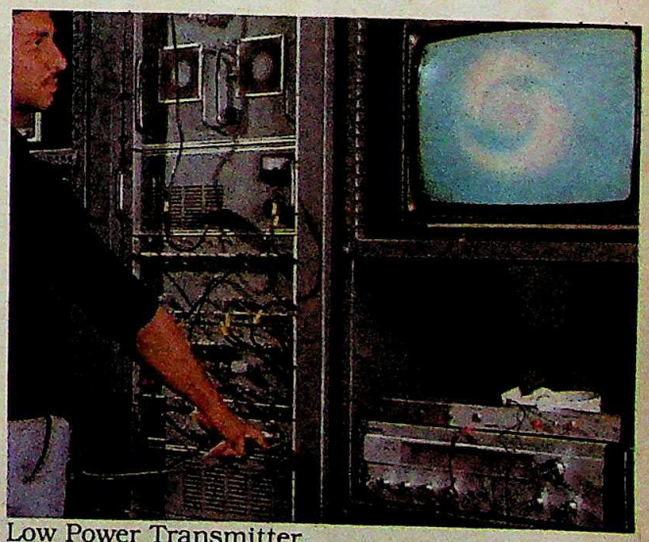

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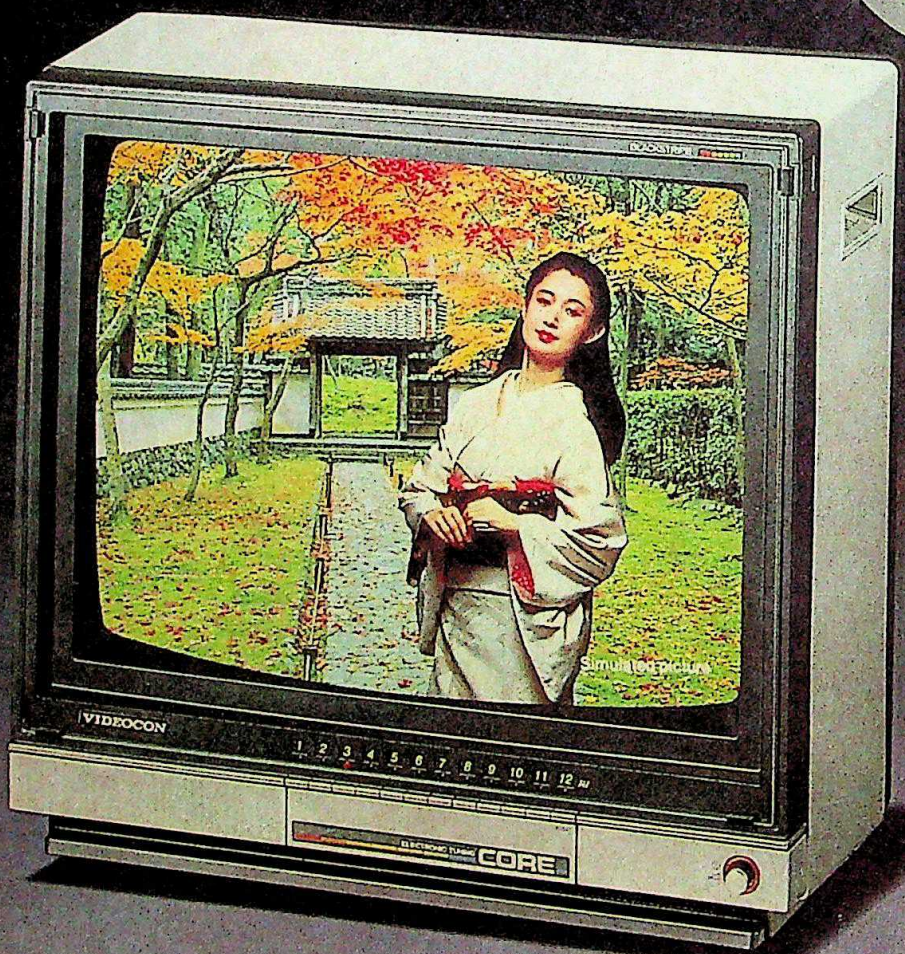

SUPER-SSI BLACKSTRIPE II

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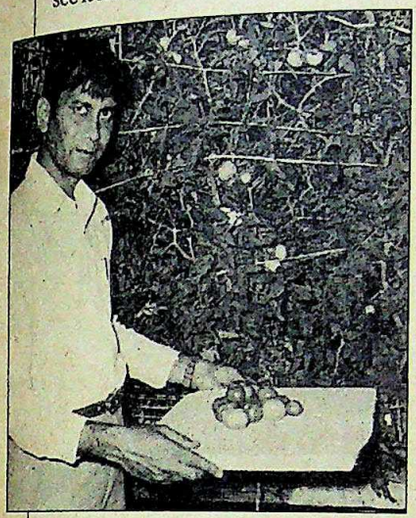
Watery Harvest

TECHNOLOGY transfer can be very expensive, especially if the transfer happens to be from the land of the rising yen. Apart from miniature electronics, the Japanese have perfected a technique for growing vegetables in water—hydroponics, it's called. Indian scientists who went to Japan to see it for themselves were simply bowled over, but the price for the technology transfer was a bit too steep: Rs 2 crore for one-tenth of a hectare. So the scientists did a little snooping around and came back to launch the experiment at the G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology in Uttar Pradesh. After months of work, they have at last perfected the concoction necessary to grow plants in water. The scientists have successfully raised cucumbers and tomatoes, with 30 tomato plants on 3 sq metres of water yielding more than 1,000 tomatoes in five months. "The technique can be used commercially, and vegetables can also be grown in bungalows and on roof-tops," says varsity Vice-Chancellor Kripa Narain. So it won't be long before hydroponically-grown vegetables are sold in the corner shop.



Tomatoes grown in water

Star War

WHEN dancer-actress of yesteryears Vyjayanthimala Bali, now MP from south Madras constituency, inaugurated a suburban railway station outside Madras airport last fortnight, few people knew that what she would inaugurate was a controversy instead. As the glamorous MP cut the ribbon, sold the first ticket and flagged off the first train, the star-struck audience was treated to some honest confessions by state Chief Secretary T.V. Antony, who told the public how he had been smitten with her role in *Vazhkai* and how he'd seen it 30 times and how well the lady had preserved her charming looks. And so on, till the politicians present at the ceremony—none of whom had been called to the dais—started squirming in their seats. While some wondered whether it was an inauguration ceremony or a fan club, DMK chief M. Karunanidhi speculated that perhaps the chief secretary was planning a film with the MP as his leading lady. The result, sure enough, was a controversy involving the Railways, the AIADMK Government and the heroine. When last heard, the various parties were still bickering.

Vyjayanthimala: fan fare

Land Locked

AS SOON as the first Malayalees returned from the Gulf with their shiny new two-in-ones, enterprising businessmen in Kerala had got busy cooking up schemes to put all those petrodollars to use. The projects ranged from hotels and hospitals to real estate. Almost overnight, multi-storeyed structures of two-to-three-bedroom flats began springing up all over Trivandrum and Cochin. Four years after the mad construction rush, the monstrous monoliths loom large over the cityscape—uninhabited and empty. There are simply no takers. The builders seemed to have forgotten that the average Malayalee prefers the single-storey, open-spaced type of house. Of the 205 flats built by private promoters—priced between Rs 250 and Rs 300 per sq ft—only 90 have been sold so far. The 45-flat Samarias Centre in the heart of Trivandrum is still to be commissioned, while the Kerala Housing Board has yet to sell the first flat in the nine-storeyed complex of 108 flats—costing Rs 3 lakh each—in Ernakulam. The builders are now trying to woo the local middle class with cut rates, but with little success.

Unoccupied flats: no takers

Taking a Break

IN TRYING to set the record straight, Subrata Mukherjee, general secretary of the West Bengal PCC(I), set a dubious record instead—of the shortest resignation period in the unit's history, 9 minutes and 20 seconds to be precise. The occasion was a meeting to prepare for Rajiv Gandhi's visit to the city. Mukherjee saw red when a colleague had a dig at his abrupt cessation of hostilities against the high command on being elevated to the post of general secretary. He promptly summoned a press conference and grandly announced his resignation, and in reply to queries, also let slip that he was not even a primary member of the party as he had not renewed his membership this year. Just then, in walked state party chief Priya Ranjan Das Munshi. "Don't be mad," he exclaimed and promptly closetted himself with Mukherjee. A few minutes later, the press were told that Mr Mukherjee had withdrawn his resignation. "I have never withdrawn what I said before," he said. "But this time I am withdrawing what I just told you. I am sorry for the inconvenience." A very convenient excuse, indeed!

Mukherjee: volte face

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FOREIGN OFFICE

Turbulent Times

THE FOREIGN Service, considered the cream of the bureaucratic crop, is currently passing through troubled times. Excessive interference from external sources, a succession of changes at the ministry level, a reduced role in the conduct of foreign policy and other related factors have reduced the morale in the service to its lowest-ever. Internally, there are additional pointers to the problems ahead, namely, a marked reduction in the quality of inductees into the service and ever-increasing levels of politicisation and favouritism. Associate Editor DILIP BOBB *spoke to a wide range of people in the Ministry of External Affairs and serving diplomats to gauge the extent of the malaise and its effects. His report.*

SHORTLY after taking over as foreign secretary last April, A.P. Venkateswaran, a stocky, no-nonsense type addicted to aromatic pipe tobacco and navy blue safari suits, sent out a "Dear Colleague" circular to all heads of missions abroad and also individually to the 2,826 members of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS). Venkateswaran, widely acknowledged to be one of the most capable and efficient officers to tread the country's diplomatic board-walk, also has an added reputation—for not pulling his verbal punches. "I am sorry to have to say that the reputation of the foreign office is not what it should be. Too many of us have been indulgent, placing self above all and regarding the service only as a means for promoting personal needs and ambitions," he wrote.

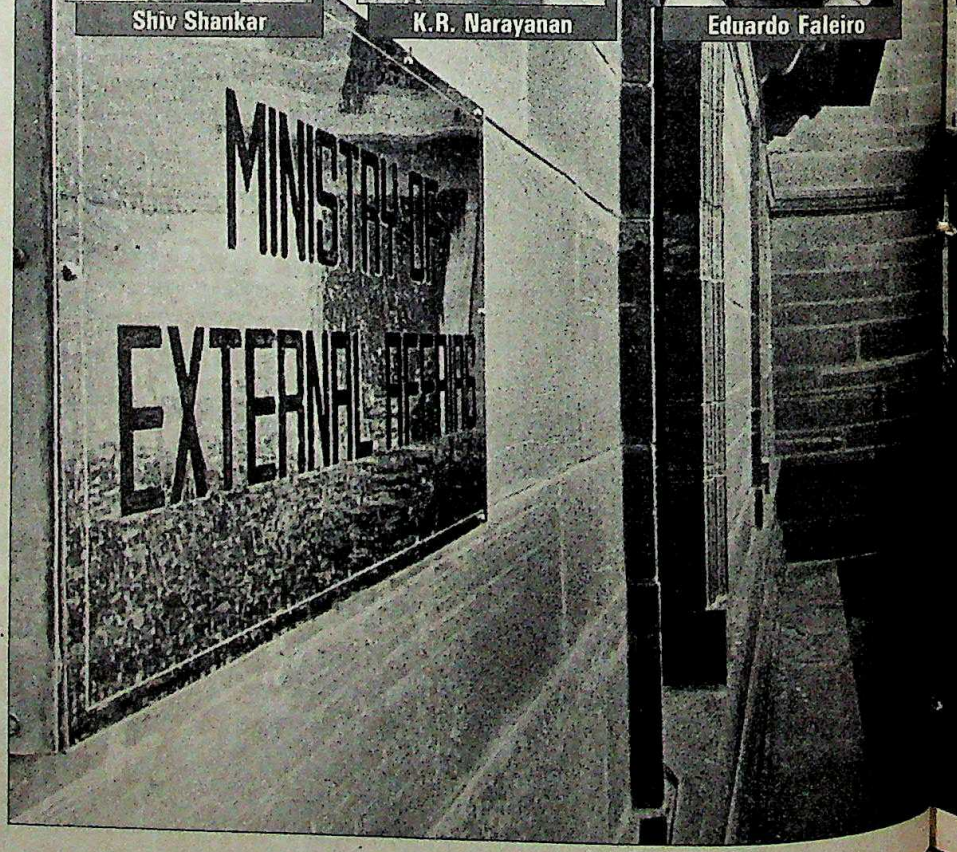
Venkateswaran's missive missile, though characteristic of the man's forthright nature, was nonetheless symbolic of the prevailing pressures that have bedevilled the country's most high-profile and elite service. Perhaps at no other time in its 38-year-old history, as now, has the morale in the foreign office sunk so low, engulfed by what one top Foreign Ministry official terms, "a tide of rising expectations and diminishing returns".

The sense of uncertainty is reflected in myriad and inexplicable ways. In the almost cavalier manner in which changes are made at the top—Bali Ram Bhagat replaced by P.Shiv Shankar, who doubles as commerce minister, and Eduardo Faleiro, the MP from Goa, brought in as minister of state for external affairs. (With former diplomat K.R. Narayanan already ensconced as minister of state, this marks the first time in the country's history that three ministers have had the run of the foreign office). The sidelining of veteran G. Parthasarthy and the Policy Planning Committee, and their subsequent rehabilitation. The unseemly lobbying that has led to embarrassing delays in the choice of ambassadors to the two key embassies in Moscow and Washington and the side-lining of career diplomats from such plum postings. The rather naive approach to current foreign policy concerns like Sri Lanka and Pakistan. The confusing flip-flops on relations with the US, one minute wooing Washington ardently for super-computers and other high-tech goodies and the next, hysterical anti-US outburts on issues like Libya and South Africa. The failure so far to influence countries like Canada and Britain on the activities of Sikh terrorists. The interference by officials in the Prime Minister's Secretariat, not to speak of retired diplomats like K.Natwar Singh and Romesh-

Shiv Shankar

K.R. Narayanan

Eduardo Faleiro



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Bhandari, one of whom is now a minister and the other in charge of the Congress(I)'s foreign cell. The decision to shift a large chunk of the foreign office from South Block to the Akbar Hotel. The litany seems endless.

The tragedy is made all the more greater by the fact that the Indian Foreign Service, with minor exceptions, has been regarded as the cream of the Indian bureaucratic crop, an elite corps peopled by "the best and the brightest". But now, under assault from marauding politicians and interlopers, they seem to have drawn their wagons into a circle in the vain hope that the cavalry will eventually come to their rescue. Much of the undermining of the foreign office citadel is attributed to the advent of Rajiv Gandhi. His informality and political naivete seems to have short-circuited the traditional channels of communication in the foreign office.

The naivete, or lack of basic political reality, is probably the reason why the flurry of changes at the political and bureaucratic levels in the ministry has led to the impression that it is sprinting on a treadmill. Just before Bhandari's exit, there was total confusion in the upper echelons of the ministry as to his successor. Venkateswaran was, in fact, informed that he was going as ambassador to Moscow and then later, deservedly, made foreign secretary. The embassy in London was without an ambassador for months after the premature retirement of Prakash Mehrotra till P.C. Alexander was taken out of limbo and given the job.

In Washington, K.S. Bajpai had packed all his belongings and was in the midst of his final farewell party when he received a frantic telephone call from the ministry asking him to hang on till a replacement could be found. That embarrassing situation was further compounded when veteran B.K. Nehru, 77, was approached for the job he had held exactly 20 years ago. Nehru cited ill-health as his reason for rejecting the offer. Then the Prime Minister's Secretariat mulled over another candidate, former foreign secretary M.K. Rasgotra, but even that was shot down by the invisible marksmen in the Prime Minister's Secretariat and it was only last fortnight, two months after Bajpai finally left Washington that the cabinet secretary, P.K. Kaul, was appointed his successor, triggering off yet another round of bureaucratic musical chairs (Kaul had one more year to serve as cabinet secretary).

MUCH the same situation existed in the case of the ambassador to Moscow, where the names of candidates were seemingly selected out of a hat and then discarded while the crucial post remained vacant. B.K. Nehru was approached again and after he politely turned down the offer T.N. "Tikky" Kaul, 73, a staunch pro-Soviet who had served as ambassador in Moscow in the mid-1960s was shaken out of semi-retirement and given the post. Reacting sarcastically to the appointment of people taken out of mothballs ("recycling of skeletons" as it is being derisively referred to) and the inexplicable delays, a foreign office source quipped: "After all, we are a nation of 750 million people. It must be awfully difficult to find suitable people."

But there is little cause for humour in the foreign office these days. The bottom line in the appointments is that in none of the cases was the foreign office involved. The Prime Minister's Secretariat was solely in charge and that is currently the main cause for concern in the foreign office—the growing feeling that their role is being undermined, that they are being increasingly sidelined from their rightful turf and they no longer wield the clout they once did. One example officials point to is the abrupt decision to shift the main bulk of the foreign office to the Akbar Hotel, the former India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) hostelry, to make space for the expansion of the Prime Minister's Secretariat and the Defence Ministry. This, when it should have been the Defence Ministry that moved out after its new headquarters, Sena Bhavan, was completed. Little wonder that foreign office officials literally see red at the sight of flag cars belonging to military brass cheekily parked in front of Gate No: 4 at South Block, the entrance to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

More recently, the foreign office was shouldered out of the negotiations with

Natwar Singh

G. Parthasarthy

B.R. Bhagat

The uncertainty is reflected in the cavalier manner in which changes are made at the top—B.R. Bhagat, Shiv Shankar, Faleiro, K.R. Narayanan. The sidelining of G. Parthasarthy, interference by former diplomats like Natwar Singh and Romesh Bhandari.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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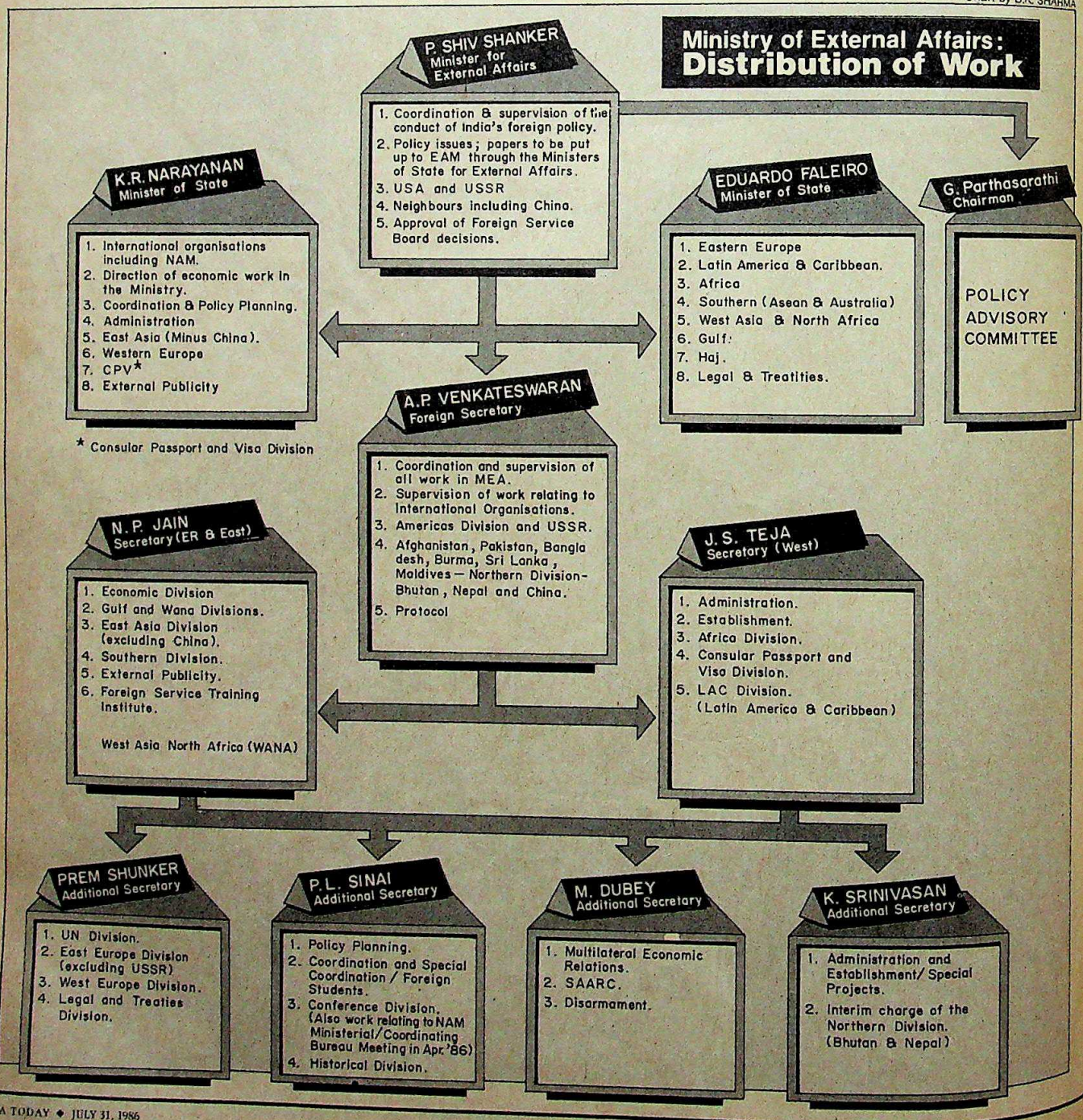
Pakistan on the Siachen glacier. The negotiating team is headed by service officers rather than diplomats, as has always been the case when the country's borders are at issue. Natwar Singh, at the behest of the Prime Minister's Secretariat elbowed his way into the non-aligned meeting in Harare and was sent there to oversee arrangements. Similarly, in the last round of negotiations with Colombo, the team was headed by a rank outsider, P. Chidambaram, minister of state for personnel and administrative reforms.

In Indian missions abroad, the foreign service is increasingly finding itself in a minority. The advent of extremism has panicked the Government into posting additional intelligence people abroad. Currently, rather than the traditional one representative from the Research & Analysis Wing (RAW), the larger embassies now have as many as three intelligence operatives from RAW as well as the Intelligence Bureau (IB), and that too in important consular and second secretary positions. This is in addition to personnel from defence, the Administrative Service, the Audit and Accounts Service, commerce and trade and the boffins from the Department of Science and Technology. There have been, inevitably, increasing reports of the intelligence agents being at loggerheads with the diplomats on issues such as embassy policy and information-gathering. The controversial decision last year to expel two Sri Lankan Tamil Eelam leaders from the country was strictly a RAW recommendation that the country's top diplomats did not even know about in time. Inevitably, the move boomeranged.

There are also increasing signs that many ambassadors and high commissioners find they are left with little initiative even in such areas as the hiring of public relations firms (as was the case in Washington recently), private meetings with government officials, dignitaries and legislators or in the negotiation of various

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



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purchases, which has been their purview all along.. This has increased with the Rajiv Gandhi Government's penchant for appointing a host of "special emissaries" of the prime minister for negotiations abroad, often without the ambassador of that country being kept fully informed. Complains a senior foreign office official: "In no other ministry is there such a high level of intervention. Everybody is an expert on foreign policy and want to put in their oar. Everybody else has the voice but not the responsibility. "We have the responsibility but not the voice."

There are, of course, other and more obvious reasons, cloaked inevitably in political raiment, that have been responsible for India's recent foreign policy activities being subjected to bewilderingly quixotic twists and turns, with an equally bewildering assortment of players being accused of poking their unwanted fingers in the foreign office pie.

THE MOST visible symptom of the malaise was the surprise induction of Bali Ram Bhagat as foreign minister last year and his equally surprising and ignominous ouster. Bhagat in a fit of pique, gave an interview to a Bombay tabloid, washing some dirty Foreign Ministry laundry in public in the process. Terming the ministry a "*khichri* external affairs ministry" and stating that India's foreign policy was in "an unbelievable mess", Bhagat charged that he had been sacked because Rajiv had "succumbed to the pressures of pro-US elements" and added that the prime minister's directions were "often confusing, being a little pro-Soviet and a little pro-US". He also accused Romesh Bhandari, Natwar Singh and G. Parthasarthy of meddling in the foreign office pie and also alleged that the activities of pro-Soviet and pro-US lobbies in the ministry were chiefly responsible for the "mess".

Those who currently occupy the upper echelons of the Foreign Ministry dismiss the allegations airily. "Since taking over, I have not noticed any signs of external pressure from any side," says P. Shiv Shanker. "We have highly capable people in the ministry and we discuss matters and come to our own decisions. If we feel that a certain issue needs external input, only then do we get it." His deputy, the mild-mannered K.R. Narayanan, says that Rajiv's entry into the scene has brought in an element of "creative continuity and originality into our foreign policy. His is an uncluttered view and a freshness of approach." Romesh Bhandari diplomatically denies any interference in the ministry on his part. "I was asked to join the delegation to Sri Lanka because of my experience on the subject but apart from that, I have no reason or opportunity to interfere in the ministry's workings," he says.

But despite the denials, Bhagat's charges buffeted South Block till finally he himself succumbed to pressure by issuing a statement lamely denying that he had given the interview. The tabloid, however, insisted he had and also mentioned that it had left out even more controversial statements on interference in foreign affairs by officials in the Prime Minister's Secretariat, namely Mani Shankar Aiyar, G.K. Arora and Montek Singh Ahluwalia (the first a joint secretary and the other two additional secretaries).

Rajiv with Bhandari: short cuts

Though dismissed as the irrational outpourings of a frustrated politician, Bhagat's allegations were taken seriously enough in the South Block offices of the Foreign Ministry, which has of late given the impression of floundering around in a turbulent sea of uncertainty. Admits a senior Foreign Ministry official: "There is a sense of uncertainty in every ministry and department in the Government today. The uncertainty in our case, as in many others, is about what our policy really is or should be."

What has hardly helped matters is the succession of changes at the top. Khurshid Alam Khan, the first minister of state for external affairs under Rajiv, was nothing more than a name-plate on the door that the then foreign secretary Romesh Bhandari passed on his unimpeded way to the prime minister's office. Bhandari, on his part, immersed himself in one major priority—to project Rajiv as the great conciliator which, in time, only succeeded in whetting his personal ambitions. In terms of official competence, Bhandari had few equals and the powerful espirit de corps that exists in the foreign office ensures that there are very few of his former colleagues who will admit that he stepped out of line. "He was ambitious, everyone knew that, but at the same time, he was exceedingly competent, the first foreign secretary who had specialised in economic affairs, and his input was very valuable indeed," says one of his senior ex-colleagues.

What is possible, they admit, is that Bhandari lost sight of the wood for the trees in his image-building exercise for Rajiv as far as India's dealings with the neighbours were concerned. Says a top official: "We seem to have lost the edge of cynicism that we had when Mrs Gandhi was around. She was heavily involved in foreign policy and knew

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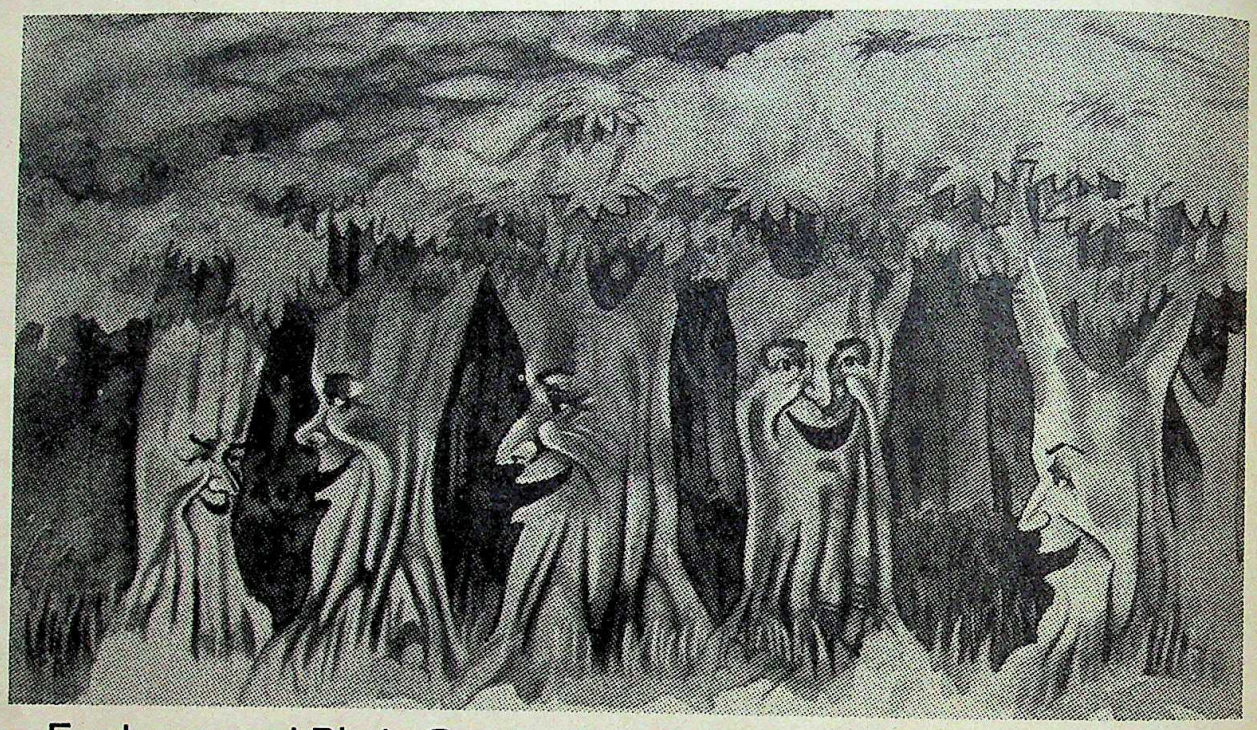
When it comes to tree plantation, it's the more, the merrier at Neyveli. When it comes to population, it's the other way round.



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NLC — GROWING POWER

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exactly what the response would be from people like General Zia and Jayewardene to any initiative from us and also what their limitations would be. There was a solid political content in our policy then. Once they (the neighbours) know that you are giving top priority to better relations with them, it gives them the advantage. If you are going to play poker, you don't lay all your cards on the table."

THAT situation was best illustrated by the recent dealings with Sri Lanka on the Tamil issue. When it appeared that Colombo was hell-bent on a military solution, the Indian Government declared its intentions to pull out of the negotiations. Almost immediately, Jayewardene sent frantic messages to say that he was sending a fresh package of proposals. "The Indian public, the current leadership and Parliament have the facile assumption that diplomacy means instant results. After 38 years, we are still unable to accept reality. The general impression is that if we don't have good relations with our neighbours it is India's fault, forgetting that it takes two to tango and that diplomacy, ultimately, is the art of the possible. It is this naivete that is hampering our functioning to a great extent," says a foreign office mandarin.

In the ranks of the foreign service itself, there are other pointers to the troubled times ahead. One major headache is the decline in the quality of people joining the service in recent years. In the last combined services examination, a candidate who had ranked 149 in the merit list made it to the foreign service—the lowest in the history of the service. A year earlier, in the batch of IFS optees, the topper ranked 21 in the all-India list and the last candidate ranked 119, which meant that over 100 candidates eligible for the service had chosen to opt out. Budding bureaucrats obviously no longer find the IFS as attractive a proposition it was earlier and many now prefer the IAS or even the Central services like customs and income tax.

Another cause for current concern has been the increasing politicisation of a service that was once immune to internal or external manipulations. The foreign office is now a helpless victim of favouritism and patronage in the posting of first and second secretaries to embassies located in the western countries. Says one Foreign Ministry source: "These posts are no longer filled on merit but on how much influence your godfather wields." One prime example is the case of an IFS officer who was posted to Washington despite the fact that his dossier detailed two vigilance investigations against him.

In a recent review, the foreign office sent out an angry letter to its 150-odd embassies abroad stating: "Officers and staff are not relieved from their current posts despite clear instructions. Similarly reprehensible is the use of non-official channels for making representations. This is against Conduct Rules, as we all know, but is blatantly resorted to at all levels... In the more comfortable posts there is an irrepressible urge to seek extensions on medical grounds or education. Conversely, in difficult posts, there are representations made to cut short the tenure. The result is that a series of extensions occur in comfortable posts whereas the turnover in difficult posts is too rapid."

The bottom line is that a diplomatic career is no longer the glamorous one it once was. The arrival of extremism has now added a new element of risk—four Indian diplomats have lost their lives due to assassinations or bombings in the last few years. Added to this is the psychological pressures of operating on an alien environment with a comparatively low salary and the periodic upheaval in family life and children's education that comes with each posting. Saddled with tougher problems and challenges on the one hand and a decline in the quality of inductees on the other, the foreign office is faced with an unprecedented dilemma.

On the plus side is the fact that most of those currently serving in the MEA still display a fierce pride in the service and a close camaraderie. "This (the IFS) is material that the country can really be proud of," says Shiv Shankar. Adds a senior MEA official: "The service has remained very Indian and its roots are deep and well watered. Despite the problems, the machinery is working and working well. If it is not producing, the question to be asked is, who is holding it up?" The fingers, inevitably, all point to the current political leadership and the quixotic element it has introduced into the country's foreign policy dealings. "Our policy right now is like the fable of the donkey and the two bales of hay," says a senior official, "he couldn't decide which one to eat so he died of starvation."

The feeling of frustration in the top ranks of the foreign office—of having the talent and capability and being denied the chance to use it properly—is palpable. "Why all this timidity and humility? Why are we reduced to reacting to situations rather than acting on situations?" queries a top MEA official. "We have the fourth largest army in the world, we have the technological edge, we are not dependent on anybody for feeding our people, we have the second largest population in the world and the biggest flourishing democracy. But instead of being nightingales, we are parrots."

The only ray of hope, as many in the service see it, is reposed in the man who currently occupies the plush corner office on the first floor of South Block, Foreign Secretary A.P. Venkateswaran. He has the confidence, the capability and the courage to buck the mounting odds that the foreign office is currently faced with—if he is given a freer hand in the running of the service. He has already laid out his list of priorities and objectives, which, as he emphasised in his circular, "will require the cooperation of everyone in the service. If we can come even within a reasonable distance of achieving these objectives, I feel that we would have brought about a worthwhile transformation in the foreign service as a body to which we are privileged to belong".

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

The only ray of hope, as many in the service see it, is reposed in the person of Foreign Secretary A.P. Venkateswaran—if he is given a freer hand in the running of the service.

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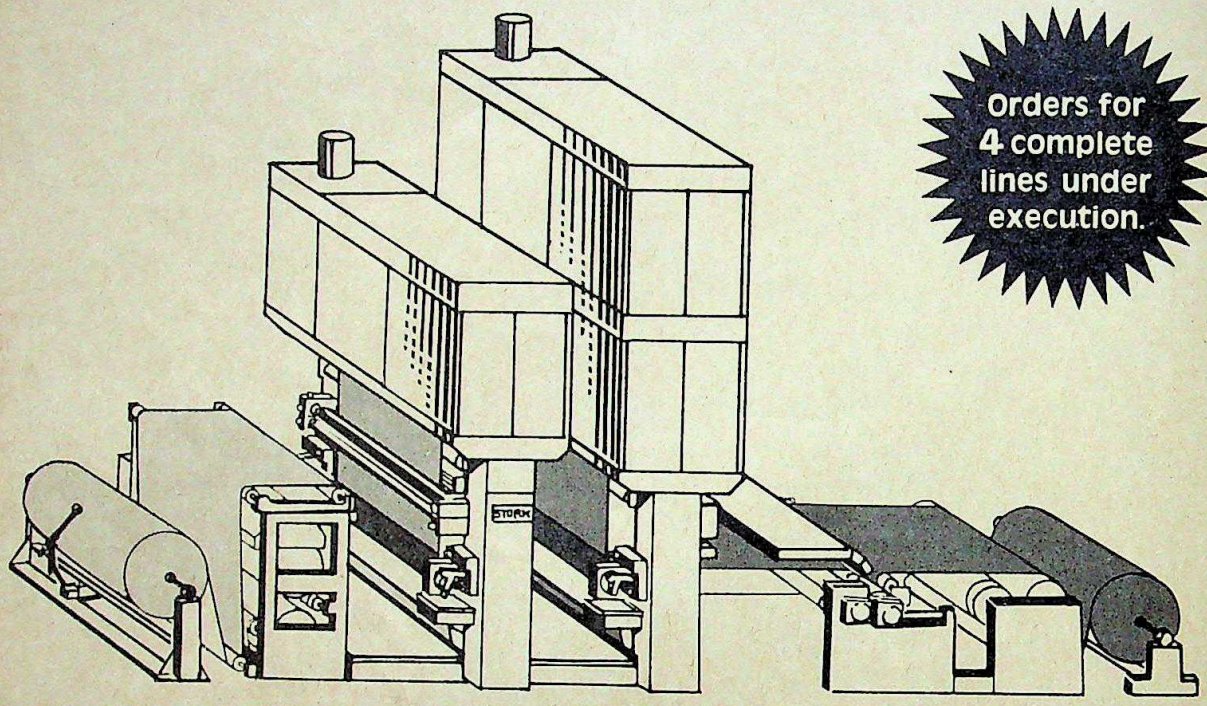

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IN A SPOT

THE SHRIRAM family that runs DCM is in a bit of a spot: it has to find Rs 10 crore to buy out Swraj Paul's 13 per cent holding in the company, but is unable to get the money together—unlike Escorts, which has rushed through with the deal. Matters have become more complicated because the male members of the family and their descendants simultaneously want to buy out Lala Shriram's daughters and their descendants, who in any case have had no stake in the management of the company, and who would therefore prefer to invest their money elsewhere. But this deal too is stalled, because the money required for the deal has yet to be found. Meanwhile, DCM itself is not doing very well—a money-spinning unit in Delhi was closed following a gas leak and the company is unlikely to declare a dividend this year.

NEW PROPOSAL

RELIANCE Industries, never a company to sit quiet, has now proposed to the Government that it should be allowed to expand its licensed capacity for linear alkyl benzene (LAB)—a raw material for manufacturing detergents—from 50,000 tonnes to 80,000 tonnes. The initial licence has not yet been implemented, and the company would like to go in for a bigger operation from the start, with an investment of Rs 32.4 crore and an expected turnover of Rs 57 crore. Rivals view the companies proposal in the context of efforts by other companies to get licences from the Government for setting up their own LAB plants. The outcome of this battle should indicate whether the wind continues to blow unfavourably for Reliance in New Delhi's corridors of power, or whether it has changed direction.

PANELS APLENTY

BELIEVE it or not, the country's bemused exporters are faced with not one but three courts of final appeal. With a number of agencies functioning in the export arena, exporters had long been demanding an apex body to which they could appeal on day-to-day export matters. The Government finally obliged them early this year. The snag: both the Industry and the Commerce Ministry came up with committees headed by their respective secretaries, leaving businessmen thoroughly confused as to which one would have the last word. The official answer to their predicament? Yet another committee, headed by the cabinet secretary. Straddling all these are a cabinet committee on exports headed by the prime minister which is looking at policy issues, taking the total number of committees to four.

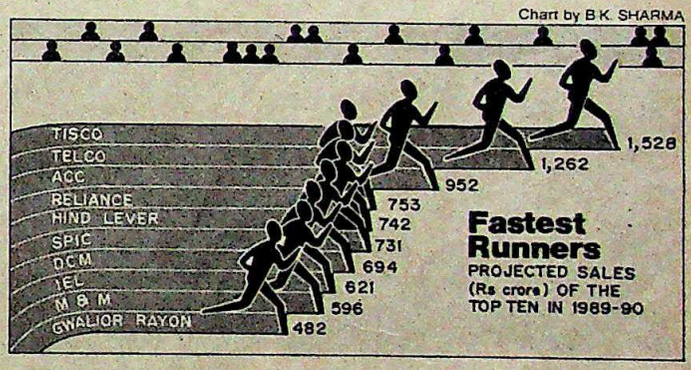
PRICING PROBLEM

WITH the prices of several new models of two-wheelers ruling at unexpectedly high levels—new 100 cc models often cost more than older 125 cc and even 175 cc machines—the Government has now sat up and taken notice of an irrational situation. The problem, lies in the duty burden borne by the new models, many of which have a high import content, on which they are charged customs duty. The continued rise of the yen during the last few months has only compounded the problem. New car models face a similar problem, but the Government seems inclined to look more considerately at the problems of the two-wheeler industry, and a duty reduction may be round the corner.

THE TALL TATAS

WHICH corporate giants will be ahead of the field four years from now? The first ever answer to this very interesting question comes from the research bureau of *Business Standard*, which concludes after a regression analysis that none other than the two Tata giants—TISCO and TELCO—will continue to head the field in 1989-90, followed

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



well behind by ACC in the unlikely third spot, with Reliance Industries coming no better than fourth. The analysis takes a number of factors into account before making its forecast, but clearly some of the companies could do better than they are given credit for, given their plans for launching new projects. Equally, some of the other companies seem overrated for their growth potential.

CHIPPING TROUBLE

WIPRO, the Bangalore-based computer unit, has run into an unexpected conflict with Sentinel Computer Corporation, the US company from which it initially acquired its technology in 1980. Sentinel has said that it is cancelling its licence arrangements with Wipro and has called on it to stop using software and manufacturing or selling products based on Sentinel technology because of "various breaches, contraventions and violations" of Wipro's agreements with Sentinel. But Wipro counters that it had bought Sentinel's technology outright on a lumpsum payment, that Sentinel's contentions are "absurd" and that the US company is raising these claims to try and take advantage of Wipro's success in India because Sentinel has failed in the American market. The company says that its subsidiary has invested over Rs 4.5 crore in research and development, resulting in "significant indigenous development of several hardware and software products". It now remains to be seen which company will sue first.

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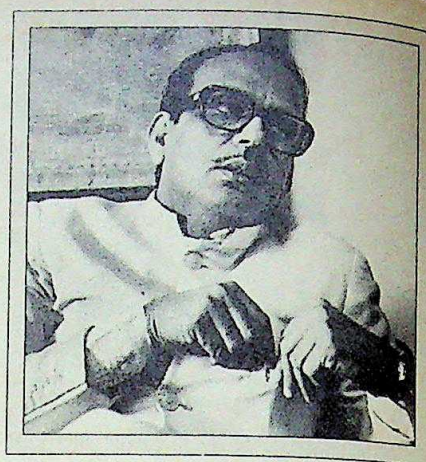
EXCISE

The Business Blacklist



HE HAS been neither a businessman nor a money-lender. But Finance Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh's ingenuity for devising novel ways of recovering government dues should provide object lessons for many a Marwari and money-lender in the country. Initially, Singh launched punitive raids on erring businessmen in order to get the message across that he would not tolerate tax evasion. When this strategy ran into a strong head-wind, he and his advisers decided to go for the jugular: no tax evader, Singh decreed, should be allowed to get favours from the Government, including industrial licences, permission to issue shares, foreign currency loans, and money from Government-owned financial institutions. Having got Cabinet approval for the decision, the Finance Ministry last month decided to blacklist 21 leading business houses which had Central excise dues of over Rs 5 crore each.

Determined to ensure that the new fiat would have the maximum possible sting, Singh decreed that even sister companies of defaulting corporations would be denied clearance. So the 'blacklist' reads like a veritable who's who of Indian industry, featuring such illustrious names as Russi Mody (TISCO), R.P. Goenka (Dunlop and Ceat), K.N. Modi (Modi Rubber and Bombay Tyres) and Jagdish Sapru (ITC). Other companies include GTC, Hindustan Lever, Bhadrachalam Paper Boards, Arbuda Mills and Hind Lamps *(see table)*. The total excise outstandings against these companies exceeded a staggering Rs 400 crore. Though many of the companies concerned have taken their tax disputes to the courts, Finance Ministry officials argue that if the companies can delay tax payments by getting stay orders on purely technical grounds, the Government can also use its executive powers to deny them sanctions that they seek. Said V.P. Singh: "If a group can't clear its dues then there must be something wrong with its management. If they collect money from their customers as excise and other taxes, this must come to the treasury immediately."

Singh set the ball rolling on his controversial—and potentially explosive—proposal last December. The Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) calculated that various business houses had been able to withhold over Rs 3,700 crore as excise duty on one pretext or the other. While the recovery of over Rs 1,700 crore was stayed by various courts, the remaining Rs 2,000 crore was locked up in departmental adjudication, which many businessmen were delaying on many counts. The revenue department prepared a list of "persistent and deliberate defaulters" and the finance minister took this to the Cabinet and recommended that none of them receive any government backing.

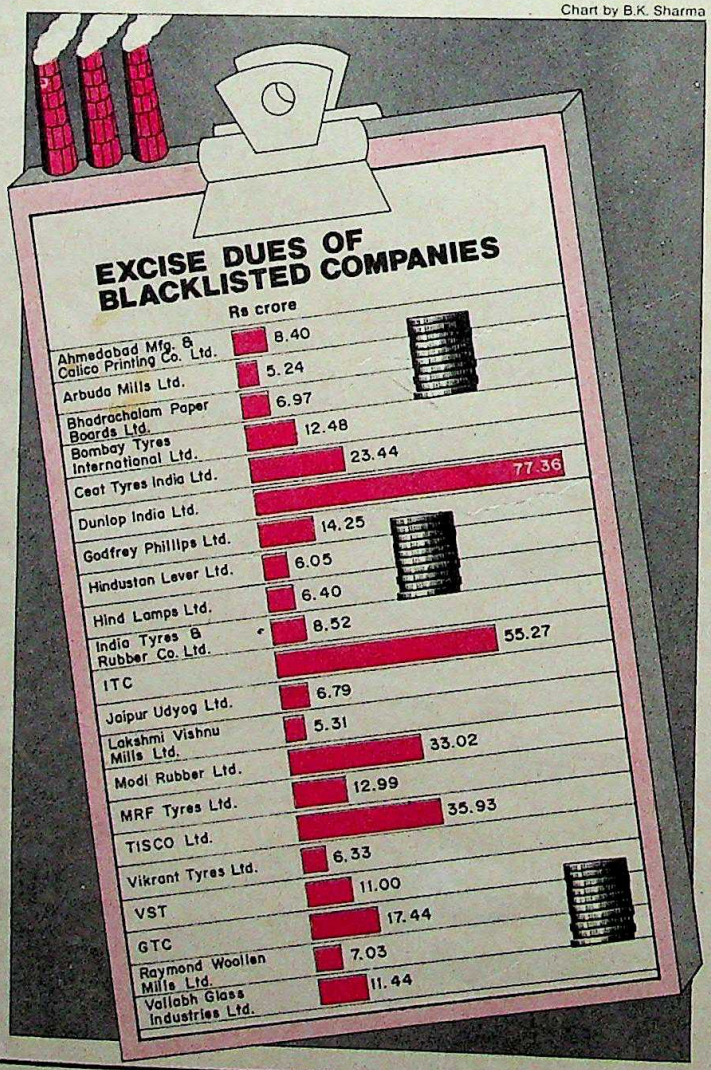
The formal proposal sent to the Cabinet in February suggested that:

- Groups which had defaulted on taxes should not be given any industrial licence;
- The Department of Company Affairs, which administers the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act, should be asked to withhold clearance for expansion or diversification programmes suggested by the defaulting groups;
- The Department of Economic Affairs should not sanction any external commercial borrowings;
- No debenture and share issues should be allowed to the blacklisted companies;
- Comprehensive guidelines be sent to financial institutions, advising care in giving loans to groups that owe taxes.

Even within the Government, the proposal created shockwaves. But after a month of to-ing and fro-ing, the Cabinet finally gave its approval. The Revenue Department then sent a list of over 200 companies (linked to the 21 major defaulters) to all the important ministries and departments, including industry, electronics, commerce, company affairs and petrochemicals. The list even included the public sector Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) and Oil India.

Despite the Cabinet approval, officials (including some in the Prime Minister's Secretariat) continued to seek ways of diluting the proposal. The Industry Ministry

Chart by B.K. Sharma



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> "If a group can't clear its dues, then there must be something wrong with its management. If they collect money from their customers as excise and other taxes, this must come to the treasury."
>
> V.P. SINGH
> *finance minister*

argued that the country's industrial development could not be mortgaged to revenue collection. It also wanted public sector units to be excluded, and contended that the cut-off limit of tax dues, for a company to be included in the blacklist, should be raised from Rs 1 crore to Rs 5 crore. The Finance Ministry eventually fell in line with these suggestions.

THROUGH this period of debate, several companies on the Finance Ministry's list managed to get away with official clearances. The Birlas were allowed to become partners in Indo-Gulf Fertiliser, R.P.Goenka got clearance for acquiring some of Dunlop's overseas shareholdings, ITC plans a major restructuring and share issue, GTC's Sanjay Dalmia got permission for Dalmia Resorts to issue share capital, the Singhanias have been going ahead with the broadbanding of licences and joint sector projects, Hindustan Lever has been pursuing normal expansion plans, and many are lobbying for new projects: the Tatas with the Honda car proposal, for instance. In none of these cases is there any sign of the panic that would be inevitable if the door had been slammed shut in their faces.

Official explanations for this are not entirely convincing. But there is little doubt that the Industry Ministry (and perhaps some of the other wings of government) has little stomach for V.P. Singh's brainwave. But the Finance Ministry has gone right ahead, refusing permission to several leading business houses to raise funds on the capital market, holding up their proposals for overseas loans and not clearing the acquisition or the merger of some companies.

One person to suffer, ironically, is President of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, R.P. Goenka, who was not granted permission to buy additional overseas shares of Dunlop (some shares had been bought earlier). The reason: his companies have excise dues of over Rs 85 crore. A lot of this is held up in court action, but some of it is not. Among companies that have not been given permission to issue shares are Duncan Agro Industries (run by G.P. Goenka, R.P. Goenka's brother), Bombay Tyres International (run by the Modis), Orient Paper (a Birla unit), Ceat Tyres (R.P. Goenka), and Continental Construction Company.

The ministry's stubborn attitude has begun to pay dividends. Last fortnight R.P. Goenka told Revenue Department officials that he had a cheque for Rs 2 crore, and this was the first step to clearing his companies' dues. Said CBEC Chairman Jyotirmoy Dutta: "Every day we have been getting more than half a dozen proposals for part payment of dues."

Russi Mody

R.P. Goenka

K.N. Modi

Jagdish Sapru

Among the leading businessmen affected by the Government's decision to blacklist tax-defaulting companies are Russi Mody (TISCO), R.P. Goenka (Dunlop and Ceat), K.N. Modi (Modi Rubber and Bombay Tyres) and Jagdish Sapru (ITC).

The Government has, of course, not told affected companies and groups that they have been formally blacklisted, as this might provoke legal action. The ministry is aware that such formal notices are fraught with legal danger, and the guidelines on the subject that have been sent to the financial institutions are couched in suitably careful language. Ministry officials conceded that some of the companies may not even be aware of the Government decision (K.N.Modi, for instance, confessed he had no idea that his group had been blacklisted), but said that most businessmen knew they would get nothing out of the Government till the tax money was paid up.

Meanwhile, the industries affected by V.P. Singh's decision have been plying the Government with memoranda stating their case. Typically, the industry associations have blamed the Revenue Department for overcharging them, so that they were forced to resort to legal remedy. The tyre industry (one of the biggest culprits) argued in a representation: "We have never stopped legal dues, but more often than not the excise authorities have not given us benefits genuinely due to us according to law." The cigarette business (another major culprit) said in its representation: "The laws are vague and difficult to understand. They give enough scope for interpretation, and different people have been taxed differently for the same product. We have to fight these discrepancies. Hence the delay in payments."

These representations, however, have cut little ice with V.P.Singh, who sees the issue in simple terms: companies with large tax dues are delaying payment of money to the Government on a number of pretexts. He salvaged his budget last year through the tax raids, which put the fear of God into potential tax evaders and sent tax collection soaring despite the sharp drop in tax rates. This year Singh has a large deficit to handle, plus additional burdens like the pay commission, and he must ensure that the money keeps coming in, lest he is left at the end of the year with an unpretty picture to present to Parliament. So whether industry protests or not, and whether the other ministries cooperate or not, he says he intends going full steam ahead with his latest drive.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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GTC PROBE

The Smoke Rings

THE MONEY involved is Rs 50 crore. The Government's investigators unearthed what they saw as a tax fiddle to squirrel away this enormous amount into secret pockets two years ago during raids conducted between 1980 and 1982. Yet, in a cautionary tale that involves textbook bureaucratic dawdling, deliberate delays and legal quibbles, the Government has been inexplicably tardy in trying to recover the sum from Golden Tobacco Company (since renamed GTC Industries). The price of the delay: Rs 10 lakh daily.

At one stage, the officials handling the case were systematically transferred to far-flung outposts. Questions have been asked in Parliament, alleging attempts at hushing up the case. And the Public Accounts Committee has persistently nudged the Finance Ministry into taking follow-up measures. But the money remains unrecovered.

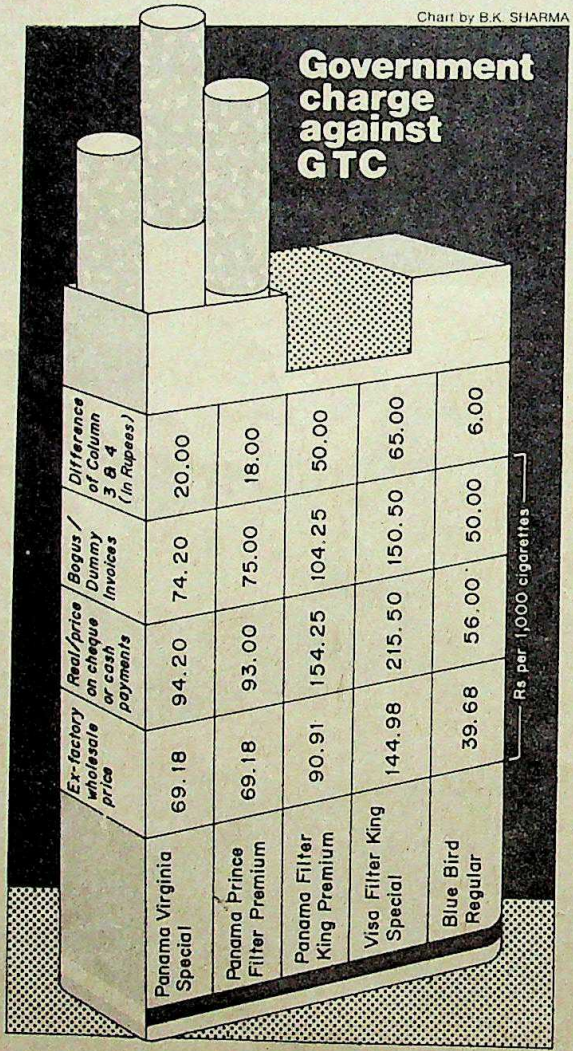
The action began after a long investigation, when GTC's premises, wholesalers and semi-wholesalers were raided in several towns and cities across the country. "Truckloads of documents" were recovered as evidence, as well as statements under questioning allegedly indicating that the cigarette-manufacturing company was engaged in a nation-wide excise evasion exercise in collusion with its dealers. Finally, after a parliamentary storm during which the Government was openly accused of attempting a cover-up, the excise authorities issued two show cause notices to GTC in 1983.

But the company's lawyers got a stay order from the courts on the ground that the notices dealt with matters that were time-barred: a show cause notice relating to under-recovery of excise can only cover a period starting six months before the notice's issuance. And as GTC's lawyer Umesh Khaitan argued, the period covered by the 1983 notice covered 1978-79 and 1979-80.

Two full years later, the authorities woke up once again—after the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee got into the act. This time, they issued a notice to the company making allegations of fraud. But once again, GTC went to the court and got a stay order—on the same ground: the matter was time-barred. A notice including allegations of fraudulent manipulation covers a longer period: five years. But the company lawyers pointed out that, as before, more than five years had elapsed before the notice was issued and this was indeed the case—the 1985 notice related to a period before 1980. If the charge of fraud had been made in either of the 1983 show cause notices, the company's lawyers would have been unable to get a stay order on the technical ground of the matter being time-barred. But this was not done. And now the court has ordered that while administrative proceedings against the company may continue, no orders can be issued.

Even today, the case has not come up for departmental adjudication, though excise officials acknowledge that the daily loss is a staggering Rs 10 lakh. Only now has the Revenue Department in the Finance Ministry stirred itself to create a special cell in the Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC), charged with preparing a prosecution case against GTC. Said CBEC Chairman Jyotirmoy Dutta: "We are not going to allow anybody to take advantage of any delay on our part. We have a cast iron case against them and we will fight it out in the court." But that only begged the question: why had the matter dragged on for four years if the Government had a cast iron case?

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



The information already with the officials, meanwhile, reveals a ingenious modus operandi through which—Government documents allege—GTC and its dealers used a system of fictitious accounts, phony agencies, fiscal legerdemain and tight control of the distribution machinery to avoid paying their fair share of taxes. This scenario, however, is disputed by Khaitan, who argued last fortnight that, "There is nothing to the case. There are no real facts behind the show cause notice. After the raids took place, there was an extensive inquiry by the officials concerned, and they did not find a shred of wrong-doing."

Nevertheless, the fact remains that strong influence was brought to bear on the Government to thwart the investigation, and senior officials in the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence severely curtailed the number of investigators on the job and slowed down the pace of the inquiry.

Moreover, the Government's own records show that, since 1980, it had details compiled by the investigators which set out a graphic account of what GTC and its dealers were up to. The case diary records that in 1979, when Sanjay Dalmia bought GTC from the Narsis—a Gujarati family—all the company's existing wholesalers were replaced with 13 Marwari families. By 1983, some 40 such families were running a network of 330 wholesalers who controlled the company's sales throughout India. In 1982, their cigarette sales in Bombay were controlled by just two families—the Sardas and the Thards—each of which had several subsidiary partnerships under which market territories were clearly defined.

The wholesalers and other dealers

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down the line, the Government's documents say, were chosen not so much for their experience in the cigarette trade as for the purpose of forming a tightly-knit organisation which would be an extension of the mother company in the fiscal wheeling and dealing that was to follow. The investigators alleged that the business relationship between GTC and its dealers "was in the nature of transactions between commercially related persons who have both a direct and indirect interest in promoting the business of each other".

THE MASTER PLAN to dodge excise payments, the documents allege, began in 1979. GTC began steadily reducing its wholesale prices, often by minor changes in the brand names of its cigarettes. The price reductions brought down the excise burden as well as the tax on profits. On paper, there was nothing illegal about this exercise. As attorney Khaitan put it: "The cigarette industry has total freedom to fix its prices. In fact, our price lists were approved by the Government after negotiations. The whole scheme was revealed to the Government."

But there was one hitch. If the wholesale prices were reduced, the retail prices should also have come down. This did not happen; instead, they remained unchanged. And Government investigators alleged after their investigations that the wholesale prices too had changed only on paper; in reality, even these had not come down. The "lowered" prices were reflected in *kutcha* or dummy vouchers. The difference between the old and the new price—the Government argues—was then ploughed back into the company.

The charge against the company is that this accounting gimmick was designed to bring down the selling price of cigarettes in the books, thereby drastically reduce the excise levy on the cigarettes, and then plough the money back in a manner that did not attract taxes.

GTC's wholesale buyers, after getting their cigarettes at an unusually low price, sold them downstream to their dealers or semi-wholesalers with a higher margin. For example, GTC supplied Panama Virginia Special to its wholesale buyers at Rs 69.18 per thousand cigarette sticks. The wholesaler sold them at Rs 94.20 to semi-wholesale dealers. But this last price—the real earnings—were not reflected in the account books because the wholesalers gave *kutcha* vouchers to the dealers showing that they had sold the cigarettes at Rs.74.20. The actual profit to the wholesaler (the difference between Rs 69.18 and Rs 94.20) worked out to about Rs 25 per thousand cigarettes. But for the record, the wholesalers showed a profit of only Rs 5: the difference between Rs 69.18 (the artificially lowered ex-factory price) and Rs 74.20 (the dummy voucher). Government investigators say that the hidden profit of Rs 20 was ploughed back into the company through a series of tax evasion devices.

BHAWAN SINGH

The Government charges Sanjay Dalmia's GTC with operating through closely-knit wholesalers to siphon money out of the company and then plough it back through fictitious book entries so as to evade Rs 50 crore in excise duties.

Similarly, GTC supplied Panama Filter King to its wholesalers at Rs 90.91 per thousand sticks. The wholesaler realised an actual price of Rs 154.25 from his dealers, but invoices showed that the dealers had only paid Rs 104.25, thereby creating an unaccounted profit margin of Rs 50 per thousand cigarettes.

According to a Finance Ministry report, one method of ploughing back the secret profits was through a complex system of deposits and commercial credit, with interest charges so designed as to get the money back into the company from the wholesalers. In other words, the debits and credits were manipulated in such a way that they served the purpose of creating a legal cash flow between the wholesaler and the company to cover the flow-back of the "extra" money.

Another method by which the unaccounted cash found its way to the parent company was in the form of advertising and sales promotion expenses borne by wholesalers, government investigators reported. Seized records as well as raids on several advertising companies revealed that these expenses, though borne by the wholesaler, were actually controlled by the company. And several crores worth of bills maintained by GTC as advertising and sales promotion expenses were suspected to be either inflated or fictitious. In addition, several advertising agencies which were submitting bills to GTC were found to be functioning only on paper and issued bills merely as a means to facilitate the flow-back of funds from the wholesalers to GTC. At least three agencies—Govan Advertising (which is owned by the Dalmias), Everest Advertising and Blitz Advertising—raised bills against both wholesale buyers and against wholesale dealers.

Investigators recommended that owing to several "suspicious transactions", in which the officers of the company may themselves have directly participated, it would be necessary to obtain the statements of all the directors and senior officers as well as to keep a constant vigil on the entire GTC network in order to prevent alteration or further destruction of records. Once again, this was not done. Instead, revenue officers in charge of the case were transferred to different parts of the country and the adjudication process allowed by the high court has moved at a snail's pace. It was only after Finance Minister V.P. Singh insisted that his officials go after the "big fish" that the department swung into some action. Said V.P.Singh: "I don't believe in words like 'time-barred'. If the money is due to us we will recover it even after 100 years." Only time will tell whether Singh is willing to put his money where his mouth is.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR with bureau reports

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JHARIA COALFIELDS

Ordeal by Fire

AS THE first showers of the monsoon lashed the Jharia coalfields last fortnight, vast areas in southern Bihar's coal belt suddenly turned copper red, the earth cracked, flames leapt skyward and a thick brown cloud of poisonous carbon monoxide spewed out, spreading fear and panic. The underground inferno, raging for decades, had burnt its way through yet another seam of coal-rich Jharia land.

If unchecked, the fire can destroy 17.32 square kilometres of land and 117 million tonnes of prime coking coal. Already, the fires have endangered numerous coal production outlets, surface infrastructure installations, railway sidings, roads and drainage channels, besides wiping out several housing blocks. And if local politicians and social workers are to be believed, 5,000 people are uprooted every year or affected in a variety of ways because of the fires underground. Last fortnight, even as fresh flames leapt out of the earth, the Controller of Fire and Environment in the Western Jharia coalfields, K.K.Malhotra, led a convoy of bulldozers to level the Angar-Pathra project where the underground fire had reduced 40 houses to ashes, apart from searing a 22-hectare stretch of land with its blazing heat.

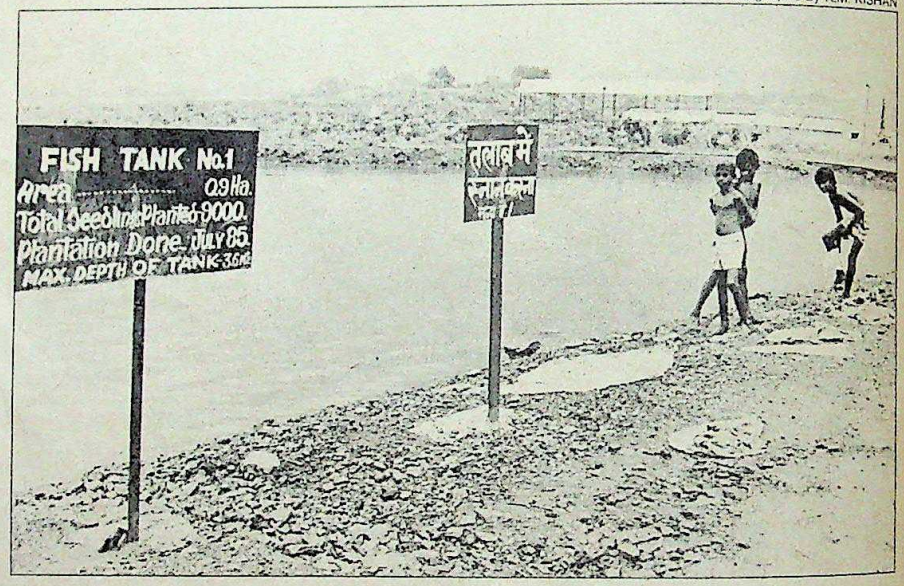
But the problem can be doused, the first successes have been notched up in the fire-fighting operations, and Bharat Coking Coal Ltd (BCCL) last fortnight unrolled a Rs 125-crore plan aimed at taming the remaining 70 fires and freeing 90 million tonnes of the 117 million tonnes of coking coal still locked in the fiery earth underneath. This marks the most ambitious effort so far to confront the problem.

In June, the Jogta fire—which had been eating into Jharia's vitals for over four decades—was finally put out. The method employed to control 18.9 hectares of blazing fire was simple: after ploughing the surface with bulldozers, the entire block was isolated by trench-cutting and the gaps covered with heavy layers of soil. Simultaneously, 14 million tonnes of coal which had been encircled by the Jogta fire, was also freed. Earlier, the blaze, which had sent the soil temperature shooting to 40 and 50 degrees Celsius, had killed all bio-life in the area. But the Jogta fire control project has changed the picture dramatically. As many as 21,000 of the 65,000 saplings planted in the last six years have survived, the oxygen level in the area has been brought down sharply, two fish hatcheries have been developed, and now BCCL officials are planning to raise a forest on a 20-hectare stretch of land; a playground and a park are also being developed. According to BCCL officials, apart from Jogta, fires have also been put out at Moolkharki, Kuridih, East Katras, Jogidih and Let Mudih.

There have been other partial successes too. Under the Londa fire control project, sanctioned in 1979 with a capital investment of Rs 17.95 crore, the danger to Londa's surface complex, the Dhanbad-Pathdrih rail line and the Jharia-Sindri road has been partly checked; also the emission of smoke, steam and obnoxious gases has been suppressed.

Under the Braree fire project, also sanctioned in 1979 with an outlay of Rs 3.78 crore, the fire is being dealt with by the surface sealing method. The digging of coal was stopped in March 1984 because the fire-front had advanced well ahead of the quarry face. But a great deal of the local coal has now been saved from getting ravaged by the flames. Some amount of success has also been achieved under the Rajapur fire project.

Photographs by K.M. KISHAN



Gas and smoke in the danger zone (top); and fish tank on former fire ground

The fires in Jharia had been caused in the first place by spontaneous heating, illicit distillation in abandoned mines, selective mining, fire in quarry debris and the dumping of hot ash. But according to S.C.Batra, deputy director of mines safety, spontaneous heating is the most common cause of major fires, including the ones at Jogta, Sijua and Londa. He argues that the making of soft coke in quarries and on ground broken by mining operations is also responsible for these fires.

Attempts to douse the fires before nationalisation by private mine owners, singly or jointly, by trench-cutting, sand blanketing and digging yielded poor results since they lacked the resources, expertise and equipment required for the difficult job. However, in the course of their trial and error methods, the private mine owners succeeded in turning 35

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million tonnes of coal into ash. At today's prices, that would be worth a staggering Rs 700 crore.

Despite the breakthroughs achieved by BCCL and the unveiling of a long-term plan to tackle the problem, the task of putting out the fires altogether remains daunting. The most difficult issue may be the re-locating of people in the affected areas. The 'Quit Jharia' notice, which was served on the coal town's residents, on the ground that the city is sitting atop an inferno, has not been followed up in any way and is now the subject of local mockery. A signboard fixed at the entrance of Jharia, proclaiming it a danger zone, has been missing for a long time and no effort has been made to replace it. And the Dhanbad deputy commissioner admitted that though "we are aware of the dangers, forcible eviction of one lakh people is not possible". Said Ashish Banerjee, a shop worker: "I have been hearing of this notice for the last several years but all along, in blatant disregard of the notice, buildings have been mushrooming, shops have been coming up and market complexes growing in Jharia."

Nevertheless, the state Coal-mines Development Authority is busy chalking out schemes to lure Jharia's population away through attractive incentives. BCCL sources say seven satellite townships are to be developed in a plan to shift Jharia's population by the turn of the century. In May, Coal India floated a global tender asking architects and town planners to "meet the challenge of building a township for 10,00,000 inhabitants....The conceptual plan should include multi-storey buildings for residences, shopping centres, stadia, parks, gardens, lakes and other modern civic amenities. The proposed township needs to be linked with Jharia coalfields through shuttle trains and road transport."

But the plan, if applicable to Jharia township, is likely to face rough weather once it gets off the drawing-boards. One of the formidable opponents of the evacuation plan is the powerful Janata Party MLA Suryadeo Singh, who has made his intention known clearly. The issue has also attracted a great deal of public attention, being the main election plank in the last Lok Sabha and assembly polls. Clearly, the fire underground will spark off political firestorms overground if the authorities push through with their scheme. However, without such a scheme, there is little hope of finally putting out the underground fires either, notwithstanding the recent successes in Jogta and elsewhere.

—FARZAND AHMED in Jharia

HINDUSTAN CIBA-GEIGY

Brand Bother

NAME-dropping is not the prerogative of the *arriviste* alone. Companies sometimes do it and, as Hindustan CIBA-Geigy will testify, the consequences can be quite unforeseen. CIBA has been hauled up by the Trade Marks Registrar for misleading consumers, and its expensive advertisement blitz has been terminated. Binaca, it was shouting from the roof-tops, has become Cibaca. Now, however, the only advertisements one is likely to see will state instead that Binaca is not Cibaca.

This confusing saga was sparked off by the sale of the consumer products division of CIBA-Geigy of Switzerland, to the English firm Reckitt and Colman (overseas). India and Pakistan were left out of the deal however, thus creating an anomalous situation: while the local incarnation of CIBA could continue making the same products, it could not use the original brand name. The item that mattered—the Binaca line of oral hygiene products which fetched the Indian company Rs 23 crore in 1985—had thus to don new raiment.

"We launched a very effective campaign," says Hindustan CIBA-Geigy consumer products chief S. Kalra. "We explained that everything was the same but the name Binaca had become Cibaca." But the hitch came when Reckitt and Colman in India approached the Registrar of Trade Marks for assignment of the Binaca brand name.

While the Calcutta-based Reckitt and Colman declined to comment at all on the whole affair, Joint Registrar of Trade Marks K.C. Kailasam pointed out that, "The advertisements were a violation of the law." Added Kailasam: "They were misleading the public. Binaca and Cibaca are two separate brands which are owned by different companies."

But what really caused Hindustan CIBA-Geigy to sit up and take note was the registrar's order that the damage should be rectified through "suitable corrigenda both in the press and television". After spending a rather large sum of money on propagating the message that Binaca was Cibaca, it could hardly sit back and watch Reckitt and Colman start a campaign saying the very reverse.

CIBA executives rushed hotfoot to the registrar. "We convinced him," says CIBA Company Secretary M.R.Lal, "that there was nothing wrong with the campaign, and anyway, that phase of it had come to an end."

The registrar, however, has a different version of the meeting. "They came with their attorneys and even contended that they would go to court to challenge the decision," says Kailasam, "but they failed to convince me that the advertisements were not misleading. The only concession we made was to delete the bit about issuing corrigenda on TV."

Matters were, however, patched up. CIBA has stopped the campaign and removed the hoardings. "We are not going to use the word Binaca in our advertisements any more," explains Kalra. Only the footnotes are left to be filled. Reckitt and Colman (overseas) has already complied with the Trade Marks Registrar's instructions to counter the CIBA campaign. Now CIBA-Geigy of Switzerland has been asked to issue a similar notice. And that, one supposes, should finally convince the misled consumer that while Binaca is not Cibaca, it is the same thing anyway.

—PARTHASARATHI SWAMI

The offending ad: causing ripples

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TATAS

Twin Trouble

IN APRIL this year a new chief executive was drafted into National Radio and Electronics Company Limited (NELCO). His job: to turn around a company which has been making losses for most of the 40 years it has been in existence. At about the same time, winding up operations were going full steam ahead at Tata Burroughs Limited's (TBL) manufacturing unit in Santa Cruz. In less than seven years, it had become a white elephant.

The two companies are Tata stable-mates, and were supposed to be front runners in the group's thrust into new growth areas. Instead, both are evidently in trouble, and the might of the Tatas seems to have been of little help in a field where numerous small-scale entrepreneurs have a far better track record.

For NELCO, of course, being in trouble is practically a way of life. It surfaced momentarily in 1982-83 to make a profit of Rs 64 lakh and then Rs 1.14 crore in 1983-84, but then slipped back to a Rs 1.10 crore loss in the 18-month accounting period that followed. Its radio division is unlikely to ever pay its way, its computers have failed to make a splash and its various efforts to diversify are yet to bear fruit.

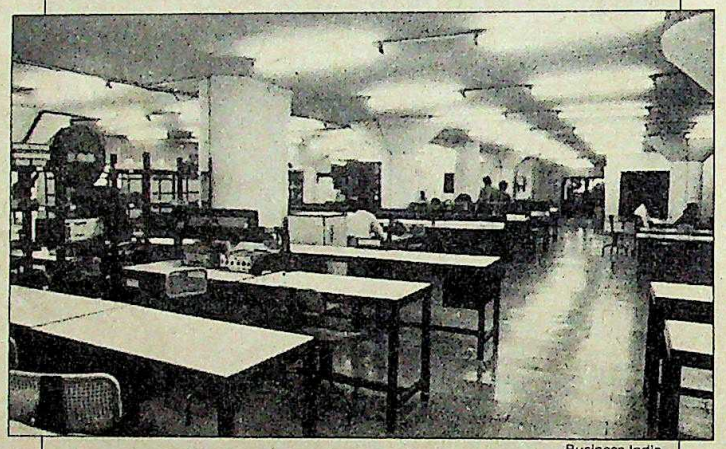
Says S.K. Mukherjee, the newly-appointed chief executive: "NELCO can be called a company of lost opportunities. It concentrated on manufacturing when it needed a marketing orientation. It stuck to radios while others diversified. It got into a groove." The new boss's recipe for revival is to divisionalise the organisation, introduce more accountability and diversify into data acquisition systems, cable TV and other high-tech areas. "You will see a new NELCO soon," he promises.

Why NELCO has constantly been allowed to remain in the doldrums is a mystery; how it has managed is no big secret. While its competitors merely added their brand names to cheap cottage industry products, it set up a huge manufacturing infrastructure. And it began with a particular approach and disdained change.

TBL's fate has been little better. It was set up in 1977 to market Burroughs' systems, manufacture peripherals and sub-assemblies and provide software and computer consultancy. Today after several midstream corrections, only consultancy keeps the company going.

"NELCO can be called a company of lost opportunities."

S.K. MUKHERJEE
President and Chief Executive of NELCO



Business India

"We have had setbacks. But these are inevitable in a fast moving industry."

MINOO MODY
Director of TBL

(Centre) Closed TBL printer assembly area

Computer sales never really took off, while rivals outfits flourished. The manufacturing line for printers, inaugurated in 1979, was ill-judged: Japanese technology made it obsolete in no time. After stumbling along, its Santa Cruz unit has finally been closed down, with 26 employees being offered a golden handshake. And the sortie into magnetic ink character recognition encoders has not proved very successful so far as the banking sector is dragging its feet. "We have had our setbacks," admits Director M.H. Mody. "But these are inevitable in a fast moving industry."

Now, as in the case of NELCO, a fresh start is being made. On the manufacturing side, TBL is now concentrating on Burroughs B25 super-micros for which a plant has been set up in Goa. But this will be priced much higher than existing alternatives, and so may not get customers trooping in. Mody insists, however, that the B25 has a vastly superior performance and potential. This is true. But industry sources feel that with computerisation just taking off, clients would prefer to invest in a less expensive machine to start with. As a rival company's executive put it, "Even if you give a 10-year-old a 42-function calculator that costs $50, he will still use only the four basic functions."

But even TBL's software business is not doing as well as before. While product sales understandably dropped from Rs 3.98 crore in 1984 to a meagre Rs 12 lakh in 1985, income from services also declined from Rs 12.85 crore to Rs 10.66 crore. TBL has been riding piggyback on Burroughs Corporation of the US, doing routine software conversion jobs. The future evidently lies in a greater emphasis on manufacture. But too many plans have gone awry. Mody feels that the Government is not changing its policies fast enough and proposals were not cleared. He admits that TBL is facing a few more problems than the others but that, he counters, is because it has been in the game longer.

Not everybody agrees. "In this high-growth industry," says an executive of a leading computer manufacturer, "you have to be pro-active not reactive. Only those companies which are fast with their footwork will avoid becoming obsolete."

So the solution for the two companies may well lie in the Mukherjee prescription: "To get NELCO going," he says, "you have to take tomorrow's decisions yesterday." Evidently, both need to catch up with the times.

—PARTHASARATHI SWAMI

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When you purchase property shares in Dalmia Resorts, you purchase one or more weeks every year (depending on your investment) in a beautiful holiday resort in some of the most exotic locations in India. The Unit is yours to occupy, enjoy and own for one or more weeks every year—forever! It is yours to live in, loan to friends, sell, let or bequeath to your heirs.

A ONCE-ONLY MINIMUM INVESTMENT OF Rs. 13,500 ONWARDS

You pay only once for a Dalmia Resort which you and your family can enjoy forever. There is a variety of accommodation types to choose from. Ranging from elegant Efficiency Units to Deluxe 2-Bedroom Units. The cost of a week varies from Rs. 13,500 to Rs. 29,500 depending upon the type of accommodation you select and the season your week falls in. You can buy as many weeks as you wish.

What's more! Unlike hotel accommodation where prices increase by around 10% every year, owning a Property Time Share assures your family an inflation-proof holiday. Forever! Add to it the bonus of an appreciating asset—after all you are buying real estate. Thus, with every Property Time Share you own, you benefit in more ways than one!

Dalmia Resorts International has now entered into an agreement with Canara Bank through which the Bank will act as the Custodian and Escrow Agent.

Your share purchase payments will be deposited in an Escrow Account, with money to be released according to the terms of the Escrow Agreement. The Bank will also hold the Title Deeds in trust on behalf of the owners.

32 RESORTS IN THE NEXT 4 YEARS

Dalmia Resorts International is based on an exciting new concept that has gained phenomenal popularity worldwide. In India, this unique new concept will give birth to 32 holiday resorts at various exotic locations over the next 4 years. Bhoomi Puja has already been performed in Goa and Kodaikanal. Foundations have been laid in Delhi. Several other sites are in various stages of negotiation.

ENDLESS VACATIONS ANYWHERE IN INDIA

When you buy property shares in any one of the many Dalmia Resorts, you don't own your own holiday resort in just one exotic location. You also have the right to exchange your resort with other Dalmia Resort owners anywhere in India through our Exchange Bank. So you can vacation in a different holiday resort every year, if you wish. All for a nominal fee!

EVEN A HOLIDAY ABROAD

What's more! Through our association with Resort Condominiums International (RCI), the world's largest Time Share Exchange company, you will also be able to exchange your resort in India with the owners of over 1000 RCI holiday resorts in 46 countries worldwide by just paying a nominal Exchange Fee!

YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE—AND THE WORLD TO GAIN

Imagine owning your very own holiday resort for just Rs. 13,500. Forever!

Imagine holidaying in a different resort in India. Every year! Imagine holidaying in Rome, Paris, London, Hollywood, Hawaii... and even Disneyland!

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Memorable holidays, year after year, forever!**
- **32 resorts to choose from in the next 4 years.**
- **No maintenance hassles, as the resorts will be run by expert hotel managers.**
- **Even the smallest Unit is larger than a 5-Star hotel room and is fully equipped, with your own kitchenette.**
- **All facilities, such as Restaurants/Bars/Recreation facilities are yours, either free, at cost or at nominal charges.**
- **Exchange facility in India enables you to vacation at a different resort in India every year.**
- **Association with RCI, the world's largest Vacation Exchange Company with over 1000 resorts in 46 countries, allows you to enjoy holidays abroad too.**
- **Facility to rent/sell/gift/bequeath your property share.**
- **Appreciating asset, being real estate.**

Property Shares in Dalmia Resorts

RCI
world's largest company dealing in time share exchange

American Land Development Association

THIS COUPON CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

Act fast. Post this coupon today. It'll change the way you spend the rest of your holidays.

Name : _____

Address : _____

_____

_____

Tel : (Off.) _____ (Res.) _____ (IT-D/786)

DALMIA RESORTS International

esorts Office.
ombay Office : 65, Mittal Chambers, Nariman Point, Bombay-400 021. Phones : 2021922, 2028843

Govan Advtg & Mktg /DRI/25A/86

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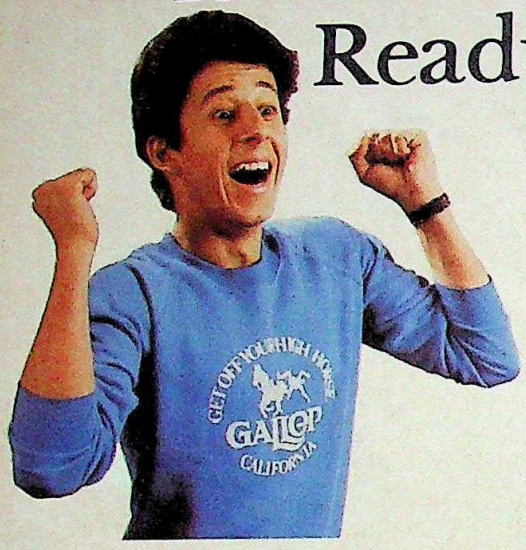
"18! At last ! Ready for a bike!"



Here you are – the stylish, gutsy bike that'll take you anywhere you'll go.

Feel its lively pick-up. Watch the (pretty!) heads turn when you dart away at the lights.

Notice how the frame and engine are mated perfectly. That's what makes the bike a breeze to handle.

Notice the attention to detail. The chunky fuel tank. Die-cast wheels. Tinted fibreglass windshield. Sleek instrumentation. The generous saddle.

In fact, the only thing miserly about the bike is its use of fuel : 60 kms per litre in actual city traffic.

Unbelievable?

Wait.

You haven't heard all.

Explorer is available, right away. You can walk into a showroom and ride out with it.

Today.

"18? Already?... Ready for a bike?"

Let's set your mind at ease. Are you worried about stability? The Explorer's 50cc engine and compact frame are matched perfectly for easy handling.

Tipping the scales at a sturdy 82 kg, the Explorer is a stable, well-balanced bike.

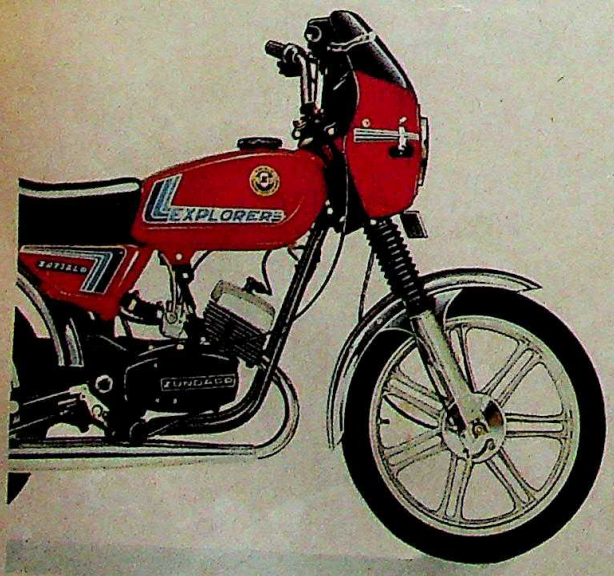
Safety? The bike's so manoeuvrable it takes city traffic, and sharp corners with ease. Besides, the tyres on the Explorer are wider than those on larger bikes. You see, the rider is in full control.

On the other hand, the 120 mm dia brakes on the Explorer are the same as those on larger bikes. No other 50cc bike has these brakes!

You can depend on the Germans to give you a sturdy design. But if you're still not sure, ask any owner.

He is your best reassurance.

Incidentally, Explorer is a good Rs.5000/- less than most other bikes!



Explorer by Enfield

All that a man's first bike should be.

OBM 9621

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TEXTILE POLICY

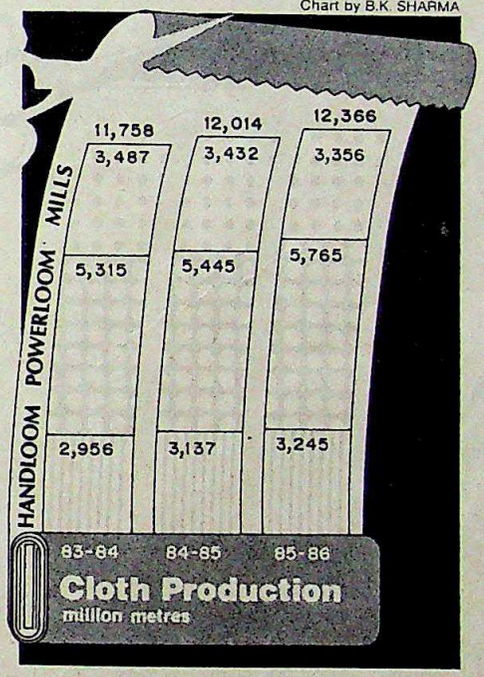
Warped Progress

YOU WOULDN'T guess it from the official press release and Textile Minister Khurshid Alam Khan's comments, both of which are generous in praise of the results of the brave new textile policy, announced a year ago. But the fact is that rarely had any industry been less in a mood to celebrate than India's cloth manufacturers were last month, when the Government toasted the first anniversary of the new policy.

Some 70 mills are lying closed; more than a lakh textile workers are on the streets; though the Government has set its face against nationalising sick textile units, the Gujarat Government was forced to do just that last month; production by the textile mills had dropped, and it was little solace that output in the powerloom and handloom sectors had gone up. Finally, the air has been thick with charges hurled at the Government for having failed to stick to promises made in the policy. Complained Jaswant Rai, president of the Northern India Cotton Textile Mills' Assocation (NICTMA): "The policy's intentions and objectives are very good, but the implementation has been shoddy."

He has a point. A committee to assess the viability of the closed mills began functioning only three months ago, simply because the Government issued the relevant notification only last January. In even more laggard fashion, a Rs 750-crore government fund to modernise the industry as well as a Rs 10-crore fund to provide doles to laid-off workers were announced only last month. Said an exasperated M.K. Mohta, president of the Indian Spinners' Association (ISA): "The Government's modernisation plan hasn't been put into effect yet. You get results only when you prime the pump."

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

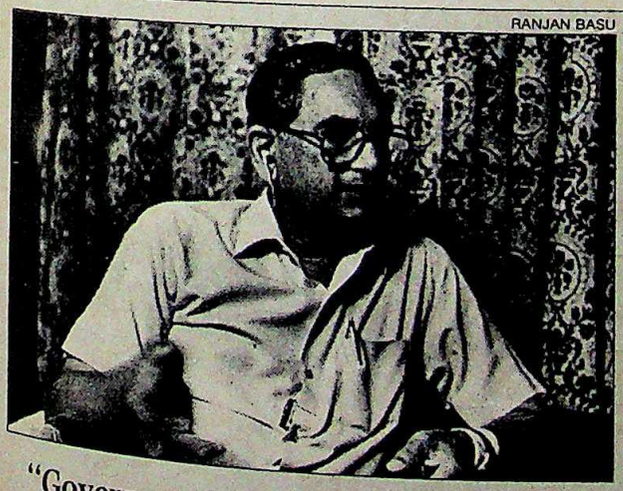


Worse yet, the objective of paring the prices of synthetic textiles and sparking off a demand explosion has made little headway. The Government did not cut taxes on synthetics across the board, limiting the duty cuts to a few fibres and blends. The price drop that resulted was barely noticed, some companies refused to pass on the benefits of the lower tax rates, and a peeved Government recently jacked up some duties.

Meanwhile, labour is turning restive, and the Government seems to have developed cold feet about shutting down unviable units. An official committee recommended closing eight National Textile Corporation mills almost a year ago, but no action has been taken on the proposal. With more than 60,000 textile workers idling in Bombay alone, local parliamentarians like Murli S. Deora were worried enough last month to write to the textile minister urging him to swiftly tackle the unemployment problem. Said Deora last fortnight: "The textile policy was not supposed to serve the interests of the millowners alone. Hardly anything has been implemented to help the workers."

Amid this collective gloom, powerloom associations—which have been crying foul for almost all of last year—questioned a fundamental premise of the new policy (that they enjoyed inherent cost advantages over the integrated mills) and lobbied furiously for amending a law introduced last year for reserving 22 textile items for handloom

RANJAN BASU



"Government's modernisation plan hasn't been put into effect. You get results only when you prime the pump."

M.K. MOHTA
president, Indian Spinners' Association

RANJAN BASU

"The policy's intentions and objectives are very good, but the implementation has been shoddy."

JASWANT RAI
president, Northern India Cotton Textile Mills' Association

OBM 8621

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Bank of Credit and Commer

(Incorporated in the Cayman

BALANCE SHE

Previous Year Rs. P.	CAPITAL AND LIABILITIES	Rs. P.	Rs. P.
	1. CAPITAL:		
30,00,000.00	Nominal value of securities deposited with Reserve Bank of India under Section 11(2) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949		30,00,000.00
	2. RESERVE FUND AND OTHER RESERVES:		
5,37,094.00	Special Reserve (see note 1)		
	3. DEPOSITS AND OTHER ACCOUNTS:		
	Fixed Deposits:		
5,10,00,000.00	(i) From banks	6,50,00,000.00	
32,88,17,411.50	(ii) From others	1,10,54,71,022.87	
37,98,17,411.50			1,17,04,71,022.87
1,46,56,872.31	Saving Bank deposits		6,08,16,784.34
	Current Accounts Contingency Accounts, etc.		
52,60,427.70	(i) From Bank	1,74,56,828.79	
18,98,88,726.11	(ii) From others	47,52,99,113.77	
58,96,23,437.62			49,27,55,942.56
	4. BORROWINGS FROM OTHER BANKING COMPANIES, AGENTS, ETC.		
20,91,46,000.00	(i) In India		14,59,08,000.00
92,20,949.76	(ii) Outside India		9,98,56,727.00
21,83,66,949.76			
	PARTICULARS:		
—	Secured		—
21,83,66,949.76	Unsecured		24,57,64,727.00
37,70,142.26	**5. BILLS PAYBLE:**		
	6. BILLS FOR COLLECTION BEING BILLS RECEIVABLE AS PER CONTRA:		
11,81,757.28	(i) Payable in India		72,00,855.60
12,32,86,982.00	(ii) Payable outside India		27,98,92,591.40
12,44,68,739.28			
	7. OTHER LIABILITIES:		
4,92,48,423.66	(i) Head Office and branches outside India-Net		5,04,09,550.08
1,17,12,454.63	(ii) Others (see note 2)		4,34,41,845.04
6,09,60,878.29			
35,94,66,427.10	**8. ACCEPTANCES, ENDORSEMENTS AND OTHER OBLIGATIONS PER CONTRA:**		
	9. PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT:		
1,62,000.51	Profit as per last Balance sheet		43,97,153.11
42,35,152.60	*Add:* Profit for the year brought from Profit and Loss Account		2,14,19,568.10
43,97,153.11			
	10. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES		
—	(i) Claims against the Banking Company not acknowledged as debts		—
16,10,79,979.78	(ii) Guarantees given on account of customers		50,22,25,966.08
2,02,975.00	(iii) Guarantees given on account of officers		3,43,251.00
14,22,00,366.99	(iv) Bills of Exchange rediscounted:		88,05,79,957.56
75,14,81,668.86	(v) Outstanding Forward Exchange Contracts		1,42,05,89,685.84
1,36,15,90,821.42	**TOTAL:**		3,36,92,6

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ternational (Overseas) Limited

(mited Liability)

IN NCH

AT 31ST DECEMBER 1985

PROPERTY AND ASSETS

Previous Year Rs. P.		Rs. P.	Rs. P.	Rs. P.
	1. **CASH:** In hand and with Reserve Bank of India and State Bank of India (including foreign currency notes)			14,22,94,463.51
12,75,48,002.61	2. **BALANCES WITH OTHER BANKS:**			
	(A) On Current Account:			
34,33,621.72	(i) In India	75,35,054.15		
27,13,471.27	(ii) Outside India	4,35,76,534,41		
61,47,092.99			5,11,11,588.56	
	(B) On Deposit Account:			
—	(i) In India		—	
—	(ii) Outside India		—	
61,47,092.99				5,11,11,588.56
—	3. **MONEY AT CALL AND SHORT NOTICE:**			—
	4. **INVESTMENTS (AT COST):**			
	(i) Securities of the Central & State Governments and other Trustee Securities uncluding Treasury Bills of the Central and State Governments (Market value of securities Rs. 40,20,67,884.00 (1984: Rs. 17,77,74,607.50) including Treasury Bills Rs. nil (1984: Rs. 7,90,80,000) at book value)		40,89,58,669.17	
17,74,15,408.17	(ii) Shares		—	
—	(iii) Debentures or Bonds		—	
—	(iv) Other investments (units) (market value Rs. 14,00,00,000 1984—Nil)		14,00,00,000.00	
—	(v) Gold		—	
17,74,15,408.17				54,89,58,669.17
	5. **ADVANCES:** (Other than bad and doubtful debts for which provision has been made to the satisfaction of the Auditors)			
	(1) Loans, Cash Credits, Overdrafts, etc.			
37,29,24,891.68	(i) In India	77,83,47,166.67		
36,72,202.24	(ii) Outside India	—		
37,65,97,093.92			77,83,47,166.67	
	(2) Bills Discounted and purchased (excluding Treasury Bills of the Central and State Government			
10,27,11,952.39	(i) Payable in India	42,57,60,138.58		
3,47,25,518.18	(ii) Payable outside India	10,67,68,169.09		
13,74,37,470.57				
51,40,34,564.49			53,25,28,307.67	
	(Particulars as per schedule attached)			1,31,08,75,474.34
	6. **BILLS RECEIVABLE BEING BILLS FOR COLLECTION AS PER CONTRA:**			
11,81,757.28	(i) Payable in India		72,00,855.60	
2,32,86,982.00	(ii) Payable outside India		27,98,92,591.40	
2,44,68,739.28				
	7. **CONSTITUENTS' LIABILITIES FOR ACCEPTANCES ENDORSEMENTS AND OTHER OBLIGATIONS PER CONTRA:**			28,70,93,447.00
5,94,66,427.10	8. **PREMISES LESS DEPRECIATION:**			93,61,62,414.11
—	Cost as at 1st January, 1985		1,92,76,842.67	
1,92,76,842.67	Additions during the year		1,19,31,457.44	
1,92,76,842.67			3,12,08,300.11	
—	*Less:* Deductions during the year		Nil	
1,92,76,842.67			3,12,08,300.11	
1,25,235.52	*Less:* Depreciation written off to date		5,49,837.11	
1,91,51,607.15				
	9. **FURNITURE AND FIXTURES LESS DEPRECIATION:** (INCLUDING VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT)			3,06,58,463.00
15,82,852.76	Cost as at 1st January 1985		1,15,13,819.26	
99,54,751.50	Additions during the year		94,80,245.39	
1,15,37,604.26			2,09,94,064.65	
23,785.00	*Less:* Deductions during the year.		71,972.27	
1,15,13,819.26			2,09,22,092.38	
12,10,702.06	*Less:* Depreciation written off to date		32,07,268.15	
1,03,03,117.20				
	10. **OTHER ASSETS:**			1,77,14,824.23
1,83,83,062.94	(i) Stamps, sundry advances, deposits and other accounts etc. (including advances and deposits for premises, furniture and fixtures (Rs. 80,83,72,055) (1984: Rs. 29,34,916) (see note 2)		2,67,61,543.46	
41,82,799.49	(ii) Accrued Interest		1,71,37,606.62	
4,90,000.00	(iii) Deposit under the Companies Deposits (surcharge on Income Tax) Scheme		5,00,250.00	
2,30,55,862.43				
—	11. **NON-BANKING ASSETS ACQUIRED IN SATISFACTION OF CLAIMS:**			4,43,99,400.08
—	12. **PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT:**			—
3,15,90,821.42	**TOTAL:**			3,36,92,68,744.00

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Bank of Credit and Commer

(Incorporated in the Cayman

PROFIT AND LOSS ACCO

Previous Year Rs. P.	EXPENDITURE	Rs.
4,01,55,592.22	1. Interest Paid on Deposits, Borrowings, etc	17,67,70
25,41,273.21	2. Salaries, Allowances and Provident Fund (see note 3)	50,14
—	3. Directors' and Local Committee Members' fees and allowances	
1,33,62,823.37	4. Rent, Taxes, Insurance, Lighting, etc.	5,24,74
75,058.00	5. Law Charges	2,64
5,26,759.91	6. Postage, Telegrams, and Stamps	14,26
13,500.00	7. Auditors' fees	25
30,20,523.59	8. Depreciation on and repairs to the banking Company's property.	48,32
5,28,799.73	9. Stationery, Printing, Advertisements, etc.	19,86
—	10. Loss from sale of or dealing with non-banking assets	
50,73,280.46	11. Other Expenditure (including proportion of Head Office expenses)	1,56,70
42,35,152.60	12. Balance of profit for the year	2,14,19
6,95,32,763.09	**TOTAL**	**27,98,84**

Schedule of particulars of advances required by the Banking Regulation A

Previous Year Rs. P.		Rs
21,71,82,919.87	1. Debts considered good in respect of which the banking company is fully secured	64,62,1
8,87,74,214.78	2. Debts considered good for which the banking company holds no other security than the debtors' personal security	15,36,07
20,80,77,429.84	3. Debts considered good, secured by the personal liabilities of one or more parties in addition to the personal security of the debtors	51,10,51
—	4. Debts considered doubtful or bad not provided for	
51,40,34,564.49		1,31,08,7

AUDITORS' REPORT

Auditors' Report on the Indian Branch of Bank of Credit and Commerce International (Overseas) Limited under Section 30 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949

We have audited the attached Balance Sheet of the Indian Branch of Bank of Credit & Commerce International (Overseas) Lim December 31, 1985 and the relative Profit and Loss Account of the Indian Branch of the Bank for the year ended on that date, s us under reference to this report.

In accordance with the provisions of Section 29 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, read with the provisions of Sub-Sections and (5) of Section 211 and Sub-Section (5) of Section 227 of the Companies Act 1956, the Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss together with the notes attached thereto, are not required to be and are not drawn up in accordance with Schedule VI to the Co Act, 1956. The accounts are therefore, drawn up in conformity with Forms A and B of the Third Schedule to the Banking Regulat 1949.

We report that subject to and read with the foregoing remarks:

(1) We have obtained all the information and explanations which to the best of our knowledge and belief were necessary for the of our audit and have found them to be satisfactory;

(2) The transactions which have come to our notice have been, in our opinion, within the powers of the Indian Branch of the Ba

(3) In our opinion, proper books of account as required by law have been kept by the Branch so far as it appears from our examin those books maintained and produced to us at Bombay;

(4) The above mentioned Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account of the Indian Branch of the Bank dealt with by this repo agreement with the books of accounts;

(5) In our opinion and to the best of our information and according to the explanations given to us, the Balance Sheet and Prof Account, together with the notes thereon, give the information required by the Companies Act, 1956, in the manner so req Banking Companies, and on such basis give a true and fair view in the case of the Balance Sheet of the state of affairs of the Branch of the Bank as at December 31, 1985, and in the case of Profit and Loss account of the Profit of the Indian Branch for ended on that date.

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THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1985

INCOME

Previous Year Rs.	P.		Rs.	P.
		(Less provision made during the year for Bad and Doubtful Debts and other usual or necessary provisions)		
5,89,67,288.82		1. Interest and Discount	24,80,09,164.16	
1,05,62,474.27		2. Commission Exchange and Brokerage	3,14,53,004.88	
—		3. Rents	—	
3,000.00		4. Net profit on sale of investments, gold and silver, land, premises and other assets (not credited to reserves or any particular fund or account)	4,22,165.40	
—		5. Net Profit on revaluation of investments, gold and silver, land, premises and other assets (not credited to reserves or any particular fund or account)	—	
—		6. Income for non-banking assets and profit from sale of or dealing with such assets	—	
—		7. Other Receipts	—	
		Note: Remuneration paid to General Manager and Chief Executive Officer in India (Previous period 4.4.84 to 31.12.84)		
		(Rs.) 1,06,800 Salary — (Rs.) 1,44,000		
		15,575 Perquisites (including benefits calculated in accordance with Income Tax Rules) — 36,096		
		1,22,375 — 1,80,096		
27,98,84	6,95,32,763.09	TOTAL	27,98,84,334.44	

of 1949) annexed to and forming part of the Balance Sheet as at 31st December 1985

Previous Year Rs.	P.		Rs.	P.
21,88,271.98		5. Debts due by directors or officers of the banking company or any of them either severally or jointly with any other persons	31,15,134.09	
—		6. Debts due by companies or firms in which the directors of the banking company are interested as directors, partners or managing agents or in the case of private companies, as members	—	
21,88,271.98		7. Maximum total amount of advances including temporary advances made at any time during the year to directors or managers or officers of the banking company or any of them either severally or jointly with any other persons	31,15,134.09	
—		8. Maximum total amount of advances including tempoary advances granted during the year to the companies or firms in which the directors of the banking company are interested as directors, partners or managing agents or in the case of private companies, as members	—	
36,72,202.24		9. Due from banking companies	—	

S FORMING PART OF THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 1985

ecial Reserve" represents written down value as on 31st December, 1985 of motor car gifted by Head Office and is represented by milar amount under the head "Furniture and Fixtures".
dry Accounts included under the heads "Other Liabilities" and "Other Assets" include amounts pending transfer to appropriate ounts.
vision in respect of future payment of gratuity to staff is not required as employees have yet to complete five years service with the k.
ets and Liabilities in foreign currencies are converted at the rates ruling at the year end except that contingent liability in respect of ward exchange contracts is included at the contracted rates.
proval of Reserve Bank of India has been received in February, 1985 for the appointment of members to constitute the first Local visory Board of the Bank's Indian Branch. The first meeting of Local Advisory Board was held on March 12, 1986.
vious year's figures have been regrouped/rearranged where necessary.

GHOSH
er
d on behalf of
WATERHOUSE
ty
WATERHOUSE & CO.
ered Accountants
ay, 15th March 1986.

K. MURARI
General Manager
and Chief Executive Officer
India
Bombay

VIJAY K. KAPUR
Manager
India
Bombay

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BCCI HOLDINGS (LUXEMBOURG) SA

39 Boulevard Royal, Luxembourg

Financial Highlights 1985

Capital Fund including reserves	US$	1,190 million
	(since increased to US$	1,510 million)
Deposits from customers	US$	12,700 million
Loans and Advances net of provisions	US$	6,800 million
Total Assets excluding contras	US$	16,500 million
Result before Tax after subvention	US$	158 million
Capital/Assets Ratio		7.18%
		(since increased to 9%)
Branches and Offices in		71 Countries

Principal Subsidiaries

Bank of Credit & Commerce International S.A., Luxembourg
Bank of Credit & Commerce International (Overseas) Ltd., Grand Cayman

Subsidiaries, Affiliates and their branches/offices in the following countries

Argentina
Australia
Bahamas
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Barbados
Botswana
Brazil
Cameroon
Canada
China
Colombia
Cyprus
Djibouti
Egypt
France
Gabon
Germany (West)
Ghana
Gibraltar
Grand Cayman
Hong Kong
India
Indonesia
Isle of Man
Italy
Ivory Coast
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kenya
Korea (South)
Kuwait
Lebanon
Liberia
Luxembourg
Macau
Malaysia
Maldives
Mauritius
Monaco
Morocco
Netherlands
Netherlands Antilles
Niger
Nigeria
Oman
Pakistan
Panama
Paraguay
Philippines
Portugal
Senegal
Seychelles
Sierra Leone
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Swaziland
Switzerland
Thailand
Togo
Turkey
UAE
United Kingdom
Uruguay
USA
Venezuela
Yemen (North)
Zambia
Zimbabwe

VARDHAMAN CREATIVE

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weavers. Some of the associations have taken the matter to court.

What this frenzied activity makes clear is that the neat weave of the year-old textile policy is now beginning to look more than a little tattered and frayed. And today's disappointment, frustration and anger mark a sharp contrast to the euphoria with which the industry had greeted the policy in June 1985, when it was hailed as the most sweeping policy turnabout to have come from the corridors of power.

OUT HAD gone the official conviction that sick mills had to be nationalised in order to protect jobs. In came the acknowledgement that terminally ill units should be allowed to give up the ghost. If labour was a casualty in the process, it would be provided a financial cushion: for three years, workers would get paid a diminishing percentage of their wage from a government fund. The freeze on mill capacities was lifted, and they would enjoy undreamt of freedom in expanding or contracting production capacities and in using almost any fibre of their choice (instead of being tied down to cotton). Lower taxes would lower prices and the tax imbalance between the organised mills and the powerlooms of Bhiwandi and Surat would be corrected. In June 1985, the joy of the Indian Cotton Mills Federation (ICMF) must have known no bounds. In June 1986, ICMF Chairman Kantikumar P. Poddar spoke of broken promises. And Chairman of the Southern India Mills' Association (SIMA) D. Lakshminarayanaswami said that the industry in the south "has been pushed to the brink in the past one year".

Ironically, the key criticism of a year ago—that the new policy would sound the death knell of the handloom weavers while crippling the powerloom industry—has proved as unfounded as the euphoria. Handloom production rose last year, as did the official statistics on powerloom production. But these statistics might be misleading, because a great many powerlooms were under-reporting their production earlier in order to escape the tax net. If this is indeed the case, both the mill sector and powerlooms turned out less cloth last year than in the year before.

The Government, of course, sees things differently. It insists that it has worked on all the major components of the new policy and says that this has provided significant pay-offs. Textile Minister Khan claimed last month that the policy was working: that total cloth production in the country had gone up, as had exports, and that substantial fresh capacities had been licensed in the synthetic fibre and blends sector. Taxes had been cut, and outdated regulations had been simplified. Textile Secretary Shiromani Sharma said that around 200 textile units had applied for switching fibres. Also, the Government announced new incentives last fortnight for textile exporters.

But the industry still has its complaints. Satish Modi of Modi Spinning and Weaving Company pointed out that the cumulative duties on blended yarns still came to more than 250 per cent. F.C. Rustagi, president of JK Synthetics, also complained of the duty levels and said this would prevent markets expanding to a point where companies could take advantage of economies of scale.

The Government in turn has its complaints about the industry's behaviour, and not just on the question of its failure to lower prices in line with lower duties. Textile Secretary Sharma argued last fortnight that the announcement of the modernisation fund was delayed by discussions on the industry's demand for very soft terms. "The industry expected the entire modernisation programme to be at government expense. The Finance Ministry said this was not on."

HARI OM GULATI

"The industry expected the entire modernisation programme to be at government expense. The Finance Ministry said this was not on."

SHIROMANI SHARMA
secretary, Department of Textiles

Meanwhile, the Government is faced with several sticky issues. Powerloom associations contend that thousands of powerlooms have been forced to down shutters because the textile policy discriminates against them—an argument that finds powerful support among the unions and even in the organised mill sector. M.K. Padhe, secretary of the CPI(M)-affiliated CITU, reports after a visit to Maharashtra's powerloom belt that thousands of them have closed down. This, argues SIMA Chairman Lakshminarayanaswami, was inevitable because powerlooms don't have the advantage of a brand image when marketing their cloth. Lending credence to such assessments is a South India Textile Research Association study on the textile policy's impact. The unreleased report startlingly concludes that powerlooms have cost disadvantages in several areas. If this is true, this knocks the bottom out of a premise on which the policy was founded.

However, the biggest single fall-out of the continuing ills of the textile industry may be a potentially explosive labour situation. Industry experts say that some 10 per cent of mill capacities and 20 per cent of the labour force are surplus. Fearing large-scale retrenchments, some 19,000 striking textile workers included in their charter of demands a call to the Government to withdraw its textile policy altogether. Said Brinda Karat, joint secretary of a CITU union that is involved in the strike: "The Government's rehabilitation scheme looks fine, but where will workers get jobs after three years?"

But the industry's prospects for trimming its fat seem bleak. The state governments have the final say on closures, and they will be wary of annoying the 8-lakh strong textile mill workforce.

Faced with this bleak scenario, Textile Department bureaucrats concede that the industry's road to recovery will not be smooth. If nothing else, that marks a new realism that stands in sharp contrast to the euphoria of a year ago.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI
with PARTHASARATHI SWAMI

VARDHAMAN CREATIVE

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THE MARKETS

Marking Time

THE BULLS are willing, but the market is bearish: that about summed up the situation on the stock exchange last fortnight as most shares reached slightly lower levels and *The Economic Times* share price index closed out at 517, well below the recent high of 550. As share prices moved down listlessly, it seemed the right moment to bide one's time and wait.

Tata Iron and Steel lost ground despite a bonus issue, while Tata Engineering also gave in to bear hammering. Others to lose included Associated Cement, Century Spinning, Gujarat State Fertiliser, and Larsen and Toubro.

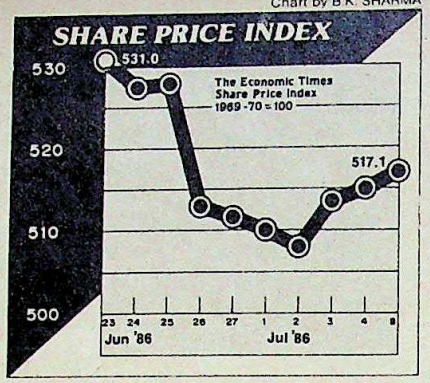
Not everything was, however, on the downswing. And among the relatively few shares that notched up some gains were Reliance Industries, which benefited from a late rally after the company's annual shareholders' jamboree, and Hindustan Aluminium, which improved on expectations of a convertible debenture issue. JK Synthetics also was bullish following excellent results and a higher dividend (20 per cent, compared to 15 per cent the previous year). And Gujarat Narmada met with buying in anticipation of a good dividend.

But there was little mistaking the bearish undertone to the general trading sentiment on the market. The monsoons had petered out in several parts of the country after a promising start, and the future looked uncertain. And there were no cheerful announcements from the Government, after its shattering decision to not allow the conversion of non-convertible debentures.

There was some amount of buying support from the financial institutions, but many bulls were busy licking their wounds after having suffered a beating on companies like Tata Tea, Hindustan Motors and even Reliance, and unable to launch a fresh offensive on other counters. And some money wended its way into the bullion market, where profit levels have become more attractive following recent price movements, domestically and internationally.

The market could well be snapped out of its stupor by long-delayed Government decisions which—the optimists hope—will spark off a fresh rally. The G.S.Patel Committee has recommended that the guidelines on bonus issues be liberalised, removing the stipulation that three years must elapse before a bonus issue can be repeated and doing away with the limit of two bonus issues in five years. There was also some speculation that the Government might announce higher prices for levy cement at a time when cement has become an unattractive investment proposition. If these pronouncements do in fact come about, the bulls should be in better shape to push up prices and recapture some of the optimism of times past.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



ACTIVE STOCKS

	1986 HIGH	1986 LOW	1986 CLOSE 8.7.86	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	45.00	26.00	28.00	0.25 –
Asian Paints	280.00	130.00	231.25	13.75 –
Associated Cement	389.00	228.00	260.00	14.00 –
Atlas Copco	92.50	64.00	79.00	1.00 –
Avery India	146.00	100.00	118.75	6.75 +
Bajaj Auto	3550.00	1950.00	3510.00	335.00 +
Baroda Rayon	490.00	290.00	305.00	55.00 –
Bata India	82.50	54.00	66.00	6.00 +
Bayer	680.00	445.00	540.00	10.00 +
Bharat Forge	86.00	48.00	68.00	1.00 –
Blow Plast	160.00	98.00	102.00	3.00 –
Blue Star	110.00	75.00	90.00	5.00 –
Bombay Dyeing	123.00	77.00	96.00	2.00 –
Britania Ind.	142.00	85.00	140.00	23.50 +
Brooke Bond	96.75	57.00	58.50	28.00 –
Ceat Tyres	520.00	240.00	420.00	nil
Century Spinning	1690.00	780.00	795.00	35.00 –
Chloride India	132.00	86.00	126.00	nil
Citurgia	65.00	42.00	45.00	0.50 +
Colgate	307.50	200.00	295.00	25.00 +
DCM	58.50	32.62	46.00	1.50 +
Dunlop	74.50	49.75	66.25	0.25 –
Elecon	127.00	80.00	117.00	5.00 +
Escorts	117.00	69.00	105.00	5.00 –
Finolex Cables	92.00	36.00	92.00	12.00 +
Food Specialities	327.50	215.00	320.00	13.00 +
Garware Nylon	61.50	36.00	44.00	1.00 –
Glaxo	87.00	61.50	67.00	2.00 +
G.E. Shipping	36.00	21.25	24.00	0.50 –
Gujarat St. Fertilisers	182.00	92.50	163.00	10.50 –
Gwalior Rayon	88.00	59.00	77.00	nil
Hindustan Lever	166.00	124.00	163.00	nil
Hindustan Motors	128.50	39.40	41.90	1.30 +
Hind. Dorr	660.00	380.00	620.00	60.00 +
IEL	84.50	61.50	67.00	1.50 –
Indian Hotels	157.00	115.00	135.00	nil
Indian Organic	97.00	63.00	74.00	1.00 –
Indian Rayon	151.00	100.00	139.00	4.00 +
Indrol	430.00	200.00	420.00	70.00 +
Ingersoll-Rand	505.00	250.00	250.00	207.50 –
ITC	76.50	53.00	66.75	4.25 +
J.K. Synthetics	132.00	90.00	115.00	3.00 –
Kinetic Engineering	355.00	220.00	355.00	25.00 +
Lakme	195.00	120.00	142.50	nil
Larson & Toubro	204.00	124.00	129.00	5.00 –
Lipton	69.00	46.50	57.00	1.50 –
Lohia Machines	70.00	36.00	38.00	5.00 –
Madura Coats	92.00	53.00	53.50	4.00 –
Mahindra & Mahindra	86.00	51.00	56.00	1.00 –
Motor Industries	1000.00	605.00	890.00	45.00 –
National Organic	840.00	530.00	787.50	2.50 –
Nirlon	77.00	39.00	40.50	1.50 –
Orkay Silk Mills	192.00	111.00	178.00	nil
Pelco Electronics	104.50	48.00	55.25	1.75 –
Pfizer	125.00	78.00	88.00	7.00 –
Ponds	327.50	200.00	327.50	27.50 +
Premier Auto	870.00	555.00	842.50	25.00 +
Ranbaxy	160.00	105.00	134.00	2.00 –
Raymond	97.00	72.00	85.00	1.00 –
Reliance Industries	392.00	226.00	363.00	8.00 +
Shriram Fibres	88.00	49.00	53.50	2.50 –
Sandoz	120.00	62.00	111.00	17.50 +
SPIC	184.00	129.50	143.00	15.50 –
Tata Steel	1610.00	1090.00	1440.00	40.00 –
Telco	910.00	575.00	600.00	85.00 –
Vulcan Laval	162.50	85.00	105.00	5.00 –

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	7.9568	7.8824
Austria	Schilling	100	81.7751	81.0034
Bahrain	Dinar	1	33.0138	32.9710
Bangladesh	Taka	100	41.9730	41.5720
Canada	Dollar	1	9.0672	8.9935
Denmark	Kroner	1	1.5408	1.5274
Egypt	Pound	1	15.0290	14.8732
France	Franc	1	1.7953	1.7809
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	1.5914	1.5790
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	1.1010	1.0930
Iran	Rial	100	15.7320	15.5010
Italy	Lira	100	0.8290	0.8130
Japan	Yen	100	7.7761	7.7147
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7790	0.7680
Kuwait	Dinar	1	42.4048	42.1996
Malaysia	Dollar	1	4.7475	4.7080
Mauritius	Rupee	1	0.9330	0.9018
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.5960	0.5800
Netherlands	Guilder	1	5.0830	5.0427
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7380	0.7218
Singapore	Dollar	1	5.6988	5.6501
Spain	Peseta	1	8.9380	8.8010
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4390	0.4210
Sweden	Kroner	1	1.7642	1.7485
Switzerland	Franc	1	7.0135	6.9554
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.4330	0.4260
Thailand	Baht	100	47.6030	47.5820
UK	Pound	1	19.1681	19.0439
USA	Dollar	1	12.5000	12.4150
UAE	Dirham	1	3.3910	3.3080
USSR	Rouble	1	17.9038	17.9780
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	5.7471	5.6980

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 8.7.86.

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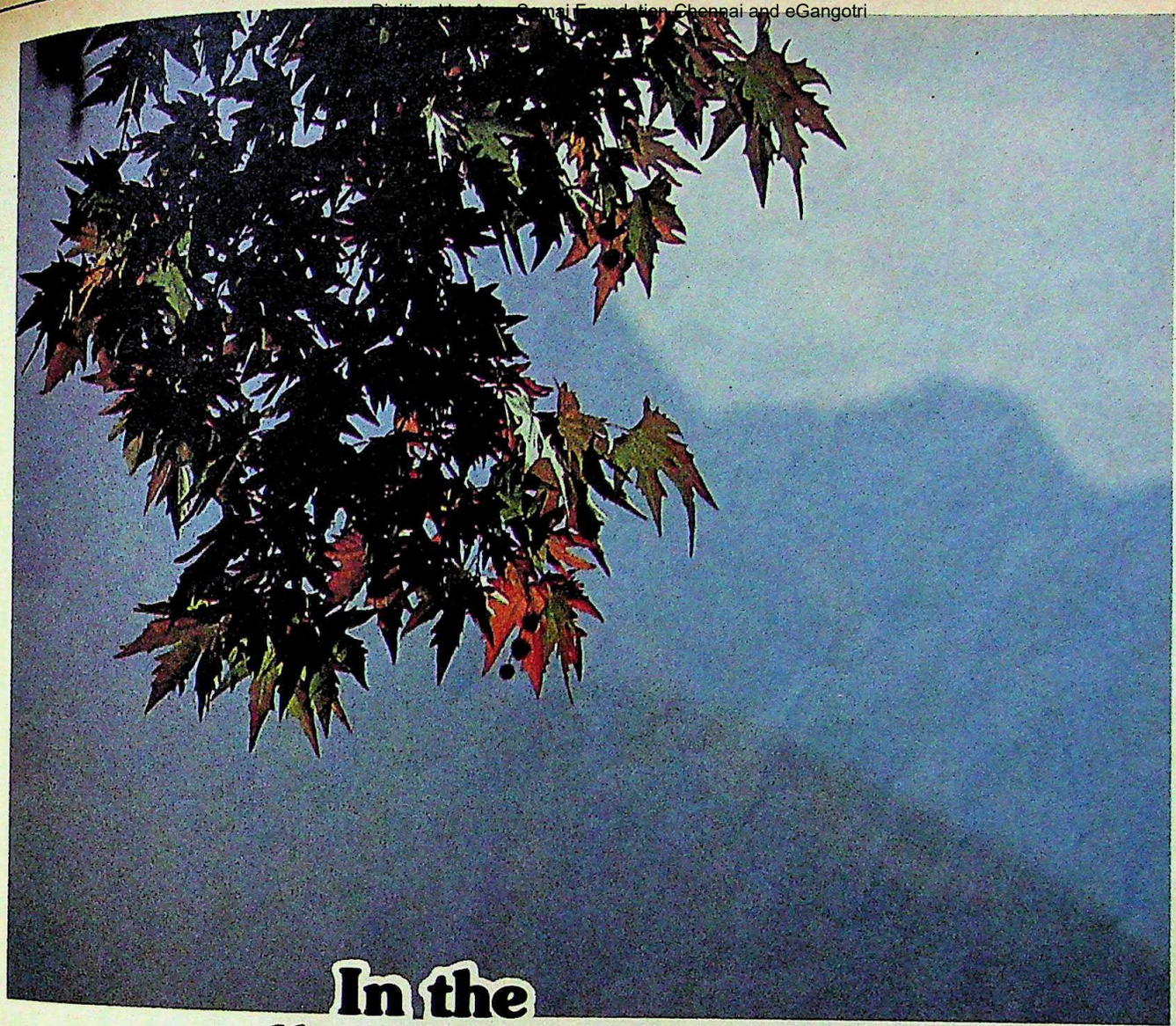

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Visit Kashmir
Discover Paradise

Department of Tourism
Government of India

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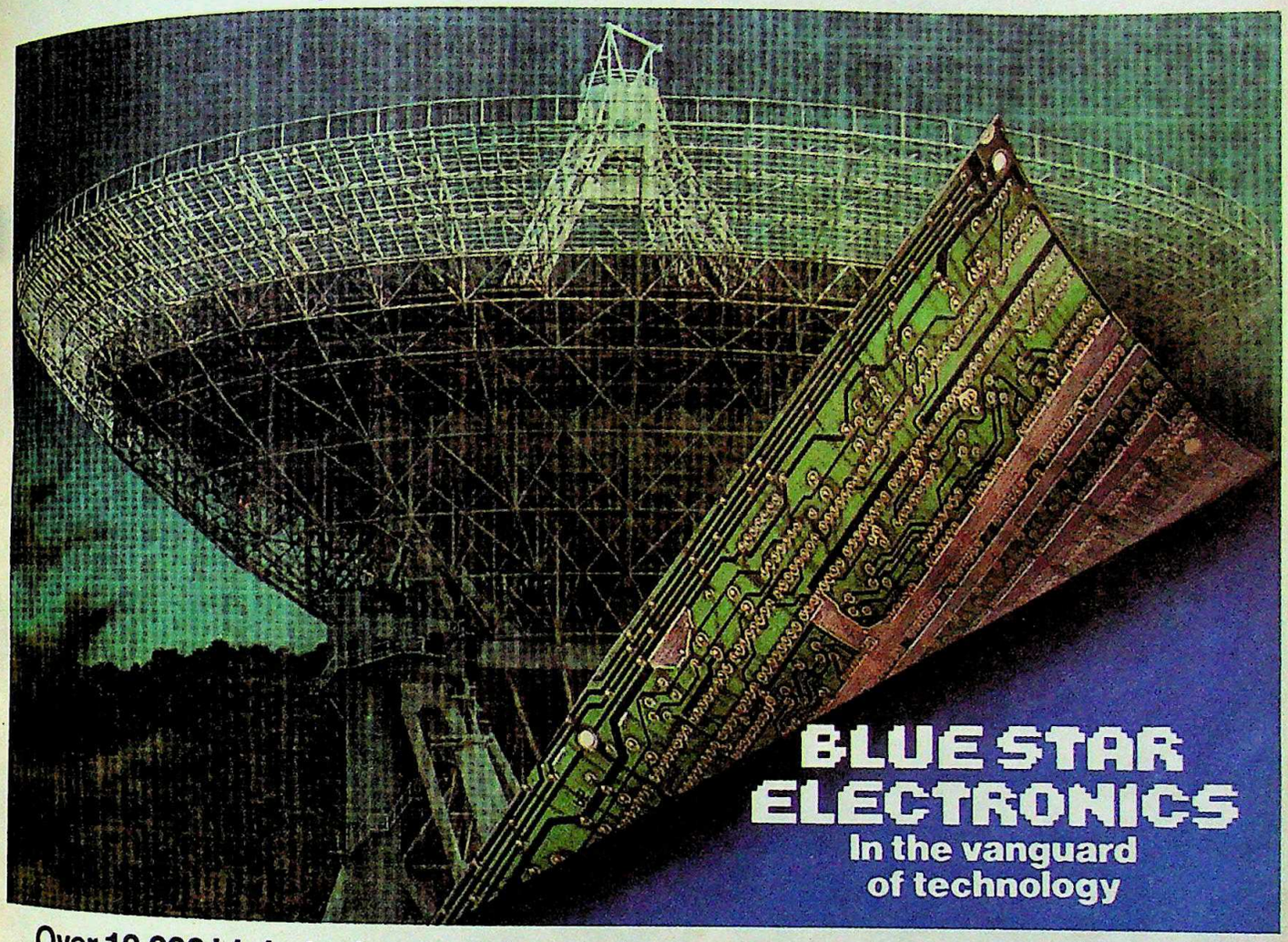

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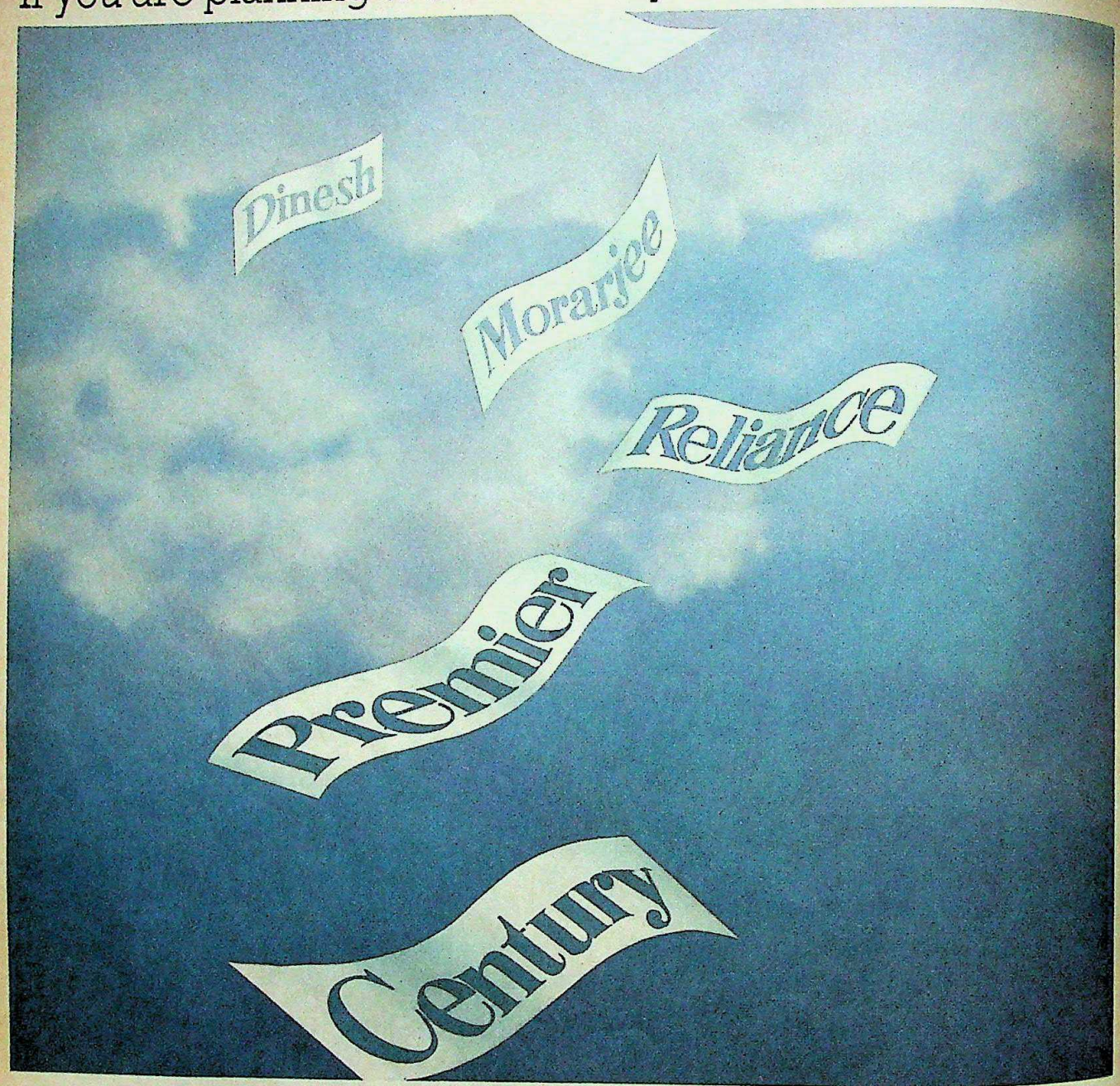
If you are planning to modernize your textile mill...



...consider over 200 mills Batliboi have humidified.

Humidification – the indispensable component
The truth is, an ideal humid climate is an indispensable factor towards making better cloth and increasing productivity. Without it, even the best machinery is of no avail.

BATLIBOI – the first name in humidification systems
Let the facts tell their story. BATLIBOI has supplied humidification systems to more than 200 mills in the country. They include most of the big names in textiles: Century, Premier, Reliance, Raymonds, Dinesh, Bombay Dyeing, Morarjee, Orkay... They are more than satisfied with the performance of our units and have given repeat orders over the years for the expansion/modernisation of their plants.

BATLIBOI – A cut above the rest
Yes, we are first on every parameter: Price, performance, low power consumption, efficient after-sales service...

So, if you are planning on modernising, BATLIBOI is the answer. We will design, fabricate and install the perfect humid climate to improve the quality and image of your mill.

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CHAITRA-B BB 255

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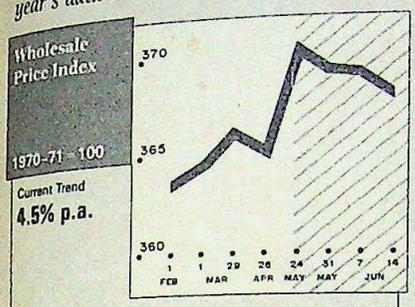
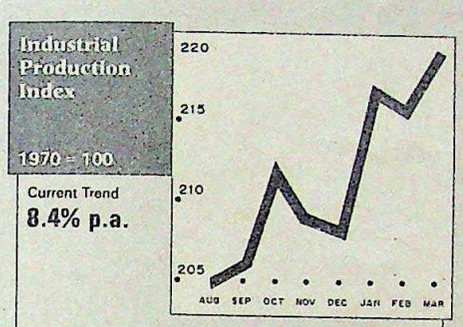
INFLATION continues to remain steady at under 5 per cent. The industrial production was up in the first quarter of 1986 and the long-term trend is accelerating. But the manufacturing sector is not doing as well. Power generation has also shown improvement. Bank credit is expanding. The stock market is relatively quiet and gold prices are on the rise.

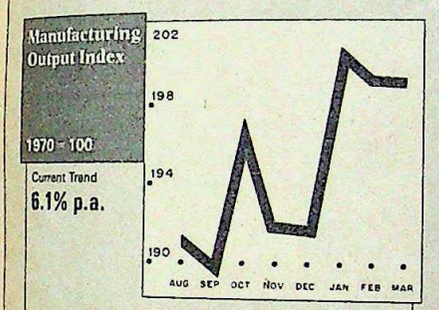
All data are seasonally adjusted. The cement trend is computed on the basis of the last one year's data on which regressions are fitted.



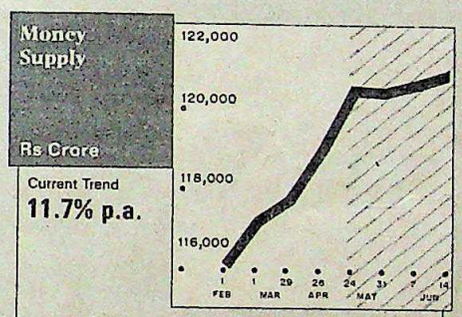
There was a 1 per cent fall in wholesale prices between end-May and mid-June. Overall, inflation has remained steady at under 5 per cent.



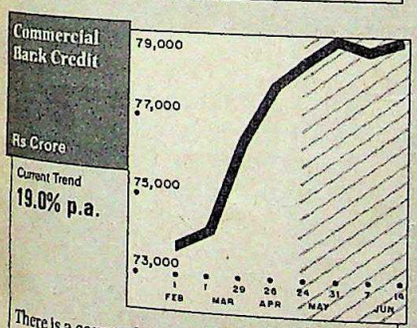
Industrial production grew by 3.3 per cent between October and March, a performance that has taken the growth rate to 8.4 per cent.



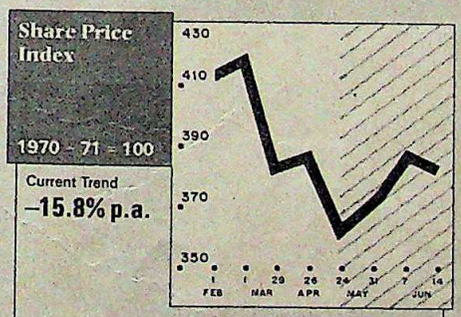
Manufacturing output jumped by 4.6 per cent between December-January, but at 6 per cent the long term growth leaves much to be desired.



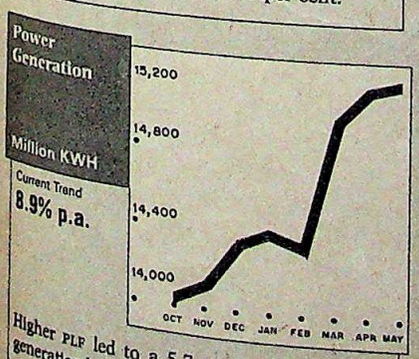
The period from May to June saw a 1.6 per cent rise in money supply though the long-term trend has declined from 13.5 to under 12 per cent.



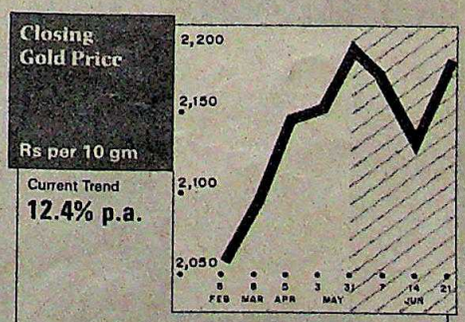
There is a counterbalancing trend in the money market. Money supply is growing slowly while bank credit grew from 16 to 19 per cent.



From the dizzying highs of June 1985, shares have fallen by 16 per cent. The 5 per cent spurt in May-June failed to reverse this decline.



Higher PLF led to a 5.7 per cent increase in generation between February and May. But it is not much ahead of industrial growth.



Gold prices are on the rise. Between March and June prices jumped by 4 per cent, contributing to a double-digit long trend.

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

Growth of Items in March, 1986

	% Growth
Newsprint	169.74
Metallurgical Machinery	66.73
Textile Machinery	53.69
Insecticides & Pesticides	37.26
Paper Machinery	25.84
Boilers Steam Generating Plants	25.47
Cement Machinery	23.31
Explosives	22.77
Dye-Stuffs	19.87
Handtools & Small Tools	18.94
Footwear	16.45
Railway Locomotives	16.40
Coffee Curing Works	16.40
Bolts & Nuts	15.46
Tea	14.07
Iron & Steel Structurals	14.01
Linolium & Similar Products	13.13
Air Gas Compresses	12.34
Rubber Footwear	11.35
Mining & Quarrying	11.28
Hydrogenated Oil	11.15
Railway Rolling Stock	10.04
Organic Chemicals	9.94
Earth Moving Machinery	9.72
Iron & Steel	9.24
Cement	7.55
Razor Blades	6.53
Petroleum & Coal Products	6.33
Bakery Products	5.77
Electricity & Power	4.94
Sugar Machinery	4.71
Tobacco Manufacture	4.66
Man-Made Fibres	4.17
Internal Combustion Engines	3.76
Sugar Industry	3.46
Buses Trucks & Jeeps	2.88
Telecommunications	2.76
Beverage Industry	2.11
Iron & Steel Pipes	2.01
Dry Cells	1.50
Dairy Products	1.29
Paper & Straw Board	1.17
Motorcycles & Bicycles	0.38
Power-Driven Pumps	0.05
Cotton & Blended Yarn	–0.06
Matches	–0.15

Of the 86 series considered, 46 of them with a total weight of 54.4629 has a positive growth & 40 of them with a total weight of 33.513 had a negative growth

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1985	1986
Rail Movement		
Net Tonnes-km, May	16967	14994
Revenue Earning Goods Traffic		
Million Tonnes, Originating, May	22.52	19.96
Call Money Rate		
Percent, May	10.00	10.00
Letters of Intent Issued		
Number, May	80.	140
Industrial Licences Issued		
Number, May	56	96

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THAKKAR COMMISSION

Appointment with Death

AS WITH the John F. Kennedy murder, the assassination of Mrs Indira Gandhi promises to become an endless controversy. Even after the conviction of surviving assassin Satwant Singh, and his co-conspirators Balbir Singh and Kehar Singh, several questions remain unanswered. Was there a deeper conspiracy leading to the assassination? Could it have been prevented by better organised security? The Justice M.P.Thakkar Commission went into these issues. But three months after its report was submitted, it is still being kept under the wraps. Principal Correspondent SHEKHAR GUPTA *got exclusive details on the proceedings of the commission. His report:*

IT IS one of the most sensitive documents in the vaults of North Block. Only a handful of officials have been allowed to read the report, which is escorted from one room to another by an officer not below the rank of under-secretary. Yet the Home Ministry grape-vine has been humming with hushed talk about the proceedings of the inquiry and the contents of the report. Vitally, the discussion centres not so much on the answers the commission has provided but the questions it has raised.

The most basic of these is Thakkar's concern that Mrs Gandhi's life would have been saved if she had stepped out of her house a few minutes earlier than she in fact did, before Beant Singh and Satwant Singh joined up. This is exactly what would have happened if she had kept to her original schedule of meeting Peter Ustinov's film crew at 8.30 a.m. But the appointment was put off by half-an-hour, by which time the assassins had gathered their nerves and got together. Though the commission does not say so in as many words, it suspects that the change in the time of the appointment was not without motive.

This suspicion arises out of the startling discovery that in Mrs Gandhi's appointment diary the time of the interview, 8.30 a.m, had been changed to 8.45 a.m. Thakkar had the diary subjected to an infra-red check, which confirmed that someone had neatly erased the original entry of 8.30 and written 8.45 over it. In the printed list of appointments for that day, the Ustinov meeting was listed at 9 a.m. and a mysterious, unidentified caller from Mrs Gandhi's office had phoned Ustinov asking him to come at 9 a.m. instead of 8.30. In reply to a letter from the commission, Ustinov confirmed that someone had called him in his hotel on the morning of October 31 to change the time.

In lengthy replies to the commission, which he typed on his old typewriter, R.K. Dhawan denied that he had anything to do with the change of timing. Commission sources confirm that the handwriting in the appointments diary is not his. But Thakkar backs up his suspicions with circumstantial evidence based on several other happenings within the 18 fateful hours beginning on the evening of October 30 in the following sequence:

► On the afternoon of October 30, Dhawan's office sent a message to Orissa where Mrs Gandhi was on tour, asking whether she was going to keep her appointment with Ustinov. The commission finds this curious because such appointments are generally fixed well in advance and, according to Thakkar, it was unusual for someone to have tried to confirm it again with the prime minister. Pleading his innocence, Dhawan told the commission that the appointment had been fixed at rather short notice and the call, in any case, was made by one of the personal assistants, and not by him.

► In the evening when Mrs Gandhi returned from Orissa, Dhawan walked up to her on the tarmac and asked if she was going to keep the appointment. She said there was no reason for cancelling it. Questioned on this, Dhawan initially denied the conversation. But Mrs Gandhi's chauffeur and personal security officer confirmed that the dialogue had taken place. Dhawan then explained that he had inquired because Mrs Gandhi often asked to have a free morning after returning from tour.

► On the morning of October 31, Mrs Gandhi emerged from her room barefoot, angry why her hairdresser, Nanda had not yet reported. The staff arranged a replacement, from Doordarshan.

Following this, Dinesh Bhat, Mrs Gandhi's personal security officer, decided to go out and look for Ustinov. Around 9.15, the prime minister was told that it would take a little more time to arranging all the props. She said she would proceed anyway and have a chat with Ustinov while the arrangements were made. By this time, the two assassins had come together and were waiting.

THE CRUCIAL QUESTIONS

Who changed Mrs Gandhi's appointment with Peter Ustinov from 8.30 to 9 am?

Who called Ustinov in his hotel to inform him of the change?

Why did R.K Dhawan seem concerned whether Mrs Gandhi was going to keep the appointment?

Why did Beant, before pulling the trigger, ask Satwant to make sure that Dhawan was not hit?

Why did Beant feel indebted to Dhawan?

Who bungled on the removal of Sikh guards from Mrs Gandhi's security?

Who was responsible for the delay in verifying the antecedents of the men in the security set-up?

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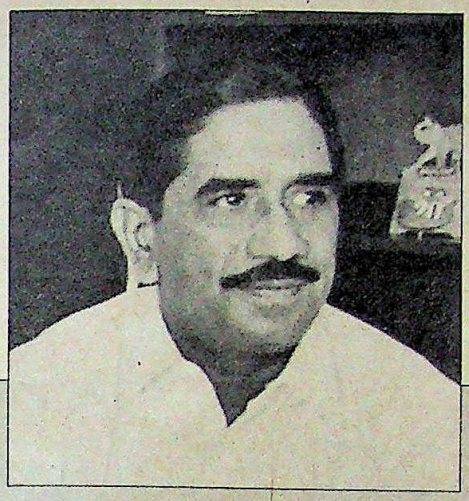
Dhawan was walking with Mrs Gandhi, barely a foot from her side, when Beant Singh began to fire. Thakkar's suspicions have been confirmed by Satwant Singh's own account of those crucial moments. He told police interrogators that when Mrs Gandhi was approaching the wicket-gate, Beant told him that he would fire five bullets at the prime minister and the sixth at Satwant in case he did not fire at her. Satwant says Beant told him to be careful not to hit Dhawan as "he has done so many favours for us". Dhawan vehemently denies making common cause with the assassins. Normally reluctant to talk to the press, the visibly hurt Dhawan told INDIA TODAY last week: "To even suggest that I had anything at all to do with the murder is the greatest sin on earth. I worshipped and served Mrs Gandhi as if she were a goddess. To me she was my everything, my mother. And after her death I have become an orphan. Can't you see that?"



"To even suggest that I had anything to do with the murder is the greatest sin on earth. I worshipped Mrs Gandhi. To me she was my mother. After her death I have become an orphan."

R.K. DHAWAN

The investigators assisting the commission too found nothing to establish any previous link between him and Beant except that he had perhaps helped include Beant on one of Mrs Gandhi's trips abroad. Several Home Ministry officials wonder if he would have walked so close to the firing line if he had any fore-knowledge of the assassination plan.

The commission had wanted to question him, with a lie-detector, on another vital point: who was responsible for persisting with Sikhs among Mrs Gandhi's bodyguards? Dhawan asserted that when Mrs Gandhi noticed that the Sikh guards had been removed she asked the police to put them back on. Dhawan claims to have told the officers that the Sikh guards should be brought back where Mrs Gandhi could see them.

The commission cross-questioned several officials to fix the responsibility for this vital lapse. One of these, Gopi Ram Gupta, the then deputy commissioner of police (DCP) in the special security district, was put through gruelling questioning for a record 39 days at the end of which he was reduced to a nervous wreck. Even today, he is under suspension. Though it has been difficult for the commission to fix responsibility, the reconstruction of the events provides tell-tale evidence of the confusion that prevailed in Mrs Gandhi's security set-up.

Given Mrs Gandhi's sensitivity on this question, her security adviser, Ram Nath Kao, suggested an alternative. He advised the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and the Delhi police to periodically re-verify the antecedents and links of the policemen in the prime minister's security set-up. But this was never done and gave the commission another lapse to delve into. The Delhi police, however, reported that they had immediately accepted the suggestion and decided to conduct verifications. At a joint security meeting, however, it was decided that the routine special branch/CID procedure of making cursory inquiries from neighbours about a man's antecedents was inadequate and that this verification should be done on the basis of a proforma to be prepared by the IB. But the Intelligence Bureau took all of three months to prepare the proforma, which was sent to Delhi police on October 25, just six days before the assassination.

Several examples of confusion and lack of accountability came up during the cross-examination of officials. The picture the probe paints is of a total lack of organisation in the prime minister's security set-up. For example, several months before the assassination Rattan Sehgal, a deputy director in the IB looking after the prime minister's security, was put in charge of the security of Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi and had, in fact, visited Italy with them. But the IB did not post a replacement for him. Similarly, the sudden induction of scores of commandos from the Indo-Tibetan Border Police only caused confusion. The commandos did not seem to know where they were to position themselves, and often refused to take orders from Delhi police officials.

Embarrassing disclosures like this are one reason why the commission's report is being treated as one of the most sensitive documents in the vaults of North Block. But another reason why the Government is shy of releasing the report is the basic message it contains: that there might have been a deep conspiracy. Justice Thakkar had suggested that the Government should ask the Anand Ram Commission to look into this and several other questions. But a decision is yet to be taken.

Highly-placed Home Ministry sources are sceptical about the possibility of any investigating agency being able to find substantial evidence against any of the other suspected conspirators, including former Bhopal student and All-India Sikh Students Federation leader Attinder Pal Singh, currently believed to be in Pakistan. But if the evidence of confusion, lack of precise responsibility and amateurishness in the security of perhaps the most threatened political leader in the world, results in preventing a re-enactment of similar tragedies, then Justice Thakkar's exertions would have proved more than worthwhile.

Satwant says Beant told him to be careful not to hit Dhawan as he had done so many favours for them.

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JK PAPER LAKSHMI CEMENT

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

At the 47th Annual General Meeting

Ladies & Gentlemen:

I cordially welcome you all to the 47th Annual General Meeting of your Company. The Directors' Report and the Audited Accounts of the Company for the year ended 31st December 1985 have been in your hands for some time from which you must have observed that the Company continues to have sustained all-round growth.

IMPROVED PERFORMANCE

There was an overall improvement in the performance of the Company during 1985. Sales and other income crossed Rs. 117 crores. The gross profit at Rs. 21.16 crores was substantially higher than Rs. 16.99 crores in the previous year.

I am happy to state that your Directors have recommended a dividend of 20% on the Equity Capital which has more than doubled as compared to last year. The dividend to be distributed for the year 1985 would thus be Rs. 2.04 crores as against Rs. 1.07 crores in the last year, consequent upon enhancement of the Equity Capital to Rs. 10.14 crores from Rs. 4.84 crores.

Production of Paper & Board and Cement was well maintained. "JK Paper" and "Lakshmi Cement" continue to be the market leaders in their respective fields and enjoy consumer preference on account of their high quality.

Modernisation and renovation of Paper Mills in Orissa with an investment of Rs. 23 crores is progressing satisfactorily and is expected to be completed before the end of 1987. The Company proposes to take up installation of a new Paper Machine for production of light weight and speciality papers at a cost of about Rs. 10 crores. Besides expansion in its existing products, the Company is pursuing its policy of diversifying into new areas. Electronics, synthetic fibres and petrochemicals are some of the areas under active consideration.

Polyester Staple Fibre project of Orissa Synthetics Ltd promoted by the Company and Industrial Promotion and Investment Corporation of Orissa Ltd is in an advanced stage of implementation. The plant is expected to go into production in the third quarter of 1986. We would like to express our gratitude to the Indian and non-resident Indian investors for reposing confidence in our new venture by their overwhelming response to the Public Issue.

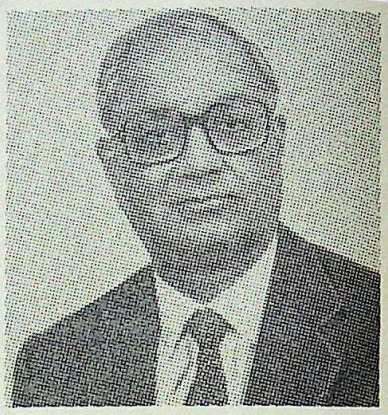
OPTIMISTIC ECONOMIC SCENARIO

Ever since Shri Rajiv Gandhi took over the reigns of the Government about a year and a half ago, the economic and industrial scenario has undergone a sea change for the better. The change is fundamental. From a regime of controls and regulations in which we have lived for over 35 years, there is an attempt at deregulation and restoration of management initiatives in decision making. The industrial capacity is no more looked upon as a restrictive ceiling for production, rather a new concept of Minimum Economic Scales of Operation has been adopted for several industries in due recognition of economies of scale. Competition, both domestic as well as international, is being encouraged to achieve efficiencies and cost control. There are new perceptions of the role of the Government in the economic affairs and therefore the need for re-allocation of its functions. We have, I think, got out of the sterile debate on Public versus Private Sector. Challenges of the future — of the 21st century — have been accepted with timely response for rapid modernisation and adoption of high technology in various areas including information and communications. It is heartening to see computers on the desks of ministers and bureaucrats.

Confidence shown in the principle that beyond a point high taxation is counter-productive and consequent reduction in tax rates have yielded immediate and positive response. Income-tax collection has increased by 36% in 1985-86 and overall tax revenue by 21% over the last year. Union budgeting has been made open. The announcement of the long term fiscal policy has ushered in a new era of meaningful dialogue between the Government and the public.

Economic and industrial outlook, both within the country and as perceived by the foreign investors all around the world, is one of new optimism and opportunity. It is indeed satisfying to know that India is now sought after for investment and technology transfer more vigorously than it was only a couple of years ago. This will no doubt result in long term benefits to the country.

I would like to take this opportunity of congratulating and recording our deep appreciation for this turn around in the economic scene to Shri Rajiv Gandhi, our young and dynamic leader and his team, particularly Shri Vishwanath Pratap Singh, the Finance Minister and Shri Narayan Datt Tiwari, the Industry Minister. I am fully confident that the Indian entrepreneurs will rise to the occasion and make full use of the



Shri Hari Shankar Singhania

new opportunities that are available for expansion, diversification and growth. I would request the Government to continue to vigorously pursue the process of change and not to get disheartened or impatient because the results in full measure are not obtained immediately.

AREAS REQUIRING URGENT ATTENTION

Despite substantial improvements, there are some areas which need urgent attention. I would touch upon a few.

Growing trade deficit underlines the need for export-based industries as an integral part of industrial development as imports are bound to rise with spurt in industrial growth. We must, therefore, indentify and promote industries which can stand up to international competition in terms of economies of scale, cost of production, quality and technology. On the strength of large domestic market base, there is no reason why India cannot develop such industries.

The other important area is one of growth of demand. It has been the country's experience for some years that even a moderate growth in industrial production cannot be sustained due to lack of growth of demand. There are various factors governing it, including the purchasing power and cost to the consumer. These are, no doubt, complex issues. I suggest that due recognition of the need for deliberate effort to increase demand to achieve higher and rapid industrial growth is called for.

In initiating anti-poverty programmes, the Government is moving in the right direction. It is only through such measures that we can increase the purchasing power and achieve socio-economic goals. We have to overcome the present deficiencies of leakages, identification of beneficiaries, ignorance of needs of the people concerned and inappropriate appraisal of the local conditions. It is necessary to have a single agency in each State to integrate various programmes, rather than each programme to have its own target and each to run independently as is being done now.

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The next important subject which I would like to refer to is one concerning redundancy of labour in the existing industries which need rationalisation to cut costs, to modernise and in fact even to survive. I do hope, with the active participation of the trade unions, it would be possible for the Government to find a solution to this vexed problem. Financing of sick industries has already assumed enormous proportions. I am glad that the Government has come out with a new legislation which aims at identifying and providing solutions for sick industries quickly. However, the question of how the redundant or excess labour can be dealt with has defied solution. I would recommend an unemployment benefit scheme to be provided to the affected workmen, This will have to be essentially for a limited period and would be less costly than continuing to operate uneconomic units.

Last but not the least is the almost perennial question of inadequacy of infrastructure. Industries continue to suffer both quantitatively and qualitatively because of infrastructure deficiencies. For instance, your Company was forced to transport over 50% of its production both of cement and paper by road at a considerably high cost. The quality of coal continues to be poor adversely affecting efficiency and cost of production. The coal quotas have been pruned causing serious anxiety for maintaining production. Situation in regard to power is even worse. On one hand there are severe power cuts and on the other the quality of power in terms of interruptions and voltage fluctuations continues to be unsatisfactory. There is also continuous and steep increase in power rates. The increase in cost of power and fuel leads all other cost increases. No doubt, there is awareness of these problems. However, more meaningful action is necessary in order to achieve definite results.

I will now say a few words about the Paper Industry and the Cement Industry.

PAPER INDUSTRY

The paper production in India in 1985 was 14.25 lakh tonnes showing an increase of 8% over the previous year. However capacity utilisation continued to be low due to large capacity remaining closed and inoperative. Moreover 40% of the installed capacity is comprised of small units. Most of these have been set up by import of very old second-hand plant and machinery and thus are basically uneconomic. Keeping in view the need to put the nation's economic resources to the best possible use, the advisability of running such uneconomic units with heavy fiscal support is a moot point for consideration.

In the past years I have dealt with the problem of raw materials faced by the Paper Industry. The situation has worsened to the extent that the country has to import pulp and even wood chips to sustain production. Even large quantity of waste paper is being imported. This is a sad commentary for a country of our size and endowments. Effective conservation of forests, utilisation of degraded forest land for captive plantation and stoppage of wasteful use of wood for packaging etc are areas which brook no further delay. Unfortunately, despite recommendations made by the Development Council for Paper, Pulp & Allied Industries and other Committees set up by the Government from time to time, very little has been done so far. It is necessary to evolve a national strategy for forest conservation and development. An action plan fixing responsibilities of different agencies who should implement various programmes should be adopted.

I am happy to state after persistent efforts, your Company has been able to secure some areas for plantation in Orissa. The Company plans to develop these areas on scientific and modern lines.

The Government has at long last recognised the serious situation in the Paper Industry and has set up a High Powered Committee under the Chairmanship of the Secretary, Industrial Development. This Committee is to go into all aspects of the industry including its financial health and to suggest remedial measures. I sincerely hope that the deliberations of this Committee will help adoption of right policies to the benefit of the Paper Industry and the consumers at large.

CEMENT INDUSTRY

Installed capacity of cement has increased from 22 million tonnes in 1978 to 44 million tonnes in March 1986 and is expected to reach 63 million tonnes by the end of the Seventh Plan. Production has also increased to 32 million tonnes in 1985-86 from 19 million tonnes in 1977-78. Cement is now freely available and open market prices have come down. At some forums I hear questions whether further increase in cement capacity by about 50% in the Seventh Plan will not result in substantial over supply situation. It is this subject that I would like to deal with.

Cement consumption is an important index of economic prosperity of a nation. Per Capita consumption in India at 40 kgs is extremely low even when compared with developing countries where per capita consumption ranges between 100 kgs and 150 kgs. What is needed is to take steps to encourage the use of cement in India in areas which will benefit the country. For instance, cement silos for food-grains would reduce considerably annual damage due to improper storage. Similarly, cement highways would result in efficient and speedy transport and open the country for increased economic activities. Construction of houses is another top priority requirement. Increased pace of all these activities will not only stimulate the demand for cement but will also provide large employment. With rich limestone deposits and adequate coal reserves that the country possesses, there is no reason why Indian cement should not find its due place in international market also. More positive and aggressive attitude is therefore necessary for development of cement industry at this juncture by taking necessary steps towards stimulation of demand and encouraging further investments.

The adoption of pragmatic policy since 1979 has paid rich dividends and resulted in big spurt of production, transforming this almost stagnant industry into a dynamic one. The present need is to continue this thrust. It is necessary that new investment in cement remains viable and 12% post tax return maintained. Of late, returns of the new plants have fallen because of continuous increase in production cost, inadequate and delayed increase in levy cement prices and steep fall in open market prices. As a result of these factors and high investment cost even the existing new cement plants which came into production since 1982 such as yours, require excise duty rebate and reduction in levy quota to sustain themselves. The position of new cement plants which are being set up is still worse. This has been effectively brought out in the representations of the Cement Manufacturers' Association submitted to the Government. A six-monthly review of levy cement price to keep pace with the increasing cost of production is also essential to maintain the health of the industry.

Cement is a power intensive industry. The power situation continues to be bad particularly in States like Rajasthan and Karnataka where there are heavy power cuts almost continuously. This imposes extra burden by running DG sets continuously rather than as standby, resulting in high maintenance cost due to their heavy wear and tear. Cement manufacturers in these power famine areas require additional assistance over and above the DG relief already allowed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The improvement in Company's operating results has been possible due to dedication and hard work put in by all sections of employees. The management team, the workers and staff at all levels deserve appreciation for their contribution to Company's growth. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance and support we have received from the State Governments, the Financial Institutions and Banks.

Thank you.

This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

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UNITED KINGDOM

Thatcherism in Retreat

WITH ELECTIONS looming on the horizon, political affairs in Britain are gradually beginning to resemble campaign rhetoric. The key issue, however, continues to be Mrs Thatcher herself. By the time of the next general elections, she will have been prime minister for nearly nine years—the sum total of Heath, Wilson and Callaghan during the 1970s. For the Opposition, her removal from 10 Downing Street is the over-riding political priority. She continues to dominate her party and nation, and no opponent—Tory, Alliance or Labour—has yet succeeded in wresting the ideological initiative away from her potent combination of laissez-faire capitalism and disciplinarian social policy.

The Opposition argues that the tide has decisively turned against Thatcherism and a number of anti-Tory verdicts have been cast. To some extent, they are right. The current government has taken a hammering: it has been through the Westland crisis, British Leyland, Sunday trading, the Libyan bombings, the recent disastrous council elections and is currently stewing in a jam over its obdurate refusal to endorse sanctions against South Africa. There is hardly a well-populated part in this country with a Conservative-controlled council. There is hardly a Conservative parliamentary seat that is not at risk in a by-election. It is hard to believe that when the Tories enjoy a majority of over 130, it has to resemble a lame-duck government.

There are many observers who feel that, after the next elections, it is unlikely that Mrs Thatcher will be back in 10 Downing Street. Some have made furtive attempts to look for alternatives to Mrs Thatcher. Amongst the names mentioned include Energy Secretary Peter Walker. The party hierarchy has made the occasional foray to break ranks. John Biffen, leader of the House, one of the shrewdest observers of the political climate and a widely respected politician, has questioned Mrs Thatcher's singular style of leadership. An eloquent leader of Tories, Biffen called for a "balanced ticket". The prime minister's response was to imperiously ignore Biffen. She has swept away the likes of Ian Gilmour, Francis Pym, James Prior, Norman St. John Stevas and James Carrington as politically and culturally expendable. And Michael Heseltine, who turned the otherwise mundane rescue of a West Country helicopter firm into high political drama is beginning to realise that, after resignations and sackings, the chances of fighting from the outside hardly does its protagonists much long-term good. Heseltine—nicknamed "Tarzan" ever since he sprang into headlines by seizing the mace in the House of Commons and shaking it balefully at Labour MP's who were singing "The Red Flag", is a plausible candidate for the "liberal Tories" who are an army in search of a leader.

London Pictures Service

Thatcher: the image problem

The loss of two out of three parliamentary by-elections, the results of the local elections and the slump in the Tory ratings to a poor third, behind both Labour and the Liberal-SDP alliance in recent Gallup polls have, not surprisingly, touched off a severe bout of nervous introspection. The Tory image is one of an insensitive, uncaring government undisturbed by the escalating ranks of the unemployed. Whilst her supporters see Mrs Thatcher as a tamer of price rises and trade union rioters, her critics brand her as bossy, insistent and dogmatic. The Thatcher image of the "Iron Lady" is no longer seen as the Conservative Party's greatest asset as it had been at the time of the last general elections. Her image builders would like—in this age of nuclear disasters—to "reprocess" her.

This task is left to Saatchi and Saatchi who would like the electorate to see her as a "lovable Golda Meir". Mrs Thatcher herself has made attempts to woo rebellious Tory back-benchers by inviting them to Chequers for Sunday lunch. Yet, she is still known to clear the House of Commons tea room with a cloud of an approaching stilleto. Roy Hattersley, Labour deputy leader, says: "Nobody really believes that Margaret Thatcher has been converted overnight from a hard-hearted harridan into a caring mother of her people. She can use the language of compassion recommended to her by Saatchi and Saatchi, but she cannot erase the memory of seven callous years." At times of great national effort, to battle General Galtieri or an Arthur Scargill, her style of leadership is a national asset. In more normal times, it is increasingly seen as counter-productive. Her army of critics maintain that Britain's problems are too deep-seated to be tackled by a one-woman band. They need to be confronted by a first rate cabinet galvanised by a strong prime minister rather than the current lacklustre team.

Thatcher's choice of the abrasive Norman Tebbit as chairman of the party has proved unpopular. With his reputation for verbal brutality and his inability to strike a rapport with partymen, there have been demands for his removal. His deputy, Jeffrey Archer, has been effectively silenced by the Central Office after a remarkable series of gaffes that was quite extraordinary for a best-selling author (*First Among Equals*). Critics have accused Downing Street of "continuing" to operate as a conspiracy against the Cabinet.

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the distinguished columnist Peter Jenkins points out: "These Byzantine habits have created a bureaucracy which does not know who are its political masters—or its mistress. The civil service has ways of getting its act together, but only if ministers can get their act together first. There comes a moment in all Governments when direction is lost and, usually, it is the mandarins who are the first to know it. That moment seems to have arrived."

The time scale for the next elections is being predicted as sometime in the autumn of 1987 and the Tory conference in October this year will provide the way for the election manifesto. The focus will then be switched to education and health, having diverted resources from areas like defence to social programmes, and elaborating the theme that voters must not take the Government's achievements for

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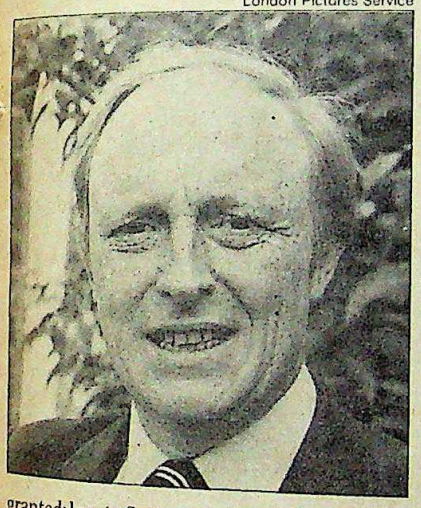
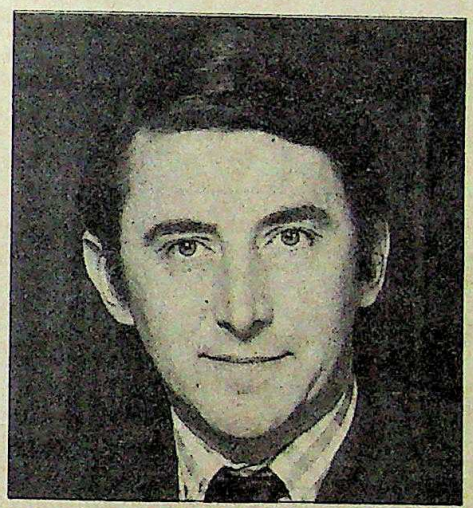
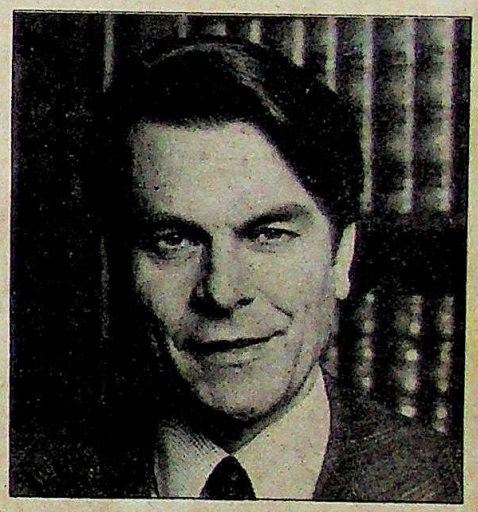


granted: low inflation, trade union reform and income tax cuts. However, Mrs Thatcher's survival hinges on relegating unemployment as the dominant issue to a less conspicuous position. And therein lies the pinch.

The Labour Party's spokesman, John Prescott, has claimed that the Government carried out 18 fiddles on the jobless figures. The headline total of 3.3 million unemployed is bad enough, but the composition of these figures is the real cause for concern. Forty per cent of those unemployed in Britain have been out of work for more than a year. Male unemployment in Britain is now nearly twice as high as in France, Germany, Italy or the US. The British Chancellor talks of recovery, yet fewer men are in work in this country now than before the outbreak of World War I, mainly because of union muscle, restrictive practices and other labour market rigidities. Disturbingly, long-term unemployed have effectively withdrawn from the workforce and are virtually living on the dole. Neither an economic upturn nor even the limited reflation promised by the Alliance will do much to help them.

WHILST Mrs Thatcher and her party wrestles with a genuine image problem, their principal opponents, the Labour Party, having hit the magic 40 per cent in the opinion polls, are confronted with other dilemmas. For instance, the policy that has emerged from Labour spokesmen has been shot from the hip, and Labour often finds itself impaled on the Thatcherite fork. Neil Kinnock is popular, but there are many who question his fibre for prime ministership. Kinnock has a tendency to touch off unexpected rows. On his recent visit, he made the grand gesture to his Indian audience that Labour would re-





(From left) Labour's Kinnock, Liberal's Steel and SDP's Owen: succession stakes

peal the two pillars of present immigration law—the 1971 Immigration Act and the 1981 Nationality Act—which would be replaced by "non-racial controls". John Wheeler, a senior Conservative in the Home Affairs Select Committee, has alleged that Kinnock's plans would send primary immigration rocketing back again to 100,000 a year. This is typical Conservative ploy, yet no Labour Party spokesman has effectively countered the allegations. Immigration is a non-issue as far as the forthcoming elections are concerned. But there is now a danger that it could become live again.

Three years ago, people predicted that Labour was "finished" and that the Conservatives were "in for another 15 years". Now, Labour sees itself in front as Kinnock launches one spirited attack after another on Mrs Thatcher's domineering attitude and her "jelliod ministers". His anti-militant crusades within his party have also gained him valuable media coverage and is applauded by many. But a *Guardian*-sponsored voting analysis, soon after the council elections, revealed that although it might finish in front and put Kinnock at 10 Downing Street, his party might still lack a Commons majority.

Meanwhile, the third force—the Liberal-SDP alliance led by the two Davids, Steel and Owen, are the best known political double act. The Alliance, formed five years ago, has been remarkably united so far but it came to an abrupt end last fortnight with a splendid row over defence policy. It was a dismal show by a party whose unique sales pitch is its claim to represent a new spirit of partnership in British politics. If not rapidly healed it could leave the Alliance looking as erratic and non-credible in 1988 as Labour did in 1983. The spat is over whether Britain should have a successor to Polaris as the independent national deterrent and the joint commission has sought to fudge the issue by postponing a firm commitment. The Liberal leader, David Steel, was forthright when he said: "I don't think that we can go into an election with one set of candidates saying one thing, and another set saying another."

It is the firmness to back down by Dr David Owen which caused the row. If Neil Kinnock is the terror of the militant tendency, David Owen is the scourge of the wimpish tendency. Like Mrs Thatcher, whose "spirit" he admires, Owen is a believer in "conviction politics". This has not made him very popular. With the fluctuating political climate, the four leaders are confronted with contrasting fortunes, as a result of which Steel is very pleased, Kinnock quite pleased, Owen not very pleased and Mrs Thatcher not pleased at all.

—RAMESH CHANDRAN

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SRI LANKA

Peace Talk

FINALLY last fortnight, a faint glimmer appeared at the end of the tiresomely long tunnel of Sri Lanka's ethnic problem. For the first time, decisively and unequivocally, Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayewardene sent a set of detailed and specific proposals to New Delhi to be passed on to the Tamil groups.

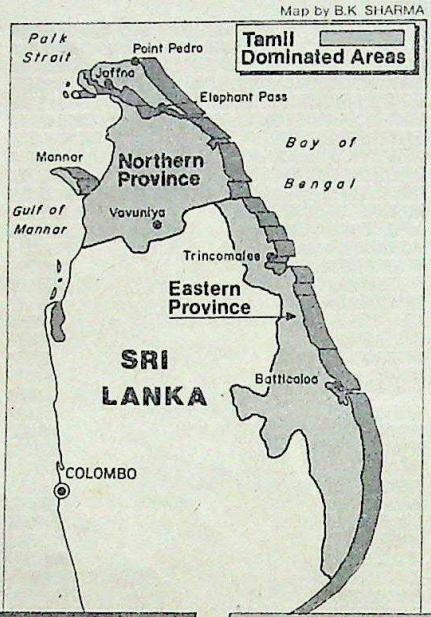
The proposals envisaged the establishment of reasonably autonomous provincial councils in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka with substantial legislative, executive, and financial powers to be devolved upon the provincial councils; the northern and eastern provinces empowered to consult each other and coordinate on matters of mutual interest and concern; the extent of autonomy to be limited within the unitary nature of the Sri Lankan Constitution; the control of defence, national security, and the armed forces shall vest with the President. Control over land was also to be devolved, except that the Central Government would have the power to use the lands it requires.

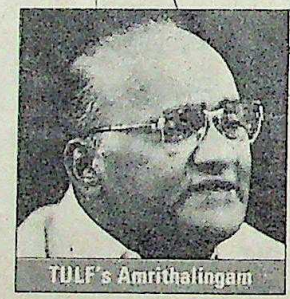
Jayewardene did not exactly give the Tamils what they have been demanding—a Tamil homeland—but it was still the most that he has committed himself to since the July 1983 Colombo riots. The 'Annexure-C' had talked about a regional council concept, the Tamil region comprising the northern and eastern provinces, but the Sri Lanka Government had not committed itself on specifics. The latest proposals marks the first time Jayewardene has directly proposed the formation of autonomous provincial councils.

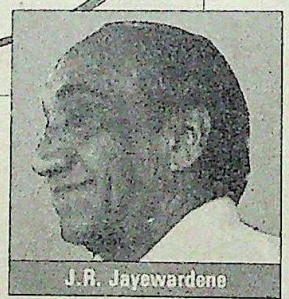
Jayewardene circulated copies of the draft proposals at a conference of registered political parties in Colombo on June 25, and the understanding was that the conference would resume on July 15; after the parties studied the proposals and formulated their views. Meanwhile, the President held separate meetings with the leaders of different political parties in Colombo with a view to arrive at a Sinhala consensus.

The Indian Government promptly circulated the proposals to the Tamil groups. Highly placed sources say that the Government wanted the TULF to attend the political parties conference in Colombo on June 25. But the TULF, sensing the angry mood of the Tamils after the latest military offensive and the disapproval of the militant groups, decided to officially boycott the conference saying that Lanka was attempting to sideline India's mediatory role.

Map by B.K SHARMA




TULF's Amrithalingam


J.R. Jayewardene

The latest proposals mark the first time Jayewardene has directly proposed the formation of autonomous provincial councils in the northern and eastern provinces.

The Indian Government was obviously not happy. The TULF leaders were summoned to Delhi and told in unmistakeable terms that the Government's considered opinion was that the latest proposals were certainly fit to be discussed with Colombo. The TULF came up with the excuse that there were serious discrepancies between the proposals that Jayewardene had sent to Delhi and those he had placed at the political parties conference in Colombo. The discovery of these discrepancies came as a godsend to the Tamil groups. The Indian Government was getting tough in making it plain that the Eelam demand was unrealistic. The Centre also asked Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran to convey the same tough stand to the militant groups to whom he distributed copies of the proposals. According to one militant leader: "The chief minister almost blew his top when we expressed our reservations about the proposals. He told us that we could go back to Jaffna and continue our fight from there."

The initial response of the Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF) was that the latest proposals did not constitute a satisfactory basis for negotiations. The ENLF reiterated the point that any settlement of the ethnic problem would have to accommodate a Tamil homeland comprising of both the northern and the eastern provinces and also allow the Tamils the right of self-determination. But so as not to sound recalcitrant to the Indian Government, the ENLF, in its confidential response, indicated its willingness to cooperate.

However, the groups were given little chance for stalling. New Delhi immediately got in touch with Colombo and clarified from Jayewardene that the Delhi document was the correct one. Jayewardene also promised to amend the draft proposals circulated in Colombo.

All this meant that at the close of the fortnight, the TULF could not but bow to the wishes of the Indian Government by agreeing to go to Colombo and convey its reactions to the latest proposals. Delhi also summoned the militant leaders to the capital, ostensibly to ask them to avoid jeopardising the Colombo peace process. So, in spite of the Sinhalese hardliners and the Buddhist clergy on one side, and the Tamil militants on the other, the blurred outlines of a meeting ground between the Sri Lanka Government and the Tamil groups did finally seem to be emerging. And with the Government of India putting its weight solidly behind a quick settlement, all eyes were focused on the negotiating table in Colombo where the future fate of the protracted ethnic crisis now lies.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

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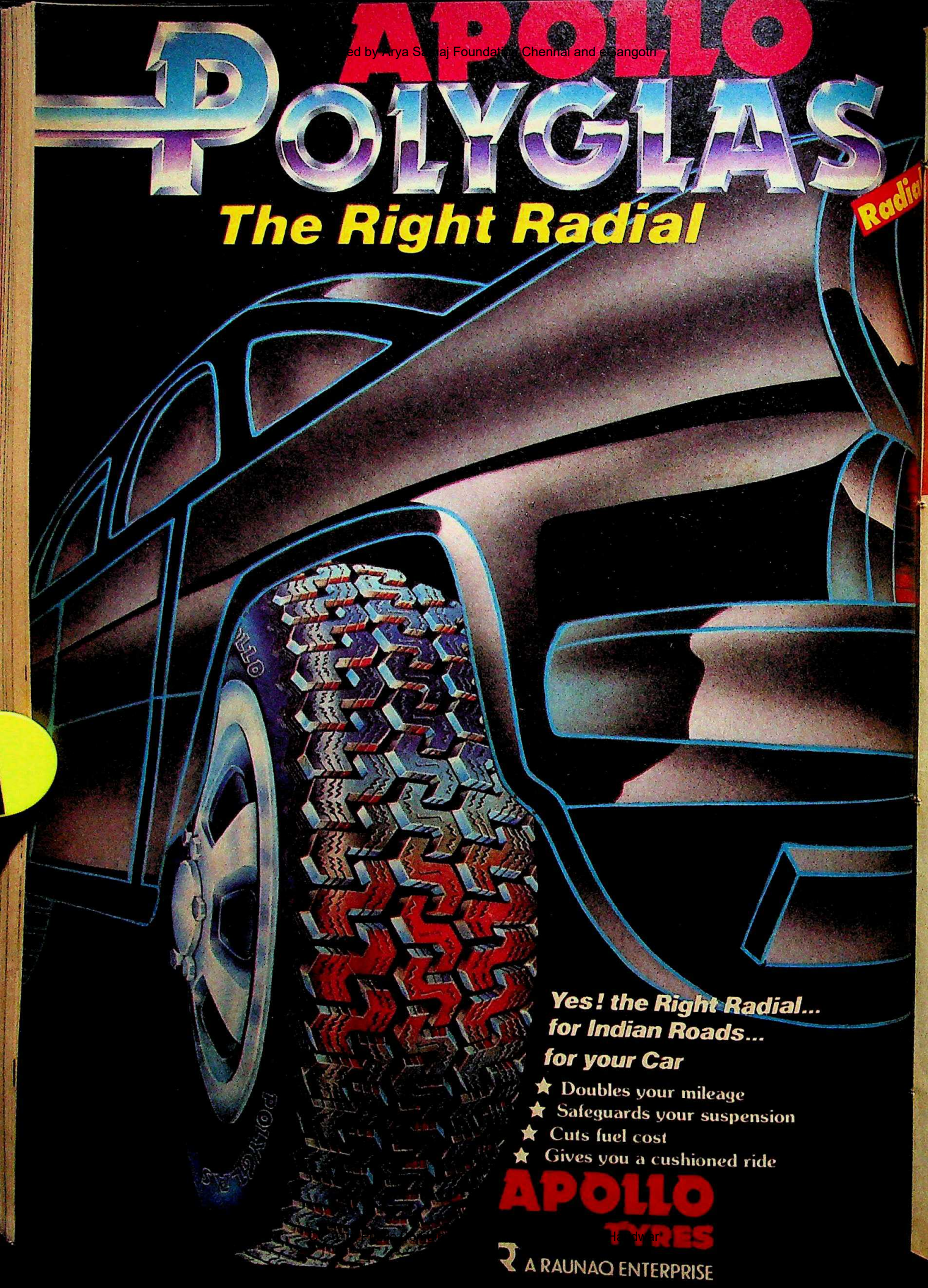

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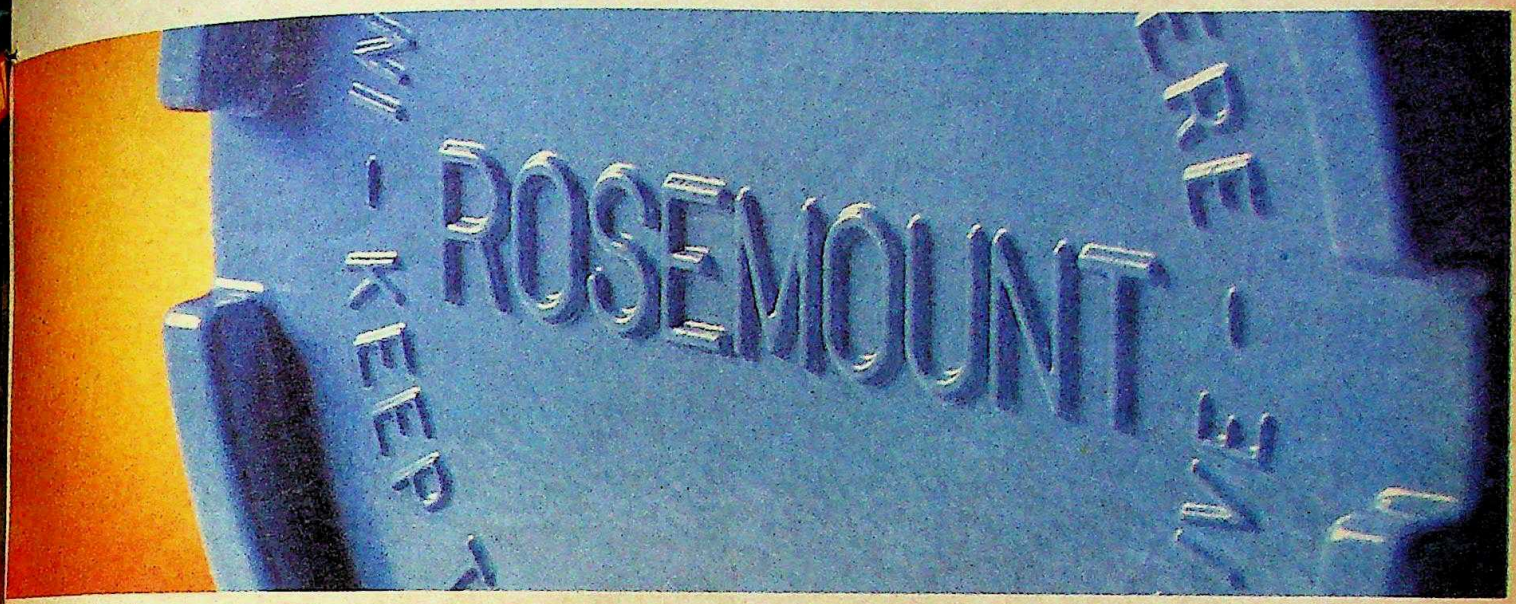

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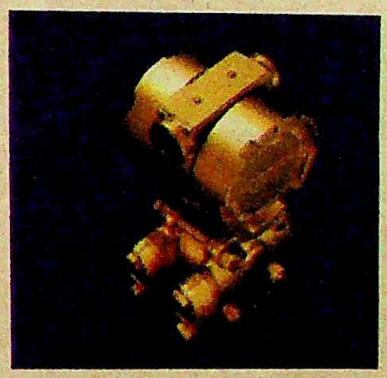

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NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY

Stop Press

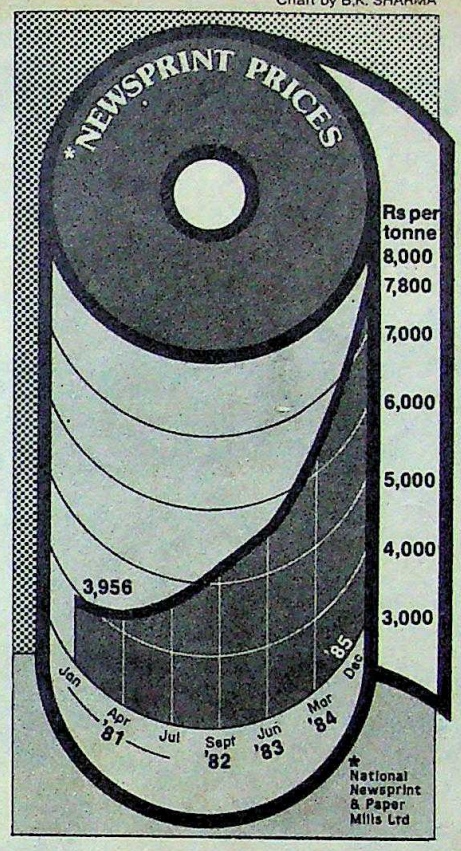
STRIKES launched by employers are unprecedented. So when press barons closed their papers across the country for a day last fortnight, the day's news took on a different colour. The issue: sharply rising newsprint costs, wage hikes ordered by the Government, and official policies towards the print media. At stake, the newspapers claimed, was the freedom of the press. Said *The Statesman*: "The hope is that this token protest against a discriminatory policy that is clearly designed to muzzle the press and penalise readers will awaken the public to an awareness of the danger."

Simultaneously, Bennett Coleman (*The Times of India* and other publications) along with two news agencies went to court challenging an official decision to double an interim wage increase for newspaper employees from 7.5 to 15 per cent.

Industry unions viewed these developments with alarm. "The closure is a declaration of war against newspaper employees," charged S.Y. Kolhatkar, chairman of the National Confederation of Newspaper and News Agency Employees' Organisations. But Basudev Ray, president of the Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society (IENS), said: "We merely wanted to tell the Government not to go on putting burdens on us."

Several forces have riled newspaper magnates: the high customs duties on printing machinery when publishers are striving to modernise; the continuance of import duty on newsprint despite the Supreme Court asking the Government to re-examine this; the failure to release requisite foreign exchange for newsprint import; and the recent newsprint price hikes when Indian publishers already pay among the world's highest prices for their basic raw material.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



"We wanted to tell the Government not to go on putting additional burdens on us."

BASUDEV RAY
president, Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society

"Allegations that we're trying to suppress the press are unfounded. We want a free press."

V.N. GADGIL
information and broadcasting minister

The *Indian Express* group swiftly moved the Supreme Court on a host of issues. Press barons wrote a joint letter to the prime minister seeking a rollback in newsprint prices, and resolved to close down their papers for two days during Parliament's budget session. The decision was deferred, says Ray of the IENS, to give the prime minister time to react.

Newsprint prices have bloated over the years and now account for over half of a newspaper's total cost. Samir Jain, joint managing director of Bennet Coleman, claimed that each newspaper page costs 10 paise. Said Jain: "A 20-page newspaper costs Rs 2 but we charge 90 paise, of which the hawker takes 30 paise." And prices can't be raised either: *Malayalam Manorama*, the country's largest selling daily (6.14 lakh in 1984), lost 65,000 readers when it tried to pass on the latest newsprint price hike.

The last straw, newspaper managements declare, was the Government's decision in May to grant a 15 per cent interim wage relief to newspaper employees without consulting publishers. Several managements insist that they cannot afford a fatter pay bill because wages form 20 per cent of total costs.

But an industry wage tribunal had concluded that the 7.5 per cent interim relief it recommended would add 2 per cent to the cost of publication. So even the 15 per cent wage hike announced by the Government will mean only a 4 per cent increase in costs: advertisement tariffs have been increased substantially more than that in recent months.

Nevertheless, newspaper barons see "a deliberate attempt to squeeze the press," as *Ananda Bazar Patrika*'s Arup Sarkar puts it. That may or may not be true but the industry clearly has a case. The Government released only enough foreign exchange last year to import 2 lakh tonnes of newsprint, as against the 2.30 lakh tonnes that newspapers were entitled to under the Government's own allocation scheme.

The problem, says Information and Broadcasting Minister V.N. Gadgil, is that imports are based on projections of domestic newsprint production that have gone wrong. He says that he has spelled out newsprint policy alternatives to proprietors and promises a decision by the end of this Parliament session. Also, the Bureau of Industrial Costs and Prices has just recommended that the import duty on newsprint should be around the level suggested by the Supreme Court. Adds Gadgil: "All these allegations that we're trying to suppress the press are unfounded. We want a free press."

Still, the mills of government grind slowly. Though Gadgil seems willing to tackle their problems, a solution to many of them does not lie in his hands and the industry may have a long struggle ahead.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI

with bureau reports

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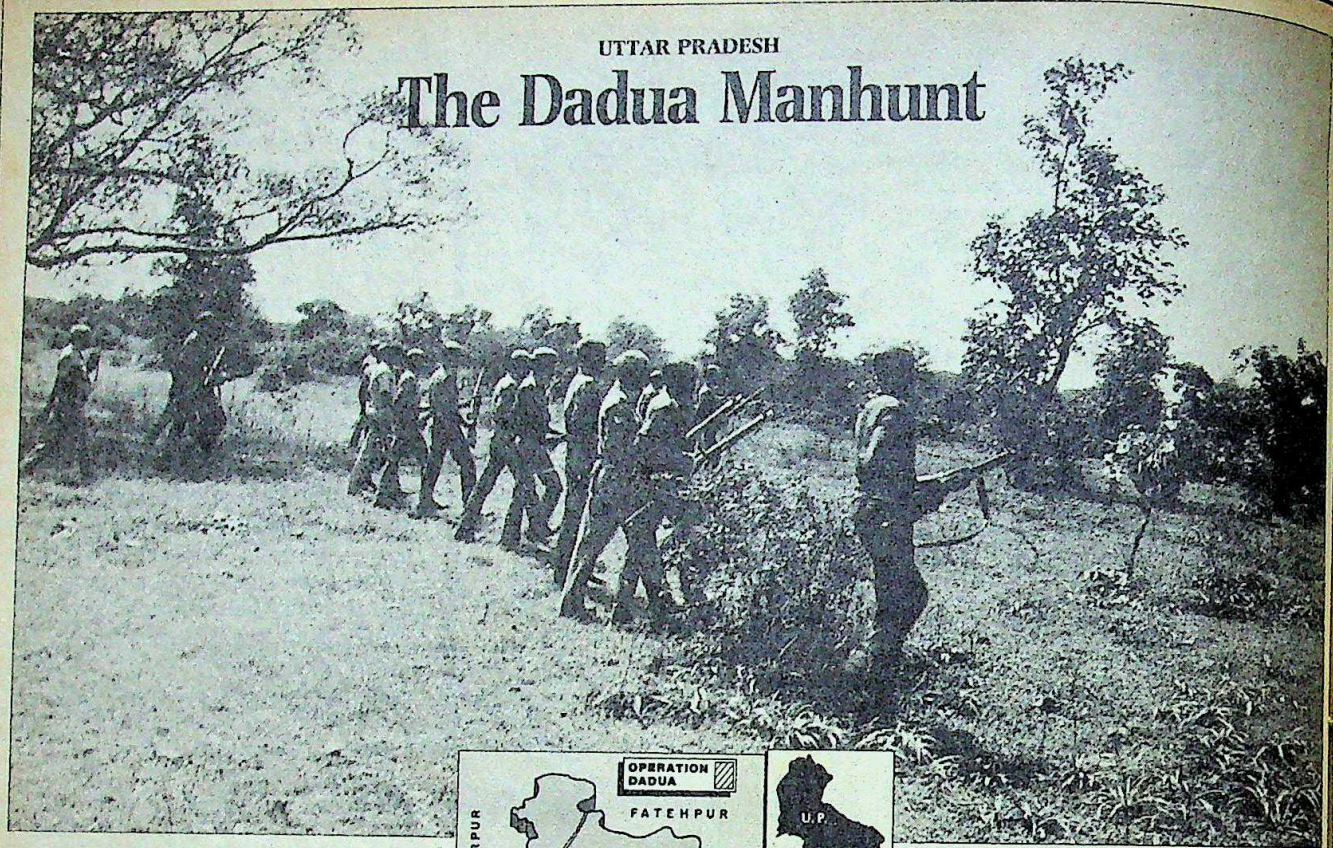
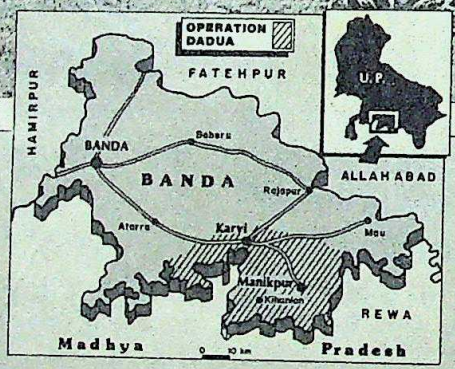
UTTAR PRADESH

The Dadua Manhunt



Photographs by S. PREM

Combing-out operation in the Vindhyachal jungles: elusive



2,500 policemen have been engaged in the hunt for Dadua, the elusive bandit leader. As on previous occasions, the wily bandit has so far outwitted the policemen.

BEGINNING from the 17th of May, some 2,500 men of the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) have been combing a 120 sq km stretch of harsh and inhospitable terrain in and around the Vindhyachal ranges of Uttar Pradesh. Their prey is Shiv Kumar, alias Dadua, the elusive bandit leader with over 100 officially-registered cases of kidnappings, murders, dacoities and robberies to his credit. This is the third successive time in the last two years that a hunt has been launched to eliminate the cowherd-turned-desperado. But, as on the previous occasions, the wily bandit has so far outwitted the policemen.

In their latest operation, the PAC men say that they have failed to even catch a glimpse of Dadua, leave alone engage him in an encounter. "We have no idea of the whereabouts of the gang and so far, have failed to gather any worthwhile intelligence on him," confessed Senior Superintendent of Police of Banda, C.D. Sharma, adding, "the support given by the backward classes and Harijans to Dadua is the main hurdle in our task."

The police claim is, however, contested by five residents of Garha Kachar village of Manikpur—Moti Chamar, Kamta, Pachna, Kailash and Sudin. They claim that twice they helped the police sight the gang in the first week of June but both times the guardians of law chose to look the other way. They state that, on the first occasion, there were seven dacoits with Dadua and 14 on the second.

Whether or not the cops have deliberately shied away from engaging Dadua, the outlaw has not been cowed down by them. Instead, he has been openly contemptuous of them, raiding and looting at his own will. His latest outrage was the burning of the house of Dharampal, a Brahmin of Marayian village on June 25. The depredation was carried out because Dadua believed that Dharampal was acting as a police informer.

Of a lean frame with an ugly scar running down the right side of his face, Dadua was baptised into the harsh world of dacoity and pillage by Gaya Kurmi. Following Gaya Kurmi's surrender in Madhya Pradesh in 1976, Dadua took over the mantle of leadership. Initially, his gang comprised only five or six members armed with ordinary, country-made weapons. But after years of painstaking consolidation, Dadua's army has become a dreaded force. Today, it has 14 to 15 hard-core members, supplemented by 10 to 12 hired hands. According to official sources these bandits are equipped with at least one Sten gun, two Chinese-made and two .375 Magnum rifles, six .30 Springfield carbines, two .315 country-made rifles and three 12-bore double barrel shot-guns.

Dadua's gang was catapulted into the limelight in July 1984 when it kidnapped four railway employees on track duty in

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Pateria Purva village near Manikpur. While one of the abducted victims was released, the others were kept hostage for 24 days and freed only when a ransom of Rs 70,000 was paid. On September 14 the same year, the gang kidnapped eight schoolboys who had gone on a picnic to Hanuman Dhara in Chitrakoot. Two boys were released within a day but the parents of the remaining had to pay a ransom of Rs 2 lakh to buy their children's freedom.

A sworn enemy of Brahmins, Dadua has unleashed a terror campaign against them. Hira Pandey, block pramukh of Karvi, whose three relatives, Ram Kanhai 72, Avadhesh 21 and Mahesh Pandey, were kidnapped and shot dead by Dadua, says: "Dadua has killed at least 150 Brahmins. But he will never be caught as station officers of three police stations are on his payroll."

His war on Brahmins has embittered social relationships in the rocky terrain, triggering off the worst-ever caste feud seen in the region. While the Kurmis, forming 40 per cent of the 2.5 lakh population in the "Operation Dadua" area, are "united to save their Dadua," the powerful Brahmins comprising 35 per cent of the population have also closed ranks to ward off the challenge to their sovereignty.

Prakash Narain Tripathi of Manikpur, who once employed the "docile and innocent" Dadua, is vitriolic against him now. "He burnt my truck loaded with logs in 1981, had me shot and injured soon after, and as late as March this year, beat up my labourers and attempted to set light to my *tendu* field." Living in a house reminiscent of a fortress, Tripathi says he can get rid of Dadua "if given a free hand". His claims are, however, looked upon with suspicion by the local populace, which holds him responsible for initiating Dadua into the world of crime.

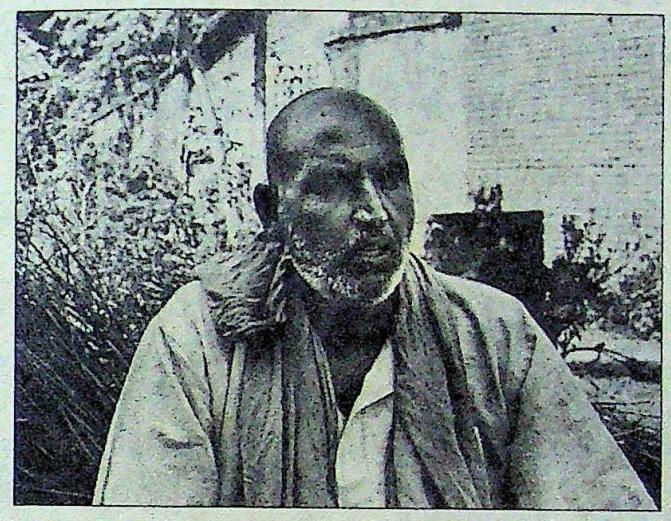
The reason for Dadua's elusiveness is that he is always on the move, never resting for more than a few hours at a place. Three of his kidnapped victims, Mahavir Gupta 59, Bhuyandan Gupta 47 and Chunwa Gupta 23 assert that Dadua did not touch a drop of liquor during the 27 days they were held captive nor allowed his gang to drink—a rare achievement for a dacoit chieftain. Consumption is, however, eating away at the entrails of the 35-year-old outlaw and Sadhu Pandit, 50, who was kidnapped from Hanua village, says that Dadua takes medicines religiously three times a day to keep his ailment at bay.

Crime has always been a cottage industry in Banda, a district where the poor prefer to forgo a day's meal for months altogether to buy a gun. The registered firearms licences range from 300 to 650 at each of the district's 19 police stations—many of them being the deadly .375 mm Magnum rifle or .30 Springfield carbine. Violence is so deeply ingrained in these thatched lives that womenfolk of some families will consider themselves widows only when their husbands' deaths have been avenged.

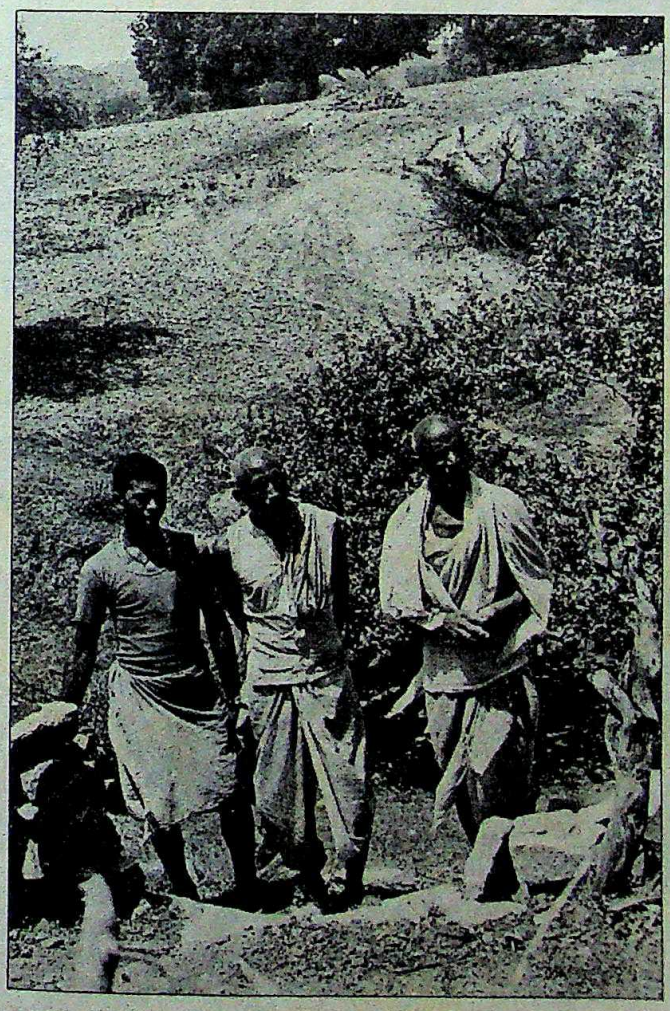
"Operation Dadua" has, however, added a new dimension to the violence-scarred lives of the people of Manikpur and Karvi. More than the prey it is the predators who have become the objects of dread and terror for the 2.5 lakh villagers eking out a miserable existence in the villages of the "Operation Dadua" area. Tales of police bestiality have overshadowed the failure of the men in uniform to liquidate the dacoit. Armed with the Anti-dacoity Act, policemen have gone from village to village wielding canes, insulting women and at times even forcing the villagers to leave their homes. Some villages, where mass looting, beatings and evacuations have been confirmed, include Onjhar, Panwari, Agru Hura, Bhujauli, Rojhota, Bilkhari, Mahulia and Pipra in the Manikpur-Karvi area. A revenue official of Manikpur confessed that mass rapes had been committed in Garwara, Deokali and Parampura villages but added that the villagers were fearful and lacked the courage to lodge reports.

But the main fear is that with the current caste war raging in the area, Dadua killed will be more dangerous than Dadua alive. The poor villagers are mortally afraid that with Dadua eliminated, the Brahmins will hit back with impunity to settle old scores. Meanwhile, they are the target of harassment by the forces involved in "Operation Dadua". Either way, they are the only ones who will lose if Dadua is finally eliminated.

—DILIP AWASTHI in Manikpur



Sadhu Pandit who was kidnapped by Dadua and released



Chunwa, Bhuyandan and Mahavir: kidnapped for ransom

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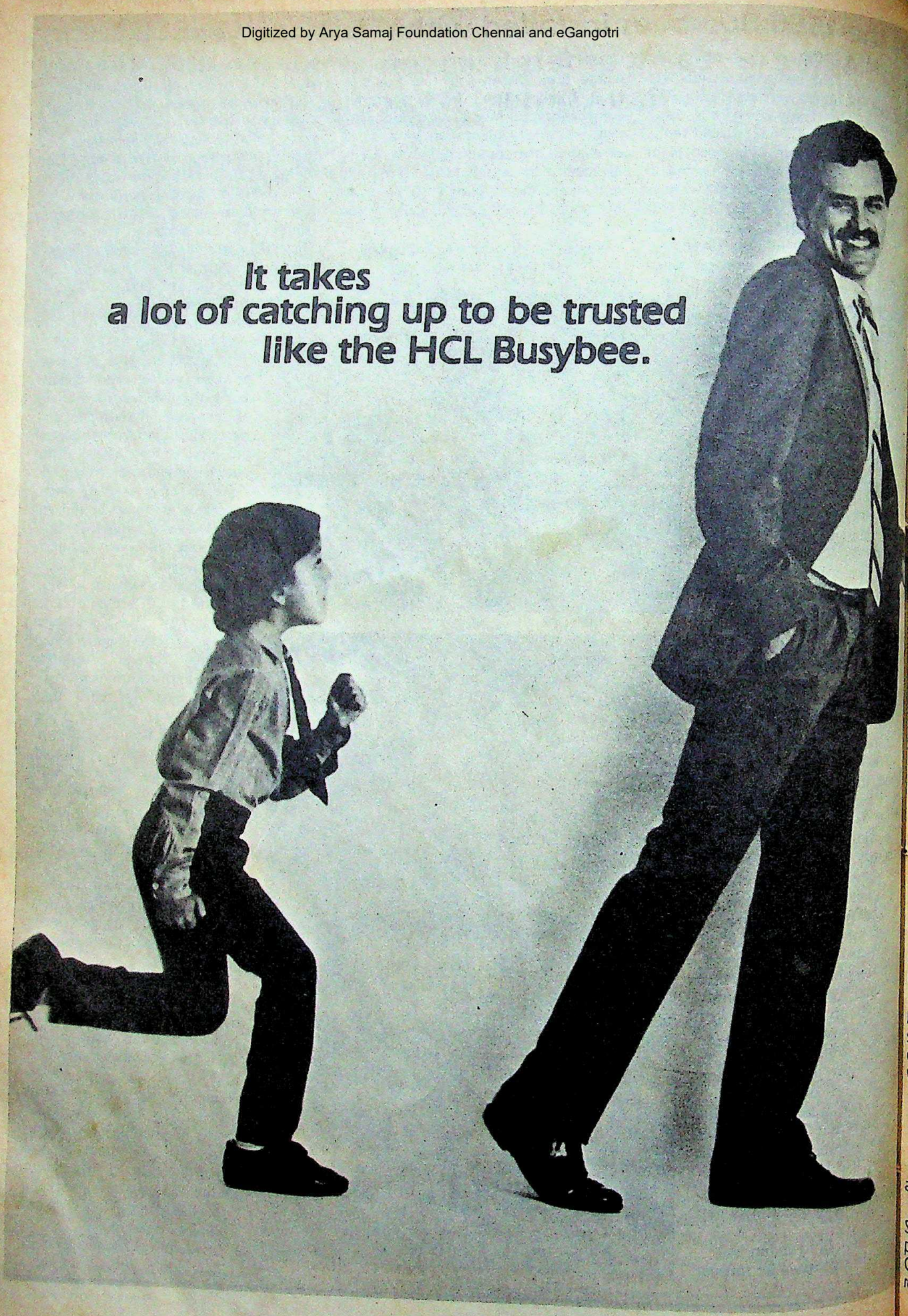

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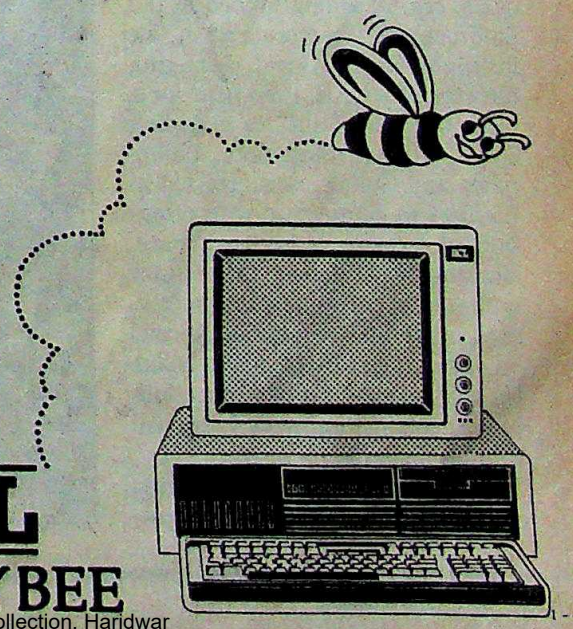

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TRAVEL FRAUD

Passport to Easy Money

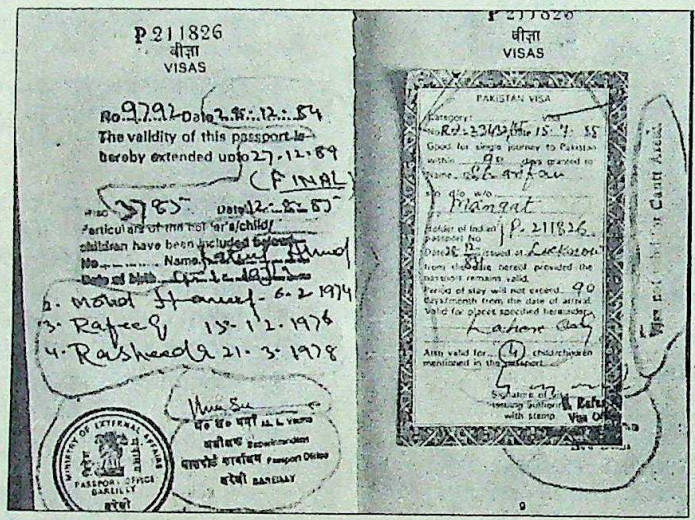
TAUFEER Parvez of Lucknow submitted her passport to the local passport office a few months ago to get her son's name endorsed on it. Months later, told that her passport was lost, she applied for a duplicate only to learn that her passport had turned up in Delhi—in the hands of a small-time travel agent arrested for fraud. The passport bore the names of four children—not hers—and $2,000 had been drawn on it under the Foreign Travel Scheme (FTS). This intriguing case is just one of the hundreds that have begun to attract the attention of the Enforcement Directorate, the Finance Ministry's watchdog agency for foreign exchange .

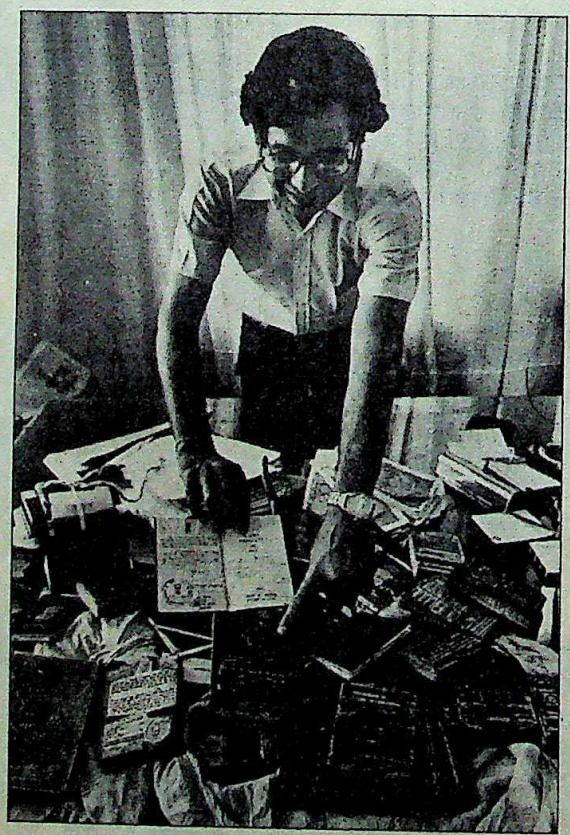
Travel fraud is suddenly big business and easy money. That the racket is country-wide and booming is borne out by the arrests made by the authorities in recent months from Delhi, Madras, Bombay, Bangalore, Jalandhar and many small towns in western Uttar Pradesh. Those arrested included fly-by-night operators gypping innocent passengers of thousands of rupees to get them passports and visas, the general sales agents (GSA's) of major airlines, the owners of major travel agencies and small-time curbside touts who collect foreign exchange and sell it in the black market.

The most startling is the case of GSA's, two of whom landed in the Enforcement Directorate's net last fortnight. Naresh Goyal, managing director of Jet Air, the agent for a large number of airlines including TWA, Kuwait, Singapore, Philippines and Gulfair, was arrested in Bombay in connection with retention of foreign exchange abroad, running offices outside the country without RBI permission and receiving part of his commission abroad on discounted tickets sold in India. He was released on bail but a full-scale investigation was launched into his dealings.

Simultaneously, the Enforcement Directorate launched prosecution against another major travel agency, Onkar Travels, GSA in New Delhi for Japan Airlines. The premises of the company and its directors were searched last September and the documents recovered during the raids revealed that as far back as 1980, Onkar Travels had acquired foreign exchange worth $1,20,6197 and £80,000, transferred it outside India and sold it to an Indian businessman in the US. Enforcement Directorate investigations revealed that in return, Onkar Travels had received payments of about Rs 1.17 crore from the Delhi-based father of the businessman. It is suspected that this may be the commission the agency received for discounted airline tickets sold in India, according to a senior directorate official.

A forged Pakistani visa; and (below) confiscated blocks and passports





BHAWAN SINGH

But there are also the smaller touts, whose methods range from the simple to the ingenious. The simplest of all techniques was employed by Parvez Alam Dost, 26, owner of a small travel agency called Dost Travels operating from Delhi's Jama Masjid area. He used to obtain the passports of poor Muslim villagers living in Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar who had relatives in Pakistan. False visas for Pakistan were then stamped on these passports and the names of four to five dependent children forged onto the passport. Dost's men then bought cheap Delhi-Lahore railway tickets costing Rs 58 for each prospective passenger and armed with these documents, they would visit the Janpath branch of the Union Bank of India. A "helpful" official in the bank's foreign exchange department—who was later arrested by the authorities—unquestioningly paid out $500 per passenger. Dost's staff used to bring to the bank bunches of 100 passports and, on an average, draw $2,000 per passport. The Enforcement Directorate estimates that Dost and his men drew $387,500 from the bank. His main associate and financier was Haji Ikram, from whose house enforcement officials seized documents revealing that in one week alone he had provided Rs 7 lakh to Dost to buy dollars. Dost and Ikram have been detained under the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Act.

Dost's activities turned out to be only the tip of a large operation whose tentacles extended to separate gangs of passport forgers and printers, visa slip forgers, couriers and printers of counterfeit currency, and staff members of the passport offices in Delhi, Bareilly

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and Lucknow. The original owners of the passports were mostly unaware of the use their passports were being put to by petty tricksters. More than two dozen persons have been arrested in connection with this racket, including some who had set up a press to print passports, and others who were manufacturing rubber stamps to make endorsements in the passports.

In recent times, however, the biggest rackets uncovered involve foreign travel allowance drawn for trips to neighbouring countries. Two Madras travel agencies, Jai Exports and Tours and Vellavar Travels, used pretty much the same methods employed by Dost Travels in Delhi. They hired a broker, K.V. Jesudas, to "purchase" passports from poor villagers for under Rs 200. Inexpensive air tickets to Sri Lanka or the Maldives were purchased in the names of the passport holders and the travel agent's employees, then foreign exchange was drawn from the Mount Road and Kondichetty Street branches of the Bank of Madura, where helpful staff paid out unsigned traveller's cheques. Enforcement Directorate officials say that in this way, Jai Exports and Tours had illegally drawn traveller's cheques worth $8,98,650 whereas Vellavar Travels had drawn $92,000. Jai Exports Managing Director S. Subbiah and Director S. Pallanivellu were quickly arrested along with the owner of Vellavar Travels, Sri Annamalai, and broker Jesudas. When questioned, the passportholders denied having applied for the foreign travel allowance. Most of them claimed they had lost their passports or sent them for renewal.

Kundan Singh of Jalandhar was more enterprising. Single-handed, he ran a foreign exchange racket which enabled him to pocket $3,47,248, £32,137 and Canadian $3,061. When arrested, Kundan Singh reportedly admitted to the authorities that he had drawn the $500 allowance on 548 passports. All he did was to buy air tickets in a name with initials like G. Singh. He would then take the passport of Gurdev Singh and after collecting the $500, take the same ticket back with another passport belonging to Gurmit Singh, then a third of Gurcharan Singh and so on. Or he would use the same passport again and again after changing the photograph. An educated man, Kundan Singh used illiterate villagers as couriers to collect money from the banks; four such villagers were arrested with him. The authorities suspect that Kundan Singh was passing on the foreign currency to smugglers involved in gold-running from Pakistan to India.

The same kind of racket was also busted in Bangalore by the CBI with the additional twist that in this case even Indian Airlines (IA) tickets being used were forged. The CBI uncovered the press printing fake IA tickets in the annexe of a huge bungalow in Madras' fashionable T. Nagar locality. The kingpin of the Bangalore-based racket was I.M. Tahir, 28, alias Raja, a Sri Lanka-born Tamil. He would get the forged tickets from Madras and send villagers with passports round the banks to draw foreign exchange for a trip to Colombo. After obtaining the FTS allowance, the bank's endorsement would be erased from the passport and the same passport submitted again to another bank for a repeat payment. In this way, approximately $2,00,000 were drawn from different banks in Bangalore in a span of just three months.

The most startling is the case of two GSA's who landed in the Enforcement Director's net, Jet Air, agent for a number of airlines, and Onkar Travels, GSA for Japan Airlines.

One thing which has surprised investigators is the ease with which the racketeers have procured large stocks of passports. This, they say, could not have been possible without the active collusion of some staff members of the passport offices, mainly in Bareilly and Lucknow. A case of possessing disproportionate assets has already been registered against a former passport officer of Bangalore and the Ministry of External Affairs has been informed of the CBI's suspicion about the involvement of passport office staff at other places.

Following the discovery of the widespread travel-related fraud in foreign exchange, the RBI had changed the rules for grant of foreign exchange allowance under the FTS. The $500 allowance will now be paid once every three years instead of once every two years. The allowance for those travelling to neighbouring countries has been reduced to $250 (from $500 earlier) and that too only once in three years. To further minimise the chances of racketeering, the Home Ministry has suggested to the Reserve Bank that those wanting to travel to Pakistan and Bangladesh should be paid only in Pakistani rupees and Bangladeshi takas. If accepted, this could help block the drain of valuable foreign exchange, which now finds its way to the black market and is used for smuggling gold, narcotics and probably guns into India.

—RAMINDAR SINGH

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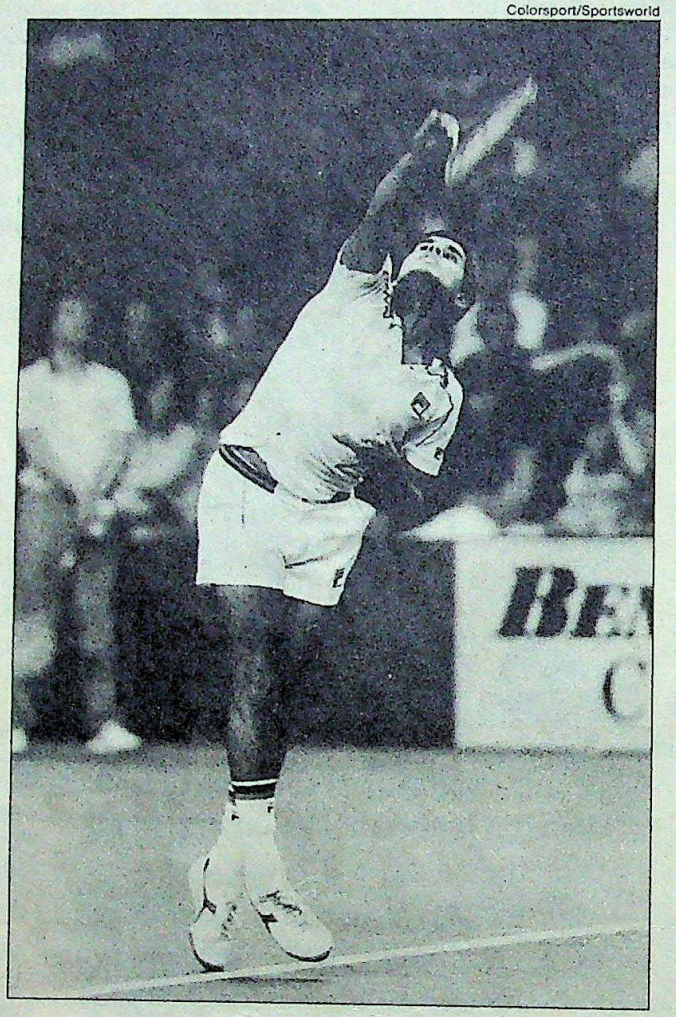
RAMESH KRISHNAN

Serving Notice

IN A SPORT dominated by brute strength, scorching serves and muscle power, his game—built on elegant, almost casually languid but deceptively lethal ground strokes—is something of an anachronism. Logically, he should be a marginal force in today's world of tennis, but 25-year-old Ramesh Krishnan served notice at the Wimbledon championship last fortnight that he is a much better player than his pre-tournament rank of 41 would suggest. Apart from making it to the quarter-finals (he is only the third Indian to do so), Krishnan also showed that he has matured into a much tougher player—both mentally and physically—and might be approaching his peak.

Krishnan's brightest hour came on a blazing hot summer day when he demolished sixth-seeded Joachim Nystrom, winner of five titles this year and marginally behind world champion Ivan Lendl in the Nabisco tally. Wrote tennis world's top commentator David Irvine: "The Indian beat Nystrom with tennis in the Ken Rosewall mould: with sudden drop shots, subtle changes of pace, whipped backhand passes unleashed with a roll of the wrist, and a beautiful improvisation when all seemed lost."

Colorsport/Sportsworld



Ramesh: in the Rosewall mould

Krishnan has shed considerable weight. He is leaner, fitter and sharper on the court. There is even a bite to his serve. Several commentators were impressed by his nerve—his "steel" and "spirit" which were previously suspect. They still recall how he let slip a peerless opportunity in 1983 after a superb five-set duel with Vitas Gerulaitis.

Relaxing at his rented house, Krishnan concurred about his new image: "I am more determined now. Perhaps marriage has made me more responsible."

Arriving in England in early June, Krishnan performed well enough in pre-Wimbledon matches to attract the notice of *The Times'* tennis correspondent, Rex Bellamy, who quoted a Belgian journalist as saying: "Krishnan is like the cream on the strawberries." To attract this kind of attention in the highly-charged atmosphere of Wimbledon, the unofficial world championship, is not easy. You need the rock star charisma and good looks of a Pat Cash or the 'golden boy' aura of a Boris Becker or the swashbuckling French Musketeer style of a Henri Leconte.

Yet, the short, unassuming and serious-looking Krishnan confounded critics. He said later: "After this championship, I now have an idea of what the guys go through to win a big tournament—it takes a lot of physical strength, it goes on for two weeks, it is three out of five sets and ultimately, it is a big learning experience." Added father Ramanathan Krishnan: "Ramesh's success proves his dedication to the game."

The five-setter Krishnan had to endure was against Mike Bauer, a big-built American. In a match in which fortunes careened wildly, what stood out was the former Wimbledon junior champion's ice-cool demeanour. But it was only after his upset win over Nystrom that Krishnan attracted headline attention and comparisons with Rosewall. Was he flattered? "Very much so. I have always considered him a genius. He too didn't have a big serve and is the perfect player for me to model my game on."

In this world of cannon-ball serves Krishnan's serve is something of a disadvantage. But it leaves him unfazed: "I think I have to learn to play my ground strokes in such a way as to protect my serve. I am not going to serve like a Becker or a Lendl or a Zivojinovic, because I am not built that way. You have to build on what you have."

His adaptability was most in evidence against the unheralded West German Eric Jelen, another giant killer at the tournament. But Krishnan disposed him off in straight sets in just over 100 minutes. His quarter finals against the 6 ft 6 in Yugoslav, Slobodan Zivojinovic, was billed as a David vs Goliath duel. It proved to be one, with the Slavonic sledgehammer blasting down 16 aces. Said Krishnan later: "I found his serve too hot to handle. He put a lot of pressure on me from the word go." Admitted "Bobo" Zivojinovic: "I had to keep on top of him because Krishnan is one of the best touch players in the world."

The new look Krishnan is now taking a few days off in Madras before returning to the American circuit in preparation for the US Open. His keenness to get back to competitive play is evident when he says: "I don't want to say, well, I performed so well at Wimbledon, let me take a fortnight off. I will then lose my sharpness. I want to get back to the US before the week is over." The US circuit is largely played on Krishnan's favourite surface—cement—which means that his fans in India will have plenty to cheer about in the months to come.

—RAMESH CHANDRAN

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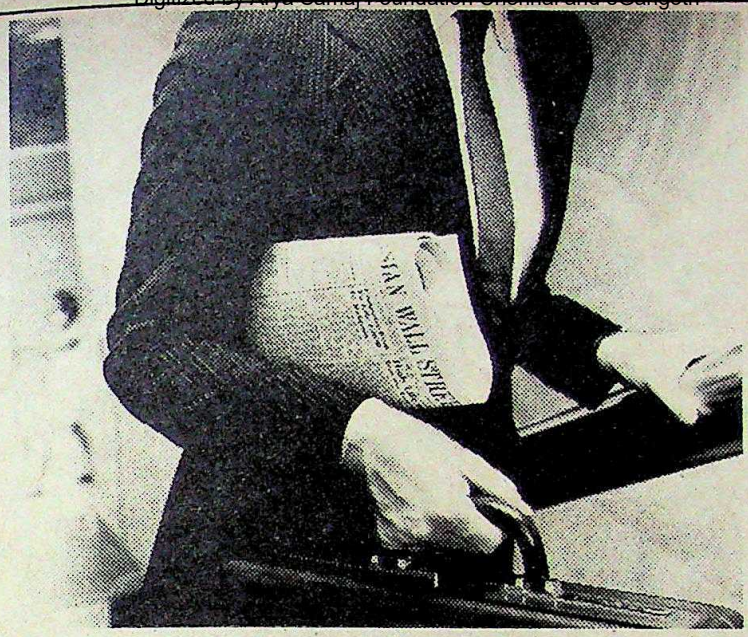

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NATIONAL BIO-GAS PROJECT

Raising a Stink

FIVE YEARS ago, the Government launched the national bio-gas project as a solution to the rural energy crisis. The targets were grandiose, the budgets generous, and the hopes sky-high. A lot of dung has flowed into the more than 6 lakh bio-gas plants that have been set up in most of the states at a cost of Rs 270 crore. Last month, however, when the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India (CAG) released a review of the programme, it raised doubts as to who was really gassing: the bio-gas plants or the officials who are in charge of the project.

Test checks by the CAG in 16 states yielded shocking findings. In Madhya Pradesh, 35 per cent of the 7,847 plants studied were not functioning because of lack of dung. In Punjab's Bhatinda district, more than 40 per cent of the 653 plants installed were defective, and another 25 per cent were working only partially. The situation in most of the other states was no better.

The review—which has kicked up a storm in official circles—quoted a host of studies done by the states to buttress its main argument: that something was seriously wrong with the bio-gas programme. A survey done two years ago by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission, one of the nodal agencies for the project, found that more than 20 per cent of the 13,216 plants surveyed in Maharashtra, Bihar and Tamil Nadu were not working at all. Worse, the surveyors couldn't find 826 plants that existed on paper.

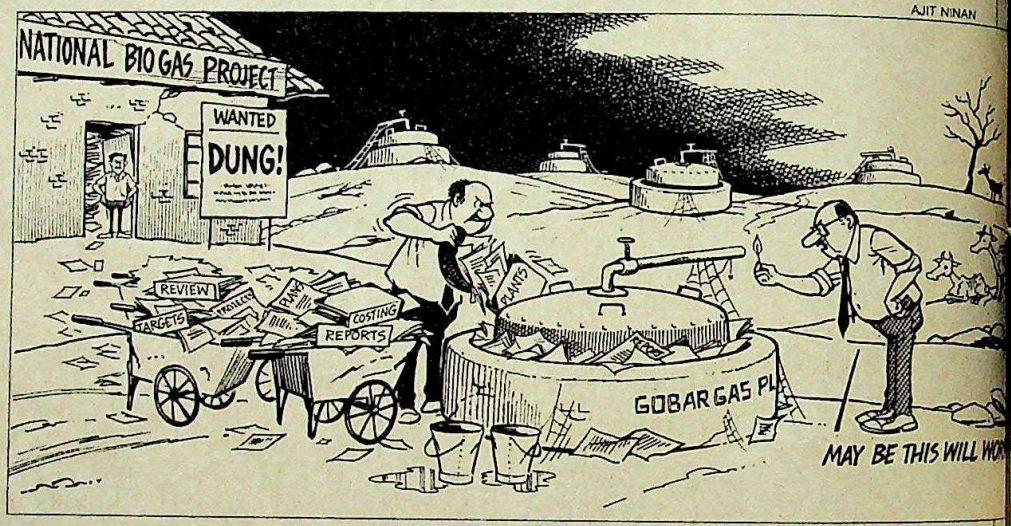
The most important reason for the plants not functioning was lack of dung. The Department of Non-Conventional Energy Sources (DNES), which has overall charge of the programme, stipulates that anyone who wants to set up a plant must have three or four head of cattle, which can provide 50 kg of dung daily—the average needed to run a plant. But this rule too had been flouted. In Rajasthan, for instance, of the 141 cases selected in Bikaner district, 79 did not own even one animal, while 33 had only one animal each.

DNES officials are now making frantic efforts to refute the damning findings. A series of meetings was convened with state representatives to check the veracity of the charges, and a visibly upset Maheshwar Dayal, secretary in the DNES, said: "On the contrary, the project is a tremendous success and we are shocked at the auditors' report." Dayal pointed out that five independent agencies, including the National Council for Applied Economic Research in New Delhi and the Operations Research Group in Vadodara, had reviewed the bio-gas programme around the same time and found 80 per cent of the plants working. Added a senior official: "We were expecting a pat on the back for our efforts. Instead, we got a kick. The audit report has really defamed us." Nevertheless, the CAG's report raises serious questions about a programme on which Rs 450 crore will be spent in the next four years, on top of the Rs 270 crore that has already been spent.

When the bio-gas project was conceived in the late 1970s, the planners had forecast a very energy-intensive future, basing their calculations on the country's cattle population of 237 million and the annual dung production of a mammoth 980 million tonnes: enough to run 55 million bio-gas plants round the year. The technology to harness this tremendous potential seemed simple: build a concrete tank, fill it with a mixture of dung and water in equal parts and cover it with an airtight slab. The slurry ferments and produces bio-gas, mainly methane, which can be piped straight into specially designed cooking stoves. Apart from producing cooking gas, the slurry can also be used as manure for fields.

When the initial momentum was slow, the Government in 1981 decided to launch the National Project on Bio-gas Development, offering a handsome subsidy of up to a third of the cost of a plant—which is around Rs 4,500. As a result of this, 6.47 lakh plants have sprung up in just five years, 1.9 lakh in the last year alone. Close to Rs 100 crore has already been given out as subsidy, and the project is, according to a DNES official, "ready to take off". The DNES plans to install 15 lakh plants by 1990.

AJIT NINAN



But the CAG report now puts a spanner in the works. While DNES officials argue that most of the flaws pointed out are "technical" and claim that replies received from many states will prove the auditors' findings wrong, even independent agencies reviewing the project have been finding flaws with the whole programme. In north India one of the agencies, which does not want to be quoted, found that during winters, the efficiency of many of the plants dropped to 30 per cent. Maintenance too was a serious problem. On top of everything else, it was turning out to be a rich farmers' project because only those owning three cattle or more were eligible for subsidies and the average cost of Rs 4,500 for setting up a plant effectively priced out the poor.

The bio-gas programme may survive the new spate of criticism. But unless corrective action is taken, the DNES is going to find it difficult to cover up the stink raised by the audit report.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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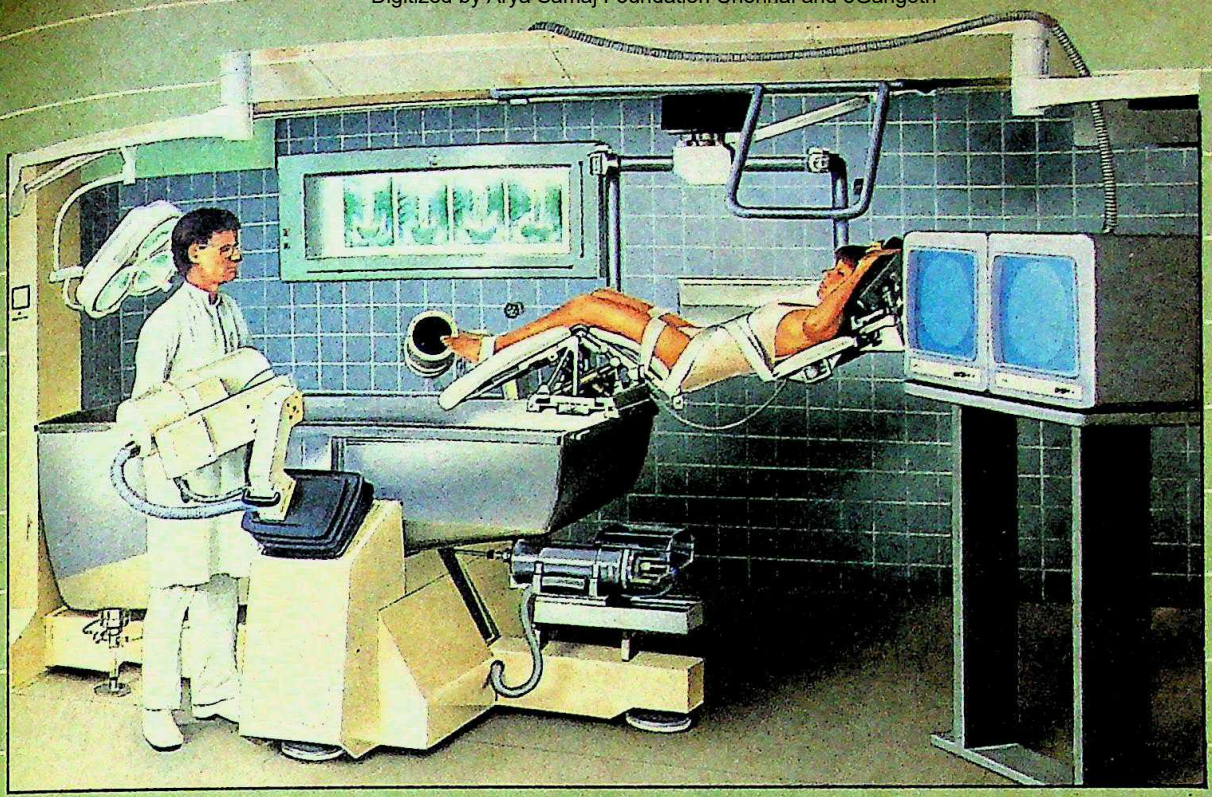

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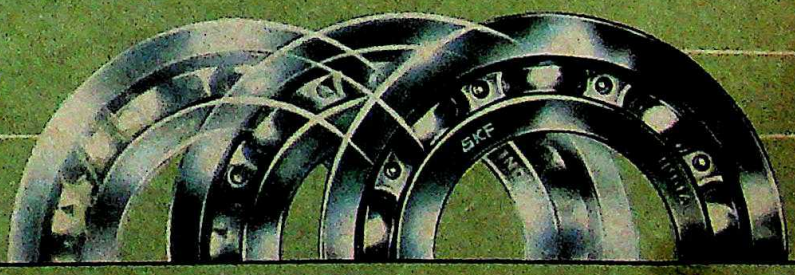

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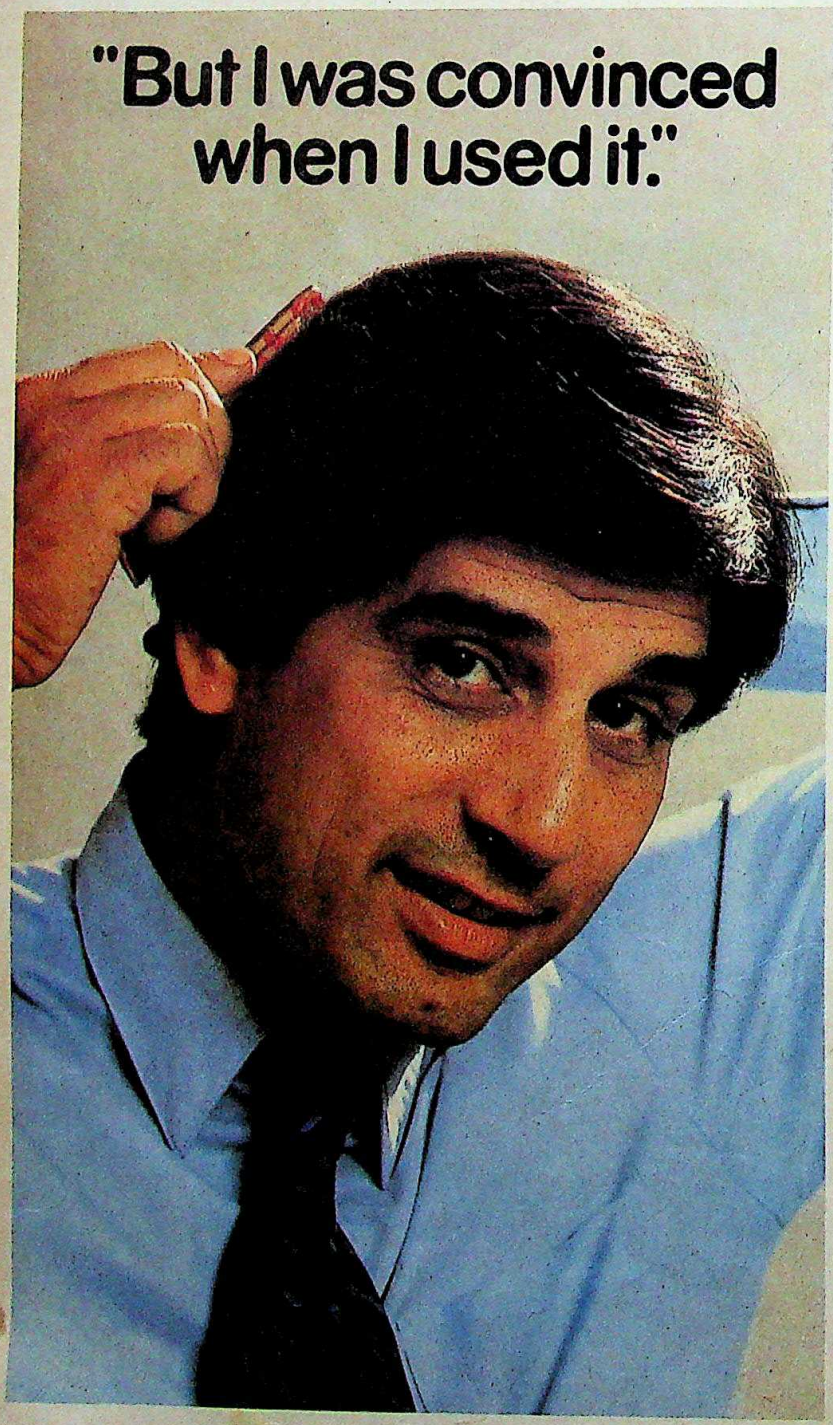

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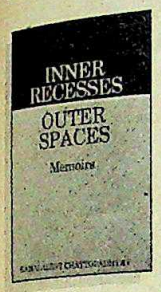


THE CAST alone is worth the entrance into the theatre which this book holds between its covers. Margaret Cousins teaching the young Kamaladevi the *Jana Gana Mana* on the piano, the golden eloquence of Sarojini Naidu, pre-dawn walks with Tagore in the beauty of Shantiniketan—set against the background of growing national consciousness and Gandhiji's call to nationhood.

Kamaladevi recalls the numbing sense of disappointment which Gandhi's call to break the innocuous salt tax evoked: "For a moment I felt a chill...is that all our great leader could devise?" Pandit Nehru's bewilderment and irritation, "unable to equate a national struggle with common salt". And the ultimate triumph of the old man's genius, now recorded history.

What is best told is Kamaladevi's stay in Sevagram with Gandhi and Kasturba. "It was a pleasant sight to see them together, an intimacy which is woven like a web, intricate yet simple." And Pandit Nehru's reaction when she tells him that "she was not important enough to add weight to the Congress Executive". Said the Congress president: "May I remind you of the popular allegory of the unostentatious squirrel contributing to the final success of an engineering feat that enabled Rama to cross over to Lanka."

To the post-Independence generation of Indians, these are polaroid images of historic events, flinty courage and untold sorrows—images which are compelling and authentic. They change frequently, yet evoke a response from the bedrock of our being because they are about us. Occasionally she inspires a rejoinder, as when she observes that modern Indian women show subtle undercurrents of prejudice against womanhood, "as though they regretted being born because of several natural functions that went with it". She sees them as isolating themselves from the mainstream of society. An argument which, however, is not true and is harsh on women who are making an attempt to change society from within.

She, however, loosens the silken cords of her persona when she talks frankly of her relationships with people: "I give myself entirely, whole-heartedly, not just bits and pieces of me." Her obvious devotion to the poet-musician Harindranath Chattopadhyay and their discovery of the new theatre is movingly described. But marriage to him could not retain that intoxicating passion for long.

She does not come out on the quality of communication between her and Verrier Elwin, the anthropologist who had married a tribal, but she notes on his death: "It left a big void in my heart...(he was) only one of his kind in my life." And of her meeting with physicist J.C. Bose she records that "he was vibrant with energy and yet soft with dreams lurking behind the eyes".

For Kamaladevi, nature is clothed in soft drapes and she lets the reader take a peep, as if through a filter. "So this is the true *Ananda!*," she exclaims, one evening in Ooty, as a rare blue envelopes the ghats. In Darjeeling the sunrise is awash with an enamel-tinged pink and she invites the reader to celebrate its perfection.

It is far easier to describe what Kamaladevi is not—not a cabinet minister, not a Congress president, not even one of the devotees upon whom Mahatma Gandhi leaned on his way to prayer meetings. By normal standards, such a person should be a saint, a discredited politician or dead. But this lady towers like an elegant colossus in India's showcase of freedom fighters and nation-builders. Her book is steeped in the importance she accords to the dignity of man, and is like the finger tracing the words, guiding the inner eye to spaces where fears of subordination were vanquished.

Today, Kamaladevi dwells in two spheres: the body entombed in one sphere, diminishing, hurting, while the heart and the mind are adrift in the other where the past nestles in the present, as the future burgeons forth from it.

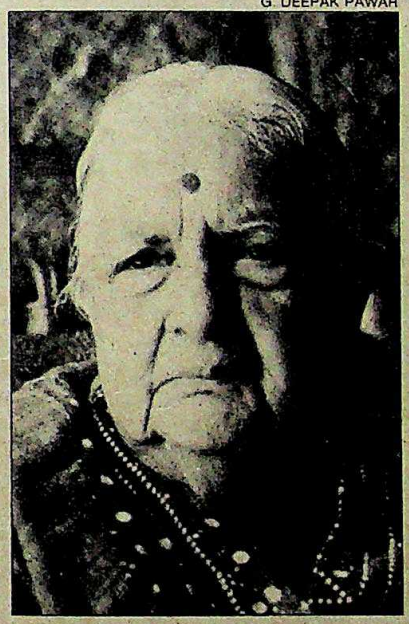
The chapters are steeped in vital essences which her mind has distilled—the impeccable priority for human dignity; her joy in the beauty of nature and its gentle embellishment by craftspeople; her detachment with a capacity to be still, full of a silence which is pregnant, not empty.

Here is a personality who has not been associated with any 'ism', but has compacted a philosophy of life, and a wisdom which Tagore sang about:

"Where roads are made I lose my way,
in the wide water, in the blue sky,
there is no line of a track,
The pathway is hidden by the bird's wings,
by the star-fires, by the flowers
Of the wayfaring seasons,
And I ask my heart if its blood
Carries the wisdom of the unseen way."

—NALINI SINGH

G. DEEPAK PAWAR



Extract

'Many of us chafed over what appeared to be a stalemate. Impatiently, we looked to Gandhiji for a sign, but none seemed visible. We had not yet grasped his uncanny capacity to gauge a situation accurately, and the ability to act at the proper psychological hour. Pandit Nehru remarked that he was not of ordinary coinage but made of a rare metal and could not be assessed by our normal weights and measures. Though we fretted we knew that when the hour came, he would strike and strike hard and one day it would be the final stroke.'

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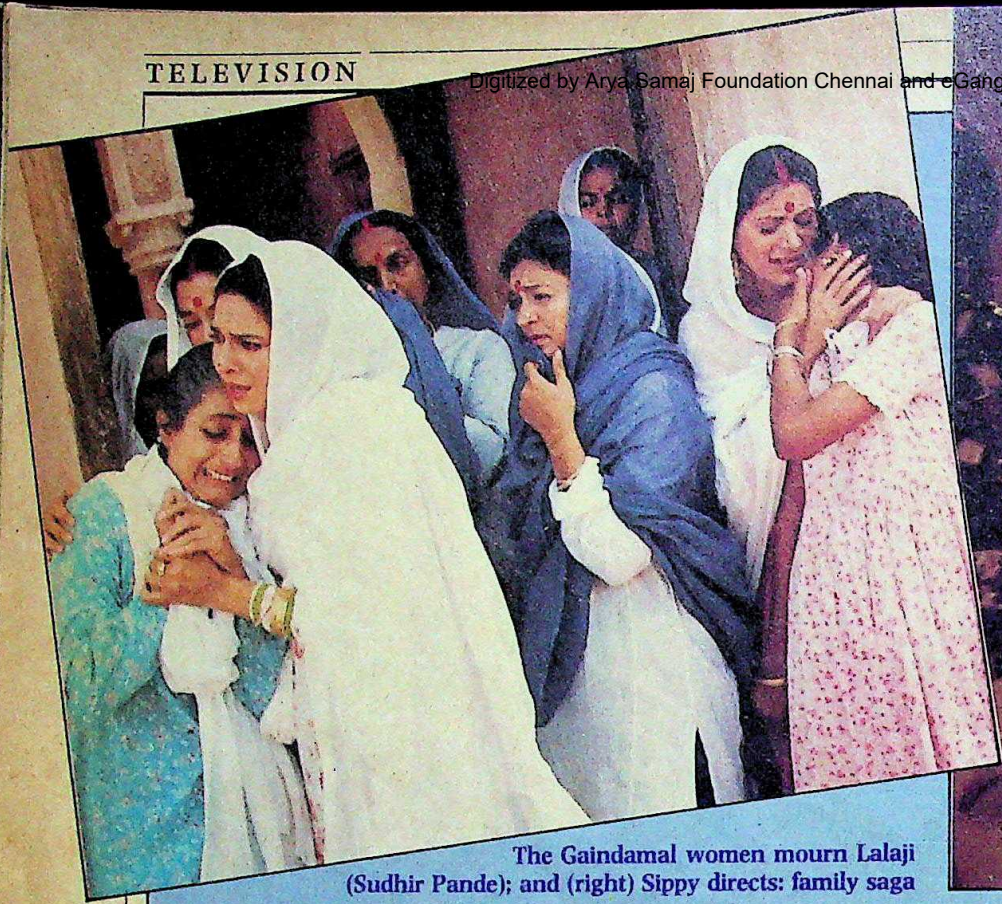

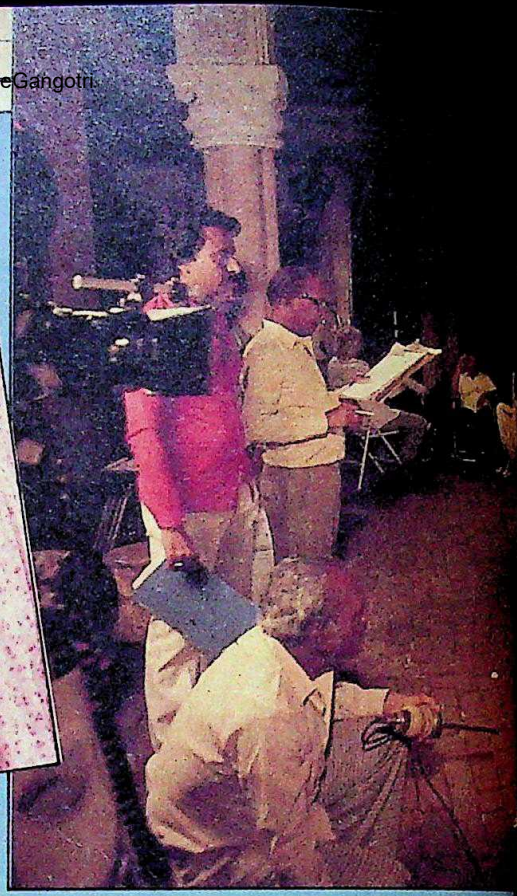

The Gaindamal women mourn Lalaji (Sudhir Pande); and (right) Sippy directs: family saga

BUNIYAAD

The New-wave Saga

FROM *Hum Log* to 'Punjabi log', television has come a long way. From tackiness to slice-of-life realism, from Dadaji's average present-day Indian family to Lalaji's pre-partition Punjab and the *Buniyaad* (foundation) of a new phase in Indian television.

Tuesday and Saturday nights are curfew time in Lahore: the streets of the city are empty as people rush home to see their favourite *Buniyaad*. Back home in India too, the TV series is rapidly moving up the popularity charts, and now ranks second among all TV serials, behind *Nukkad (see box)*.

Scripted by long-distance writer Manohar Shyam Joshi (157 episodes for *Hum Log*; 104 eventually for *Buniyaad*), it is genuine, good soap opera. The realism about the series gives it depth and authenticity, without making the viewer uncomfortable in his drawing-room. So the partition bloodbath is no more than a little rioting and looting. The horror and communal tension that Lalaji and his clan are confronted with are sanitised. It is the bowdlerized version we are presented: even realism must make bow to the demands of the medium.

What makes this rapidly unfolding saga of a Punjabi family—which begins in Lahore in 1915 and ends in Delhi in 1985—so special and engrossing is the attention to detail, the special quality to the language, the high quality of acting by people who were not stars before, the nostalgia it evokes across much of the country's northern belt. The sights and the sounds of olden day Lahore waft outward from the screen. *Buniyaad* takes the people of Punjab back to their roots. Says Aneeta Kanwar, whose amazing performance as Lajoji has made her the leading actress of the small screen: "My mother was so upset after the first episode, the partition one. She said it brought back terrible memories. But later she liked it; it was like going home twice a week, she told me."

The absence of stars in the serial only enhances its authenticity. Kanwar, despite a few sterling performances—as the bubbling young bride in *Adhaarshila*, the convincing tart in *Mandi*, and more recently, the older, tremulous other woman in *Janam*—was unknown and literally homeless until *Buniyaad* came along. "I moved from one friend's house to another...I could not even see any films. I was so poor." Alok Nath never became a household name despite his appearance in 13 serials, until he played Haveli Ram-Lajoji's lovable, fumbling Masterji. Asha Sachdev—Shano, the meanie in the stories—had been relegated to the dead-end of filmdom but now makes everybody think of their nasty sisters-in-law. Says Director Ramesh Sippy: "Unknown faces do help. If somebody who had played a swashbuckling pirate tried to play the role of Haveli Ram, it might not have been so effective."

This is not the instant television or video. It is real film. Sippy (*Sholay, Sagar*) is using 16 mm—his usual team of above 100 people in attendance—and not making any concessions for television. So the budgets are bigger than TV is used to: the sets alone have cost over Rs 10 lakhs already, and each episode about Rs 3 lakhs (both more than double the norm for the small screen). The extravagance may be justified: the producers plan to market *Buniyaad* abroad. Says Amit Khanna, the executive producer: "The large Hispanic markets of the United States look very promising." And so, before long, Lajoji

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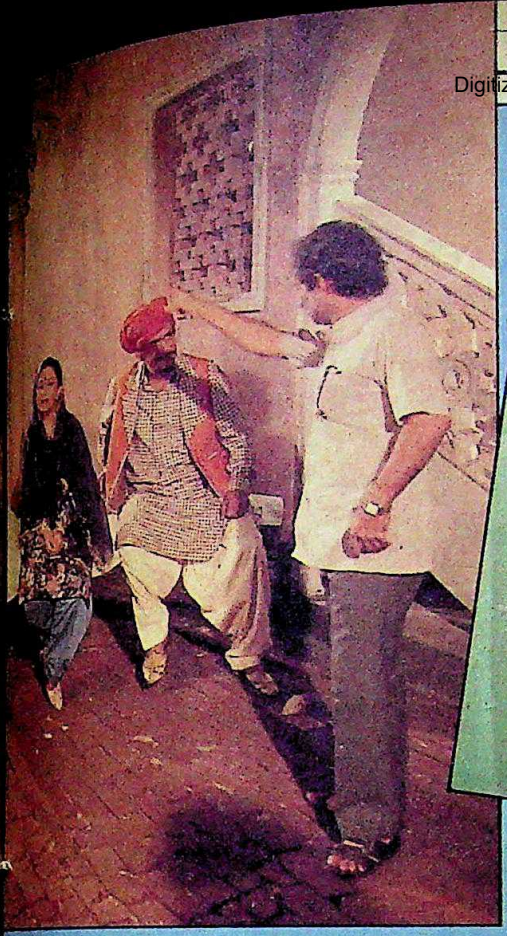

Haveli Ram (Alok Nath), Lajo (Aneeta Kanwar) and chaiji (Asha Sharma): house hold names

may be spouting impeccable Spanish to her Masterji.

More than the extravagance of the production, it is the detailed research into the period and the people of Lahore of that time and the story-line (many people recognise their grandparents) which is helping push *Buniyaad* up on the ratings list. The non-Punjabis, for whom words like *chaiji*, *bauji* and colourful *gaalis* for which Punjabis are known and grudgingly admired—*khasma khaniyeh*, *marjani*, *margai*—are quaint and almost endearing, have also begun to watch the *Buniyaad* serial. And the sets are absorbing. A large corner of Film City in Bombay has been transformed into a bit of Lahore by Sudhendu Roy.

The architecture of the place is pivotal to the story. For instance, the *mounty*—an arch of sorts between the stairs and the terrace—is indispensible to the story. And the props: the earthern pickle jars, the *chhajj*-makers, the *doridhandas* (spice-grinding pots), the solid mahogany hat racks and hangers with their criss-cross designs, and the very real door of the Atmaram house with its chained *kundi* and *aala*—the lamp-arch above the door—all add to the authenticity. Quaintest of all is the kitchen: the spankingly clean brass utensils arranged neatly in a row and the *chulha* which almost brings a remembrance of meals past. The art director's eagle eye has not missed even the tap in the courtyard: the green moss behind the tap has also been reproduced.

Finally, of course, it is the acting which has endeared *Buniyaad* to its audience. Much of it comes from the language and gestures of the Punjabi. Says Hindi writer Krishna Sobti, who provided most of the details: "Language is sensibility—that certain *Punjabipan*. We had to give the smell. We had to find the essence of the urban Punjabi: mannerism, speech, body language..." Says Kanwar: "Krishna Sobti helped me understand how much I was to flirt with Masterji. It was almost flirting, and yet it also had to be innocent."

RAMESH SIPPY, unshaven and lost in Lahore, says that he is telling the story of every and any family. "We are interested in the universality. After all, family relationships are the same anywhere...There are the same emotions of love, hate, jealousy. Children are born, people die. We are trying to be authentic; not only in the costumes and backdrop, but the way the characters speak and emote."

What is missing is the nitty-gritty of the communal tension of partition-time Lahore. It remains a backdrop to the story of Lalaji's family. But Sippy justifies this: "Partition was not our story. Its importance lies in the fact that it displaced people. The Hindu-Muslim hatred is not really our story...We have been asked to keep clear of this...But rather than portray a goody-goody world, I stayed away from it altogether."

History then can only be glimpsed out of the window. The focus is on the family; but what makes it more than a *sarson ka saga*, or Punjab's answer to *Dynasty* or *Dallas*, are the interesting historical references. Continuous references to events are made: Bhagat Singh's arrest, the Simon Commission, the Naujawan Bharat Sabha. Even the names of plays on at that time in Lahore have been dug up—*Bhola Shikar*, *Chandidas* and *Miss 1933*. (Dr Pushpesh Pant of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, provided the chronology.)

The period and location may be specific, but it is about every man and every woman. Haveli Ram is no hero: he is vulnerable; he does not know how to propose to Lajoji or how to become a revolutionary. These are people who were caught up in those times, and most of us can find them in our family-trees. Says Alok Nath: "My *nana* was a freedom fighter and in this role I have been inspired by him. When my mother saw me, she

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almost broke down."

But *Buniyaad* has until now captured only the northern heart; in the south the popularity ratings have not crossed 40 per cent, compared to as high as the 90 per cent range further north. But gradually, as the story shifts to Delhi, more parts of the country will be drawn into the dragnet. As they move down the genealogy of Lajoji and Masterji, the sons become more cosmopolitan. One of them joins the Government and lives in bureaucratic Lodhi Estate, the other becomes a businessman and lives in refugee-built Karol Bagh. Keeping up with the times and that window to the outside, there is even a grandson attracted to the Naxalite movement. So the story moves down the ladder of time. And *Buniyaad* takes root.

—MADHU JAIN in Bombay

NUKKAD

Corner Stone

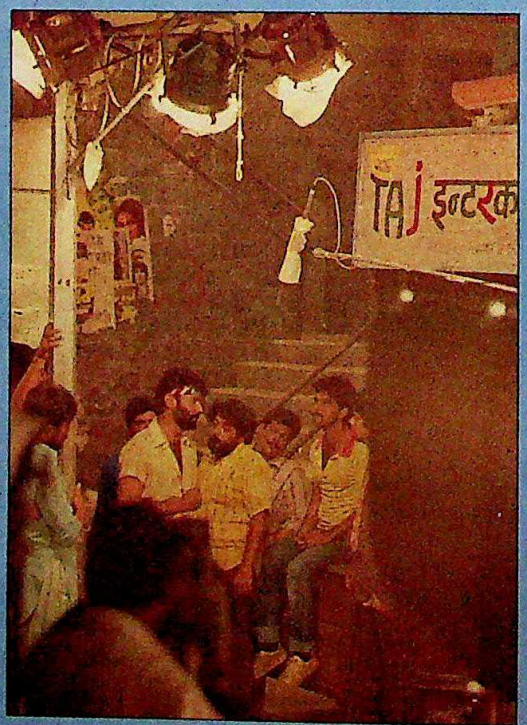
IF *BUNIYAAD* is the soap opera of the right, *Nukkad* has been christened the soap opera of the left. The little screen bristles with energy each week as the 27 characters crowd this street corner—albeit in search of a story-line. A beggar, tailor, barber, shopkeeper, drunkard, sweeper...the cast reads like a poor man's who's who. It is also "an exercise in collective nostalgia" for Saeed Akhtar Mirza, his brother Aziz, and Kundan Shah, who take turns to direct. Says Mirza: "This is not supposed to be a real world; there is a certain idealisation. There is a bit of *Awara*, *Shri 420*, *Do Bigha Zamin*. It is a lost world where words like solidarity, compassion meant something—these words are outdated today."

The sets of *Nukkad*—spread out over 600 square feet in Rajkamal Studios—certainly look like a slice-of-street corner-life at first view. Over Rs 1.25 lakh was spent in creating this *nukkad* with its Taj International Continental Hotel ('with no branches'), Raghunath's Electrical Shop, Janata Sari Shop and Guptaji's shop. The buildings are crumbling; the dirt and squalor show. But on second view, it does seem idealised. Where would one find a street corner which has the lower middle class, the middle class and the mezzanine middle class living cheek-by-jowl?

Mirza wanted to portray all three worlds: from the lower middle class of Bhendi Bazaar and Parel to the slightly upper middle class of Shivaji Park and Mahim. Says Jayant Bhinde, the art director who designed the sets after taking 1,300 pictures of street corners in Bombay: "I have spent enough time in Metro Bar, Cafe Cadel in Shivaji Park, Excelsior Restaurant in Mahim and at Lucky's in Bandra to know this world. These are all *nukkads:* you sit back and love and hate."

Nostalgia it might be for the directors, but the viewers have taken illusion for reality. *Nukkad* societies have come up in Bombay. Says Raja (Hyder Ali): "People come up to us in the streets and say: this is our Guru, this is our Khopdi." A Raghunath's Electrical Shop has sprung up in Bombay Central, a Khopdi Bar in Bandra, Karim's Hajjam Shop on Grant Road, and even a shop called Nukkad in Bandra. Says Guru (Dilip Dhawan), the series' soft-hearted toughie and its fulcrum to some extent: "People take this serial too seriously. Because of its repetitive nature, there is nothing to break that illusion."

Mirza (below); and the Nukkad crowd: streetside story



Photographs by NAMAS BHOJANI

Nukkad gives you the people of the streets, but these are not mean streets. The inhabitants of *Nukkad*, be they beggar, sweeper or drunkard, are lovable. Khopdi, the drunkard (Samir Kakkad, teetotaller in real life), is no less adorable than Winnie the Pooh. The beggar, Ghanshu (Suresh Bhagwat, who is however an architect in real life), is almost as lovable—you would not mind taking him home to mother, almost. And Hari (Pavan Malhotra) is a roadside Romeo few would slap.

It is this very cuteness that has made leftists the more vocal critics of the series. But Mirza says: "I am not dealing with Marxism. Yes, it is a left-wing programme. I am left-wing, but I did not want to be dogmatic. There is an expansiveness in Marxism which the theorists have lost. They want to make everything obscenely dour. They would have loved a *Lower Depths* kind of story."

Whatever the critics might say, *Nukkad* makes you turn and take a second look at the beggar and drunkard on the street: they could well be Khopdi or Ghanshu. The inhabitants of *Nukkad* are here to stay, but what will last long after the series is over is its exuberant street slang: *Bambaiyya*. The vernacular is already crossing the borders of the metropolis. And that is the ultimate achievement of this street corner named *Nukkad*. One day perhaps, even the Doordarshan newsreader might bat an eyelid and say: "Good evening, Reagan told Gorbachev to *chul phut* this morning."

—MADHU JAIN in Bombay

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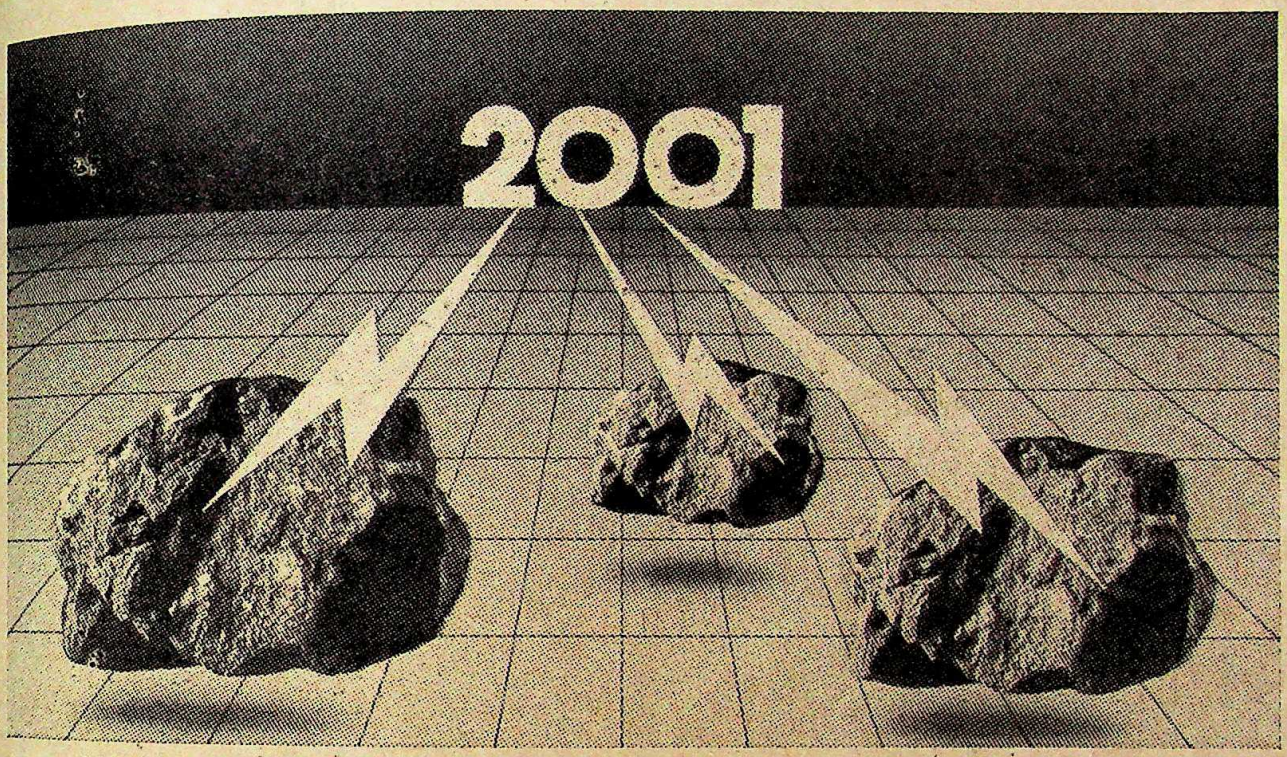

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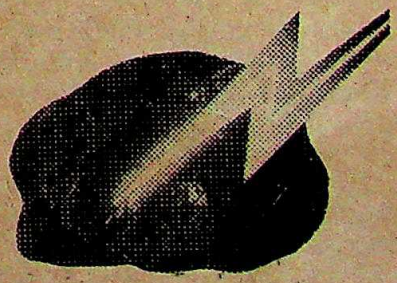

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ON WINGS OF FIRE

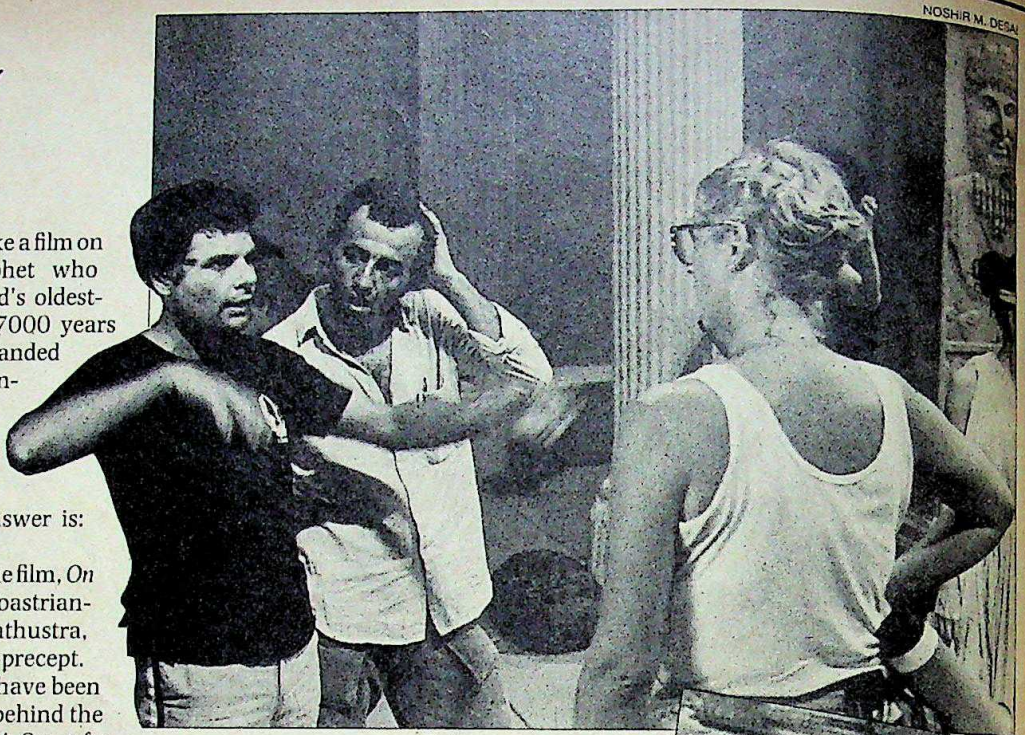
Unholy Furore

HOW DOES one make a film on an ancient prophet who founded the world's oldest-living faith some 6000-7000 years ago, whose teachings handed down in now-defunct languages have had myriad different interpretations, and whose present-day followers are a shrinking breed? The answer is: very, very carefully.

But the producers of the film, *On Wings of Fire*, based on Zoroastrianism and the Prophet Zarathustra, chose to disregard this precept. Caution should certainly have been the watchword for those behind the venture, originally titled *A Quest for Zarathustra*, which has the renowned Bombay born Parsi maestro Zubin Mehta as its pivotal figure. In their exuberance, however, Executive Producer-Director Cyrus H. Bharucha, co-producer Meherji Madan and others of the Persepolis Productions Inc., a company formed specifically for this project, seem to have burnt their fingers.

During the course of the production, eventually premiered at Bombay's Sterling Cinema last month, they proclaimed: "Just as Sir Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi* has touched us all on a worldwide scale, this film may evolve into a thought-provoking experience of far-reaching consequence." Instead, *On Wings of Fire* ruffled quite a few feathers and generated much heat among the orthodoxy within this minuscule community—said to number 1.4 lakh throughout the world, with about 1 lakh domiciled in India. Not only was the 90-minute presentation replete with misrepresentations and gross distortions, it was a dastardly attempt to convey an unhallowed portrayal of the religion and its prophet, the rarely militant conservatives fumed.

A scathing indictment appeared in the community's Gujarati-language newspapers, *Jame Jamshed* and *Mumbai Samachar*. In the English language community journal *Parsiana*, three high priests, Dr Hormazdyar Mirza, Dr Kaikhushroo Jamapasa and Dr Feroz Kotwal, asserted: "The film, if produced in the form and manner reported in the press, will be construed as a deliberate and malicious act intended to outrage religious beliefs by insulting the religion and beliefs of the Parsi community."



NOSHIR M. DESAI

Bharucha (far left) with cast on the sets; and (right) Mehta: fiery reaction

Behram Mistry, the fire-eating member of the Sestet, Council of Vigilant Parsis, moved the Bombay High Court for an injunction on the screening of the film. Both the petition and the subsequent appeal were dismissed, with eminent jurist Nani A. Palkhivala appearing on behalf of the respondents. Incidentally, Palkhivala also chairs the Oriental Heritage Trust, the sponsoring organisation and one of the fund raisers for the film. Some diehards decided to adopt the direct approach and picket the premiere but sharp monsoon showers dampened their zeal.

Probably the film-makers had nothing diabolical up their sleeves. But Bharucha and Mehta, both key persons in the production of the film, had at the outset affirmed that the project, as it progressed, would afford them an insight into their religion. Thus implying that their understanding of their faith would be manifest at the end, rather than at the beginning, of the production.

Most of the 'research' for this Rs 1.08 crore production shot mostly in Bombay and Navsari—an erstwhile citadel of the Parsis in Gujarat—was entrusted to Zoroastrian Studies (ZS), a religious studies institution directed by Khojestee Mistree who plays the role of a priest in the film. It is to Mistree that Zubin Mehta—who plays himself in the production, a westernised Parsi in search of his roots—poses questions about his faith and its implications. *On Wings of Fire* is a tacit projection of the interpretations espoused by Zarathustra, many of which are the subject of dispute.

For instance, in his eschatological dissertations in the film, British actor Nigel Terry, who portrays Zarathustra, is made to argue in the court of King Vistasp that death is evil. In reality, Zarathustra propounded that death was a necessary and unavoidable element for the evolution of human-kind. This concept is based on the underlying principle of reincarnation, a principle rejected by Zarathustra which expresses belief in resurrection instead, and the final day of judgement. Also, in the scene where

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Zarathustra confronts Ahriman, the supreme spirit of evil, the Prophet seems to loose his nerve and plaintively urges his nemesis to leave him alone. Actually, Zarathustra, who evolved this non-idolatrous and monotheistic faith in ancient Iran at the time of the Kayanian dynasty, circa 6350 BC, exhorts his adherents to stoically overcome the evil within and around them.

The film-makers have cast their version of Zarathustra in the role of a philosopher more than a divine being endowed with divine wisdom. Consequently, their Prophet comes across as a diffident tyro peddling a rather pedestrian thinking.

Emmy award winner William Humble's script had been vetted by Justice Jal Vimadalal, a retired judge of the Bombay High Court and a former trustee of the Bombay Parsi Panchayat. Vimadalal found the manuscript flawed and lacking in authenticity but refrained from publicly denouncing it so as not to stir a hornet's nest.

Bharucha's credentials are impressive; his awards include the Robert Flaherty award, the Golden Rose of Montreux, a double Emmy nomination, the Hugo award and the Humanitarian award. *On Wings of Fire* proved that Bharucha's forte lies in the production of television documentaries, for which he won these awards, and the film strikes the viewer as handled by a novice with chunks of it devoted to stills, charts and maps. The conclusion comprises depictions of famous modern day Parsis such as industrialist J.R.D. Tata, the late nuclear scientist Homi Bhabha, Field Marshal S.H.F.J. Manekshaw and Air Marshal (Retd) Aspi Engineer, and a Singapore based entrepreneur Dadi Bulsara, who contributed generously towards the venture.

It may be recalled that about half a century earlier, the noted film-maker and Avestha scholar, J.B.H. Wadia of Wadia Movietone, had to abandon his proposal of producing a film on Zarathustra in deference to an outcry within the community. Today, even before the dust has settled down on *On Wings of Fire*, Bulsara has made a public statement that he intends to make a grander, more expansive film on the Prophet starring, you guessed it, Charlton Heston. His "good friend" Francis Ford Coppola will direct this venture, Bulsara declared. By then, the community's quest for Zarathustra might have fluttered already into the flames.

—RATI DAWAR

RADIO ADVERTISING

Making Waves

THE AIR waves are alive with the sound-track of Telegu films. Radio listeners in Andhra Pradesh are turning in to a most innovative effort by Telugu film-makers to plug their latest releases, a 10-minute capsule on prime time featuring enticing excerpts from the sound track of the film and interviews with the stars.

Till last September, there were about 60 sponsored programmes a month on radio. By last month, the number had shot up to 200 on the Vividh Bharati channel in Hyderabad and between 60 and 120 in Vijayawada, and producers are using every hype in the book to entice listeners into the movie theatres. The programme on *Sirivenella*, features interviews with Suhasini and Moon Moon Sen, comments of the singer S.P. Balasubramaniam and the director K.V. Suhasini, is heard saying that "the film's shooting was an educative tour" while Moon Moon recalls that "right from my childhood my mother, emphasised the importance of working with good directors".

The other programmes are similarly a mix of conversations of film-goers, descriptions of selected sequences of the film, excerpts from the sound and song tracks and name-tags to glorify the film's personalities. N.T. Rama Rao is plugged as 'Nata Ratna'. The younger stars are given lurid descriptions like "young and angry hero" Bhanuchander and "action and karate king" Arjun. The stocky Balakrishna is known as "Nandamuri Andagadu" (the handsome man from Nandamuri village or family) and Telugu actress Vijayashanti is referred to as "Saheja Nati" (natural actress).

The radio rush actually began with *Lady Doctor* and *Ardha Ratri*, two films which were plugged on the air by a capsule devised by M.S. Rao, the one man firm called Taranga Advertisers, which today makes about 200 programmes a month. The films ran for over 100 days each solely because of the publicity through the radio programmes. The floodgates crashed open and the scramble for time slots began with radio advertising agencies pressurising All India Radio to increase their quota to one hour on peak listening time and for 90 minutes on weekends.

"Our problem is to introduce novelty so that listeners remain tuned in throughout the week. Listeners are tired of repetitive programmes", says Rao. And novelty is what the game is currently about. *Nagadevatha*, a children's film, has an introduction by a child and the conversation includes a remark by a young girl who says she took her friends to see the film to celebrate her coming first in an exam and that one of the group wound up seeing the film 12 times. Another movie, *Punyasthree*, was advertised along with the offer of a handkerchief for every woman going to see the film. Film critics and people from the target groups are asked to comment on the film and draw comparisons with earlier films by the same director.

S.V. ANJAN BABU

S. Rao: cashing in on the boom

The success of the programmes is debatable but the advertisers and film producers are convinced that they have hit the jackpot. Says S. Gopal, manager of Ramakrishna Motion Pictures: "At Rs 600 on weekdays and Rs 900 on holidays, radio advertising is cheap. We can go on the air between five and 10 times with 10-minute programmes for the same cost of hiring space for a banner or hoarding at a vantage point."

Meanwhile, the success of plugging films through sponsored programmes on radio is inspiring a wider band of advertisers. Lyricist V.S. Ramamurthy put together a programme aimed at selling cassettes and even writer M. V.Krishnamurthy has taken to the air waves to push his latest novel. Now, only the local politicians remain to get into the act. The Telugu Desam can then be plugged as *Telugu Dishum*.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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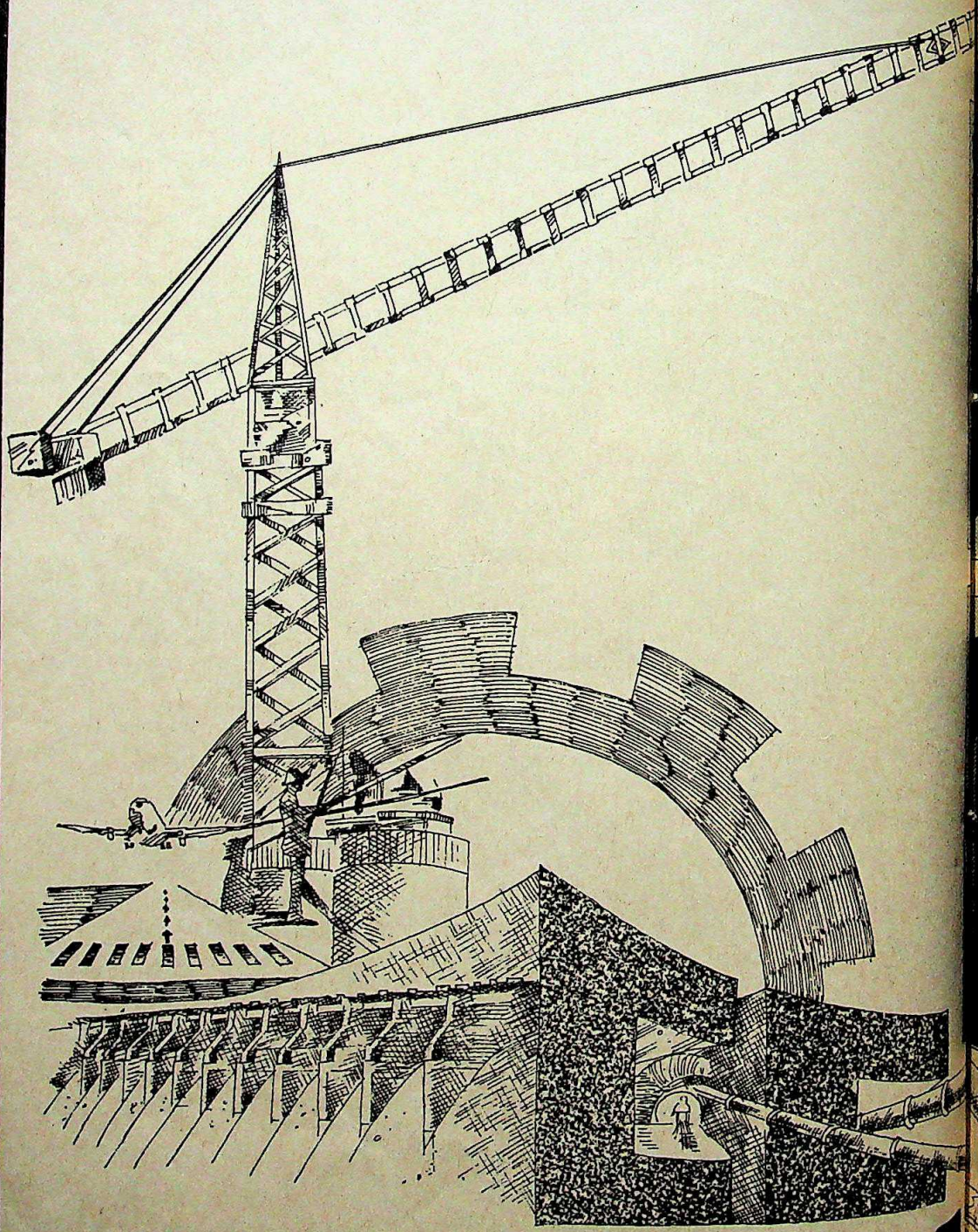

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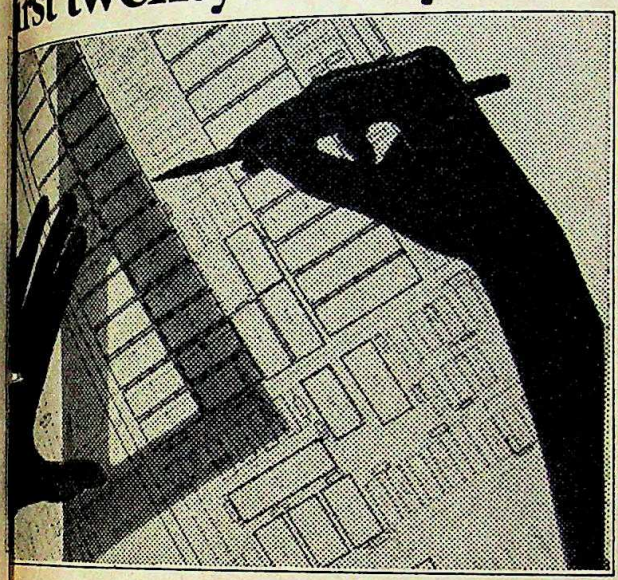

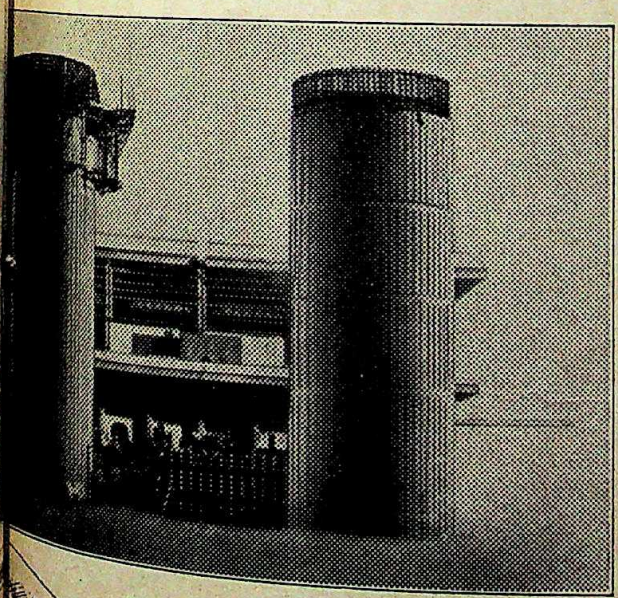

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GUJARAT

Planning for Fraud

WHEN the Gujarat Government announced last fortnight that the state had been selected by the Centre for a Rs 1-crore award for crossing its target for sterilisations, quite a few people in the state could barely suppress a chuckle. They had good reason to: they knew how exactly this had been achieved, having contributed in their own way to this success. Their names appeared in the family planning records as acceptors, but they had never really been operated upon. They had merely gone to a family planning centre, had a small incision made or a piece of adhesive tape stuck as testimony and come away richer by as much of the incentive money as they could wrest from the touts in between.

What began as a vote-earning gimmick that earned the Congress(I) Government its rightful share of notoriety, and then boiled down to a low-key and supposedly earnest effort, has now been reduced to a racket. Since the entire family planning programme hinges on cash incentives and yearly targets, almost everybody involved in it is a willing accomplice. And since the statistics keep rising, nobody complains.

The Gujarat Government, for instance, set itself a target of three lakh sterilisations last year and before the year was through, the state boasted of the proud figure of 3,33,452 sterilisations—an impressive achievement of 111.1 per cent. On paper, of course, the figures look impressive. What goes on behind them is quite another story.

Dhiraj Lal, 50, of Meghaninagar in Ahmedabad first got himself sterilised in 1974. In the 12 years since, he has repeated the experience ten times, each time under a different name. Only the first operation was "real"; the rest were all fake. At his last "operation" in March this year, at a family planning centre in Janatanagar, Lal earned Rs 80, though an acceptor is officially entitled to Rs 300. The rest, he says, was shared by the centre's officials and doctors. "After all," Lal reasons, "one cannot get the full amount for a fake operation."

For each sterilisation, the motivator who brings in the case officially gets Rs 40 and the doctor who performs the operation Rs 10. But the cut in fake cases is much higher and, according to an official in Kheda, a motivator can easily make a few thousand rupees between January and March, when officials are busy trying to beat deadlines and meet targets. This easy way to gain without pain has thrown up a whole lot of professionals who earn their entire livelihood from the family planning programme.

"When one earns only Rs 10 after a hard day's work, getting Rs 50 by giving a fake name and putting a thumb impression, is not bad."

MANGA MOHAN

"It is so easy. I just have to change my name every time."

BABU MAGAN

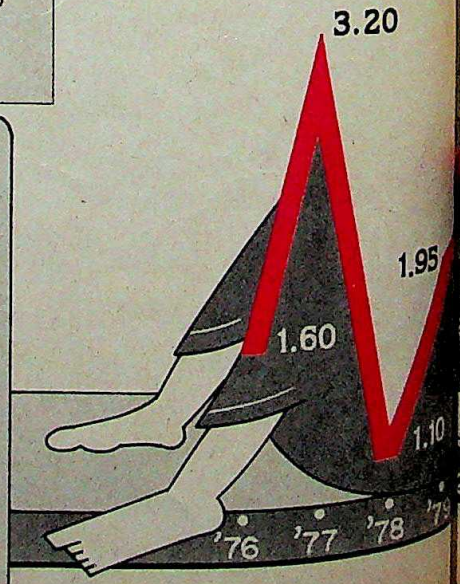
So lucrative is the business that another unscrupulous breed, the professional blood-donors, have decided to switch to this. They now hop from one centre to another, making money and losing not a drop of blood. According to Babubhai Mehta, a blood donation camp organiser, there are at least 300 people in Ahmedabad alone who have graduated from blood-donation to fak sterilisation. Babu Magan, 40, who ha three hungry mouths to feed, used to be blood-donor until he discovered th "pattiwala operation" last year. Sinc then, he has been to the family plannin centres four times, each time getting Rs 7 for his labours. "It is so easy," he says. just have to change my name everytime.

It is easy money and there are few wh would pass up a fast buck. Manga Mohan 40, a casual labourer who lives in th Jamalpur slum of Ahmedabad, has bee "sterilised" twice in a span of 45 days th year at the same centre in the Paldi area notorious for its fake sterilisations—un der the names of Manga Mohan an Manu Soma. "When one earns Rs 10 afte a hard day's work," he says, "getting R 50 just by giving a fake name and a thum impression is not bad."

The motivators prefer fake cases sin it is these that are not only easy to get b bring in more money as well, with acce tors agreeing for sums as low as Rs 35. Th acceptor, motivator and doctor all g their money, the charts keep rising, an everybody is happy. The picture could be rosier. "The idea," says Vad Fakirchand Parmar, a professional mo vator of Ahmedabad, "is not just to ma money but mainly to break targets an win bosses' favour."

A senior bureaucrat in Gandhinag agrees that the flaw lies in the targe "Setting unrealistic targets can be ve dangerous and counter-productive as encourages a lot of corruption an malpractices," he says. Not that the Go ernment is unaware of this, but figur matter more than facts. In fact, the Hea Department slogan last year was that th state must top the national chart.

The Government went about this applying a lot of pressure on its employe



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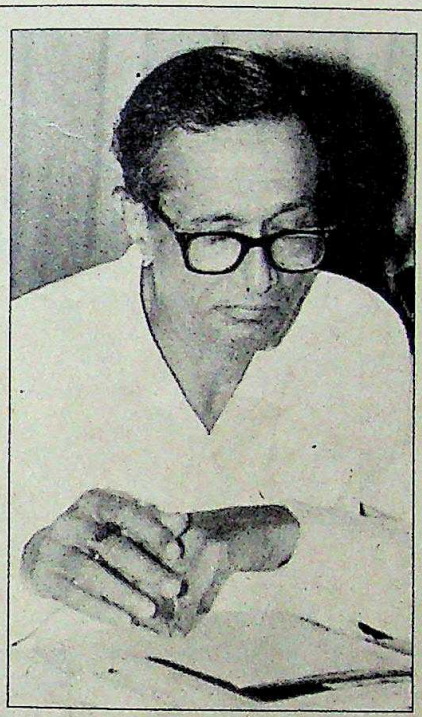
not just health workers, but primary schoolteachers, taluka and panchayat heads and collectors as well. The penalty for default could be anything from withholding salaries to summary dismissal. In Panchmahal district alone, about 200 community health volunteers paid with their jobs this year for not bringing in the stipulated 12 "cases". The fear of punishment corrupts even those who would have had little to do with the family planning programme. In Kanbaipura village of Anand taluka, a motivator brought a sterilised man, Bagha Waghri, for another operation—a common occurrence, except that the motivator happened to be the headmaster of a local school.

THE CARROT is as corrupting as the stick. A doctor in Nadiad town of Kheda district was shocked when a panchayat official came to him two months ago and suggested that he fill up the records to show that 300 villagers in the district had gone in for family planning—so that Kheda could get the colour TV set promised to districts with outstanding records. The doctor refused, but the official went ahead and swung the deal at another centre.

Earlier on, there used to be a semen test to see whether a man was eligible for sterilisation. But when motivators and laboratory technicians started selling their semen and test reports for as little as Rs 20 this method was discontinued. Also, doctors refused to sterilise anaemic cases, as well as those who had been sterilised earlier. But now all this has been thrown to the winds. With the exception of a few conscientious doctors and officials, almost everybody toes the line. Says Kantilal Parmar, a professional motivator in Ahmedabad: "Motivators work hand in glove with doctors to build up fake cases and share the booty."

The exact number of fake sterilisations is not available, nor for that matter are rough estimates. But health and family welfare officials privately admit large-scale compilation of fake cases this year. It is not surprising that the state which ranked 17th in October last year, came second barely a few months later. Janata Party MLA Manubhai Katodia had voiced fears of large-scale manipulation in sterilisations in the Assembly last year. Vigilance teams, both of the state and the Centre, sent to check out fake sterilisations confirmed their existence. But Directorate of Medical Health and Services and the state secretariat at Gandhinagar dubbed these reports "secret" and put them in cold storage.



"There has not been even a single fake sterilisation in Gujarat. If there was, I would have got complaints."

VALLABHBHAI PATEL
health minister

The Central vigilance team, during its tour of Surendranagar and Amreli districts, had found that 6.2 per cent of the so-called acceptors had given fictitious names and addresses. It also found that 215 women had removed the Intra Uterine Device (IUD) after pocketing the motivation money. Over 195 of those appearing on the list of sterilised men could not be found at the addresses given. Villagers who figured in the records and who were contacted, denied ever having been sterilised. In Kheda district, which achieved 165 per cent of its target with 44,707 sterilisations, it turned out that 15,567 of the operations had been performed in March alone. The Anand Municipal Hospital, which had not reached even 50 per cent of its target in February this year, had crossed 250 per cent by the end of March.

In spite of remarks by the various vigilance teams that the acceptors could not be traced because they had left fictitious names and addresses, Chief Minister Amarsinh Chaudhary dismissed the phenomenon outright, saying that he'd never heard of any malpractices in the family planning programme. State Health Minister Vallabhbhai Patel was more emphatic in his denial: "There has not been a single fake sterilisation in Gujarat. If there was, I would have got complaints."

Complaints there are but they mostly fall on deaf ears. A large number of complaints have already reached the Health and Family Welfare Department. Surat Collector Roy Choudhary, in fact, has categorically written to the Government that Kheda had cooked up a large number of fake cases so as to swell up its statistics and bag the cash prize. There were instances where even young boys were vasectomised at half-a-dozen places in the state. Among the cases "sterilised" at Sarsa, a taluka of Kheda, were a widow, a mentally retarded young boy and a eunuch. Not surprisingly, Sarsa achieved 215 per cent of its target.

The state's family planning programme involved an expenditure of almost Rs 31 crore last year. Almost all of it was funded by the Centre, with only Rs 1 crore coming from the state Government. The conclusion to the whole sordid drama came last fortnight when Haryana bagged the first prize of Rs 2.5 crore for its family planning record and, for all its pains, Gujarat had to be content with the second. State health and family welfare officials promptly dashed off a protest letter to the Centre, alleging fraud and malpractices by Haryana to inflate statistics. When last heard, the state Government was planning to send a team to Haryana to find things out for itself.

—RAMESH MENON

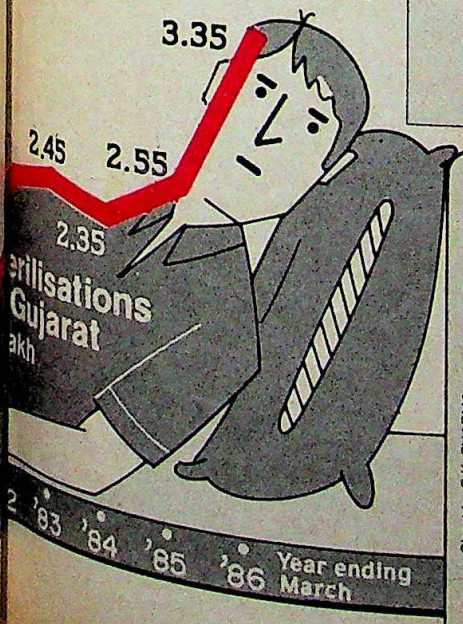


Chart by B.K. SHARMA

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SINGLES FELLOWSHIP

A Singular Success

WHENEVER I enter my house I feel like a stranger despite the fact that my four sons, their wives and four or five grandchildren live with me..." R.L. Anand's room, on the second floor of his Greater Kailash house in New Delhi, is an island of silent loneliness in the hustle-bustle of 15 people going about their lives. He eats breakfast alone in his room, goes to the rubber factory of which he is the joint managing director, returns late, goes straight to his room, eats his dinner there and tries to sleep. "I keep to my own room. You see after I became a widower, there was nobody with whom I could talk about my feelings, about my loneliness."

In October 1984, Anand could finally unburden himself. A group of 22 widowers and two widows met in Delhi to form the Singles Fellowship (India), affiliated to the Netherlands-based International Federation of Widows and Widowers. Like Anand, the others too had pulled up the drawbridges to the rest of the world.

At the first meeting itself, these drawbridges were lowered. "For once we could talk about our wives without feeling that we were boring people. Only those who have gone through the same thing will be able to understand," says D.B. Malik, a former Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd official who lost his wife in 1983.

Then began the Sunday meetings. The first Sunday of each month would find a group of about 40 men and women strolling through Lodi Gardens, sitting around tables in a restaurant nearby, helping each other out of the impasse of loneliness and despair. Today there are over 60 members, nine of them women. Nearly 300 people correspond with the society and more branches are in the offing.

Last fortnight, the society celebrated its annual day. It would have been like any other function: rambling speeches, distracted faces. But when Mrs Gujral began to dance, and in her dance to tell her story of loss and subsequent courage, there were very few dry eyes. It was collective catharsis.

The society is the brain-child of M.S. Rana, a retired bank official who had lost the will to live after his wife died in 1983. During a visit to the US, he stumbled across an organisation of widows and widowers and decided that he could cope with his grief by helping others out of theirs. On his return home in 1984, Rana went through newspaper obituaries and wrote 51 letters, asking the grieved to meet him. He received eight replies. He then advertised a meeting in a Delhi paper. And so it all began.

The society is still in its teething stages. But its plans are long-term—a home for widows, residential complexes, holiday resorts, a library. It has had its upheavals too. When the society newsletter published the addresses of its members, the women received marriage proposals. A subsequent newsletter stated that the society was not a marriage bureau.

Not that all the members are averse to the idea of marrying again. Mrs Tapasri, 40, who works for All India Radio, would not "hesitate to marry" if she found a suitable person. But she is quite content with "the emotional security" the society offers. "Had I come across such a society five years ago, I would have got over my grief much more quickly... when I see others like me I have the feeling that I am not alone."

Mrs Gujral, who lost her husband in 1977, believes that life is much more difficult for a widow. "After a few months a man can re-marry. People say that a man cannot run a house alone. He needs a woman. When a widow wants to re-marry, people say that she can't live without a man. Then it is only a question of sex. Why is that so?"

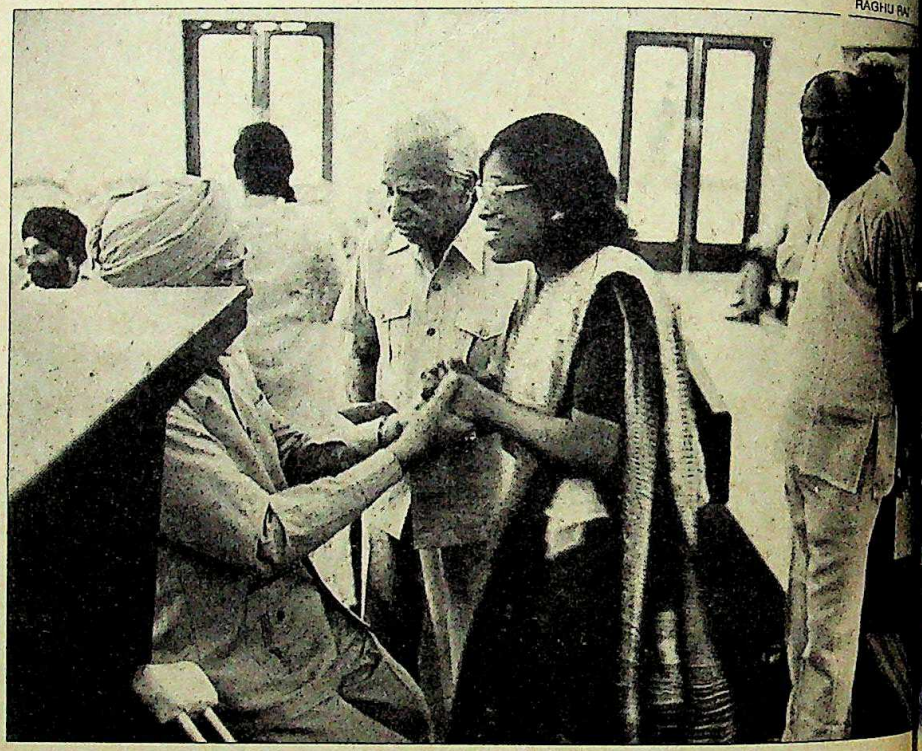
But in the case of men, generally their wives had served as bridges of understanding to the children. Says a businessman: "I have become a silent spectator at the dinner table. I cannot share the jokes, the conversation. I have now decided to live alone because this house has become more like a hotel."

And so, the members turn to one another. Strangely enough, two brothers, both widowers, had never really spoken to each other about their personal feelings. But after the society was founded, words began to fill that gap of silence between them.

Most of the society members have begun to put back pieces of their lives. And though the setting sun each evening casts the biggest shadow over their lives, the Singles club helps fight the never ending battle with loneliness.

—MADHU JAIN

RAGHU RAI



Tapasri helps Rana at society meeting

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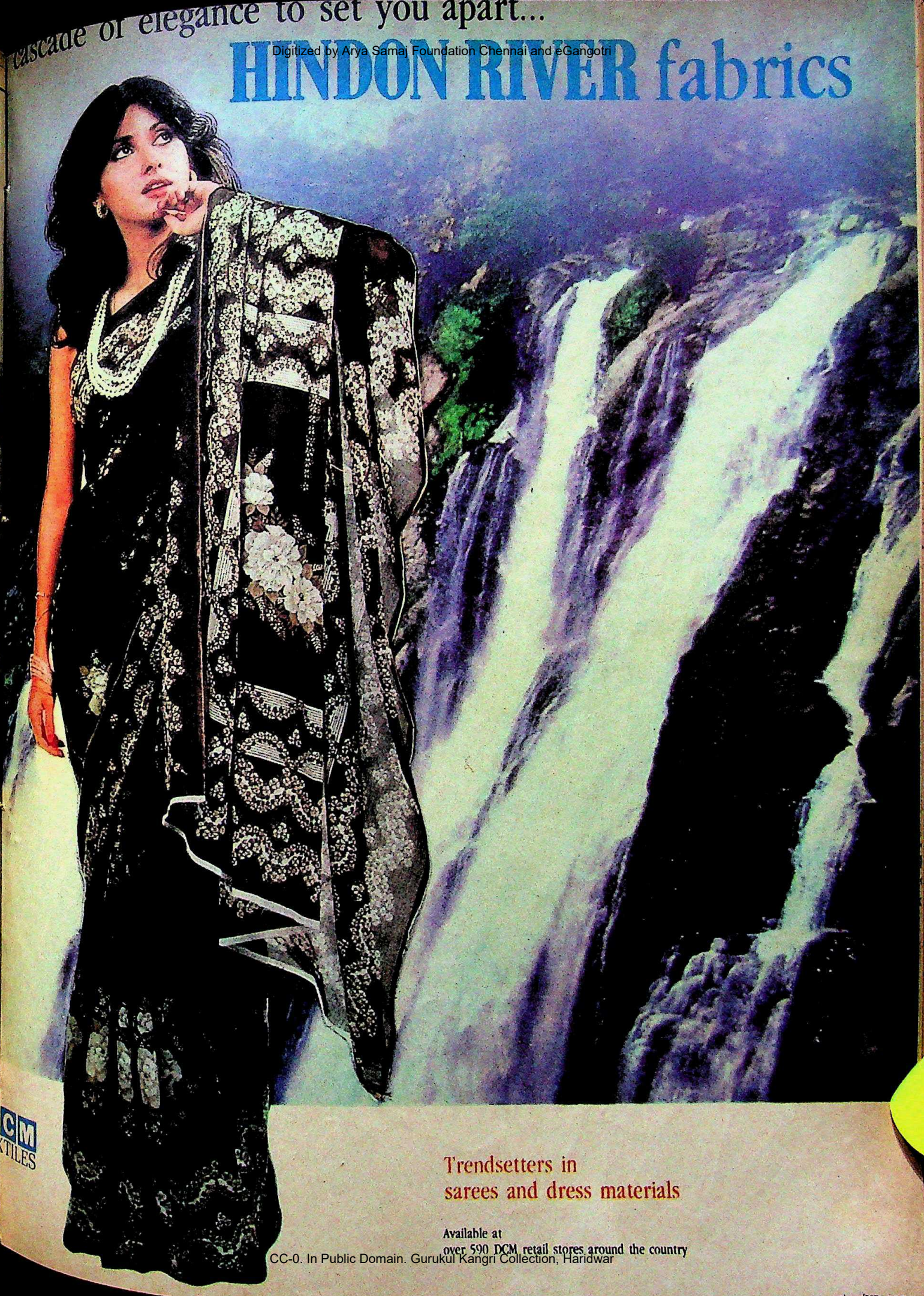

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Sawhney: burger king

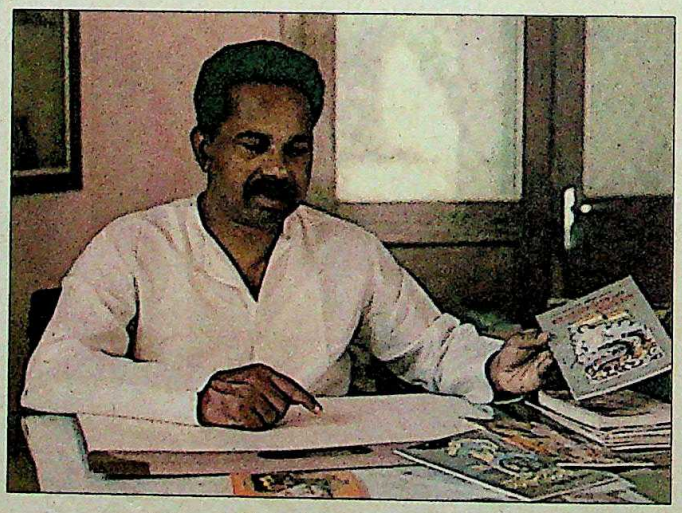
Prabhakar with Deep: new role

◆ One look at that monstrous burger and **Nippy Sawhney**, 21, thought he'd bitten off more than he could chew. But he refused to turn chicken and with a bit of egging on from his friends, demolished that saucy giant of chicken mince, buns, mayonnaise and french fries—all 2.5 kilos of it, 4 inches thick and 11 inches across—in half an hour clean. Thus did Sawhney become the country's official Burger King in a contest organised by a five-star hotel in Delhi as the final round of its burger festival, which coincided with the World Cup Soccer Final and had dishy fare ranging from Huge Hugo Sanchez to Vege Platini. With 12 rivals to contend with, the chomping champ went at his Chic Maradona forks and knives. "I love food and it was a ball," confessed the "gourmet-cum-glutton", who wanted to open a fast-food joint until he became a builder.

◆ When even toppling and tapes failed to do the trick, **Moodabidri Veerappa Moily**, 45, gave up and resigned himself to the opposition benches of Karnataka Assembly. But rather than sit at home and issue vitriolic press statements like his colleagues, Moily found a better way to put his time, and pen, to use. He went tape-to-type. The result was a whirlwind, *Suligali* in Kannada, his first novel which went on to make a successful film. "I always wanted to fight for the people and this is why I began to write," said the leader, who will shortly release his second book, *Sagara Deepa* (light of the ocean). Moily—who is still facing a probe for the tape tangle—is now working on what he calls "an innovative novel combining epic, history and contemporary fiction". But not all of Moily is prose: last year he released his book of poems, *Mathe Nadeyali Samara* (let the war start again). And for once, the enemy was not a chief minister called Ramakrishna Hegde.

◆ "Enough is enough!" exclaimed **Sharon Prabhakar**, and slammed the door shut on her *Evita* wardrobe. Three years of anything—even the star-spangled saint-seductress of Argentina—would drive anyone into the wings. "I'm tired of singing," said the weary songstress, fed up to the teeth on her own falsetto, and promptly released her latest disc, *Shararat*. Then she breezed in with *Titali*, her first Hindi play. Dispelling the butterflies, and all memories of *Kahan Kahan Se Guzar Gaya*—her first foray, and fiasco, in films—she decided to give it another try. Prabhakar is now playing a double role opposite her *Titali* number Akaash Deep in K.A. Abbas' *Ek Aadmi*. And hoping that it doesn't go the labyrinthine way of *Kahan Kahan Se Guzar Gaya*.

Moily: tape-to-type



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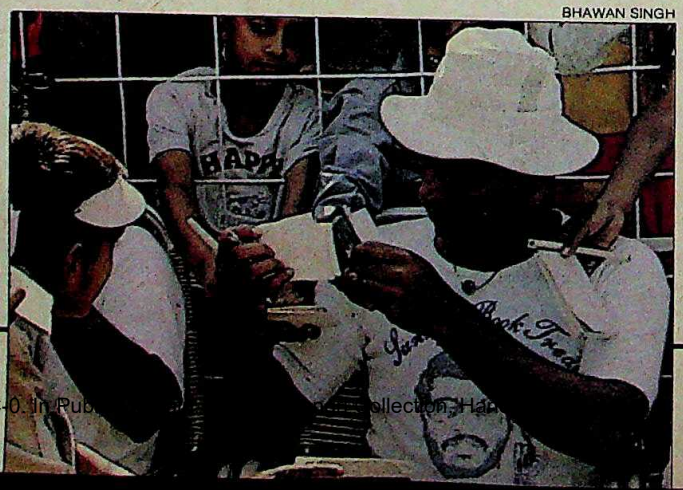

Gavaskar: prime time

◆ It is quite literally, Sunil **Gavaskar's** biggest catch, the 101st to date. And with this the cricketer is now in league with such all-time greats as Satyajit Ray. The little master will soon follow the big master into the idiot-box with *Sunil Gavaskar Presents: Great Matches I Have Seen*—a 13-part nostalgia trip for the *desi* Don. The serial has just been okayed and producer Sumed Sharma of the Professional Management Group says: "It was Sunil's desire and Doordarshan has given him a free hand." With a director like Saeed Akhtar Mirza, who's *Nukkad* has TV audiences bowled over, and with Gavaskar running the show, prime-time success should be just round the gulley.

—Compiled by MOHAMMED ASLAM

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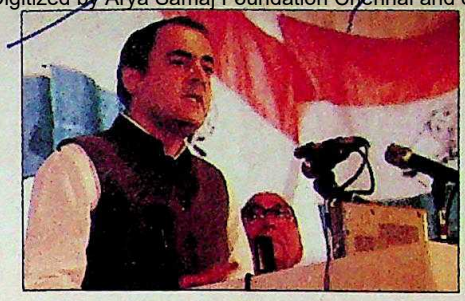
IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

Reliance Under Pressure

Dhirubhai Ambani's Reliance empire is under siege from a variety of invaders. With the Government also cracking the whip and Reliance shares taking a beating, the corporate juggernaut's future seemed peppered with question marks.

COVER STORY 88



The Battle Within

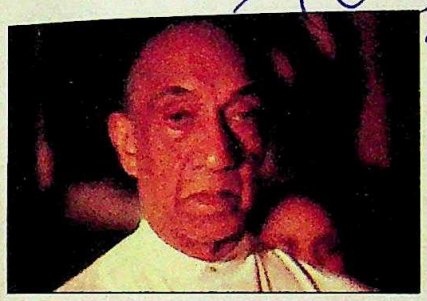
The ruling party is in ferment. By last fortnight, half of the Congress (I) chief ministers were facing a revolt from dissidents. In Delhi, senior party functionaries were busy undermining each other and party President Rajiv Gandhi seemed unable to stem the rot.

SPECIAL REPORT 25

On a Short Fuse

Frightening visions of November 1984 were resurrected last fortnight as Sikh terrorists gunned down a bus-load of passengers in Punjab and Delhi mobs retaliated against Sikh homes and establishments, confirming that the crisis rests on a hair-trigger.

CURRENT EVENTS 30



Giving Peace a Chance

The light at the end of the tunnel of the Sri Lankan ethnic crisis seemed finally visible last fortnight. At the 10-day talks between Sri Lanka President J.R.Jayewardene and TULF leaders, a broad range of agreement on the key issues had reportedly emerged.

NEIGHBOURS 68

An Environmental Holocaust

Faced with the ecological havoc that has been wrought in the last decade by indiscriminate deforestation, India is engaged in a desperate race against time. At stake is the very survival of the country's agricultural livelihood.

SPECIAL FEATURE 77

Coming Home

After 30 years in the west, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi has decided to return to his roots. He has shifted his world headquarters to Delhi and is fast entrenching himself in the rest of the country, setting up ashrams, meditation centres and schools.

RELIGION 134

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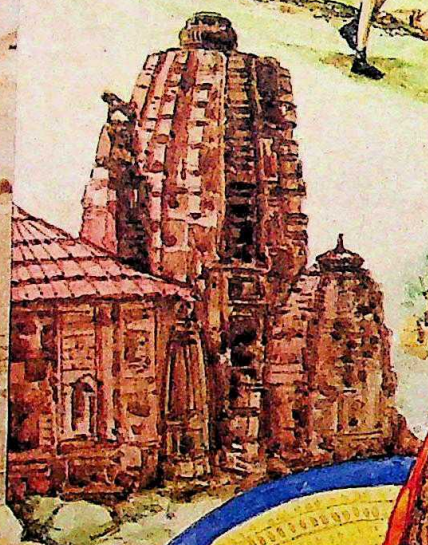
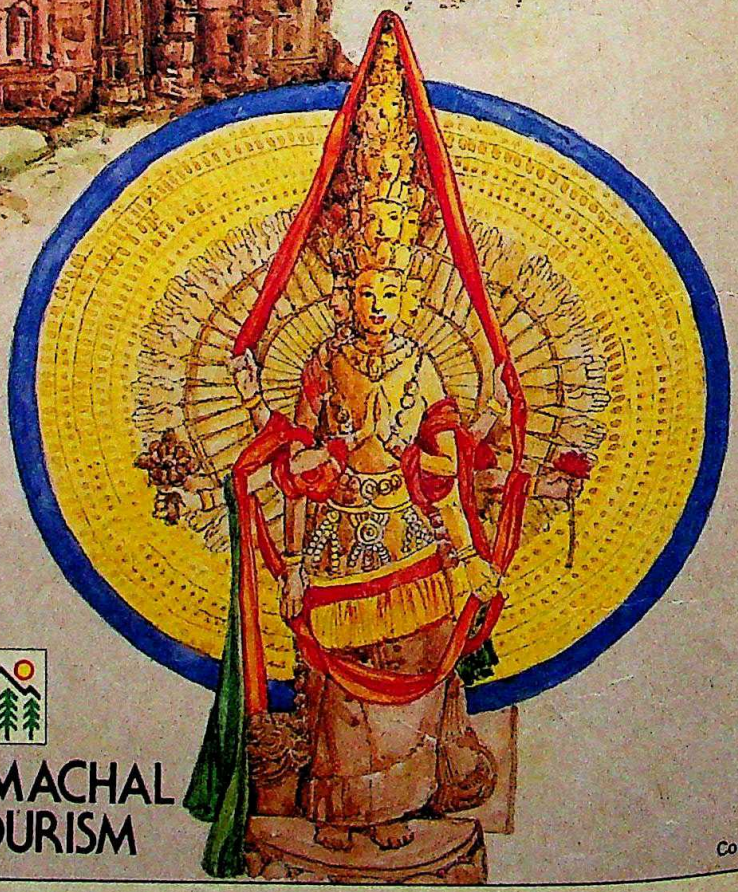
LAHAUL

NOW IS THE TIME TO VISIT A WORLD OUT OF THIS WORLD





A World untouched by the tribulations of time.

Far from the crowds and cares... rich in lush dales and craggy cliffs.. narrow gorges and rushing streams. An absolute must is a visit to Lahaul Valley, a wild and unspoilt area of great beauty, with foaming waterfalls and little villages perched on the rocky slopes. While on way you cross the Rohtang Pass (13,050 ft.) and see some of the most glorious, unspoilt scenery.

Lahaul—a world apart. Where the tribal life goes on in splendid desolation.

How to Reach: Reach Kulu by air/road from Delhi or Chandigarh. Then take a bus upto Keylong. Reach Simla by road or train then take bus to Kinnaur.

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HIMACHAL TOURISM

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OPINIONS TODAY

Your chance to speak out

पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय
हरिद्वार

Who's done the most to put Indian sports on the international map? You decide.

Is it Kapil Dev? Or should that distinction go to Vijay Amritraj? What about the achievements of Sunil Gavaskar, Michael Ferriera, Prakash Padukone, Ravi Shastri, Geet Sethi, P.T. Usha?

In this, the third Opinions Today poll, you can decide.

The above names can be found in the entry form overleaf.

Your task is to rank them on a table from 1 to 8.

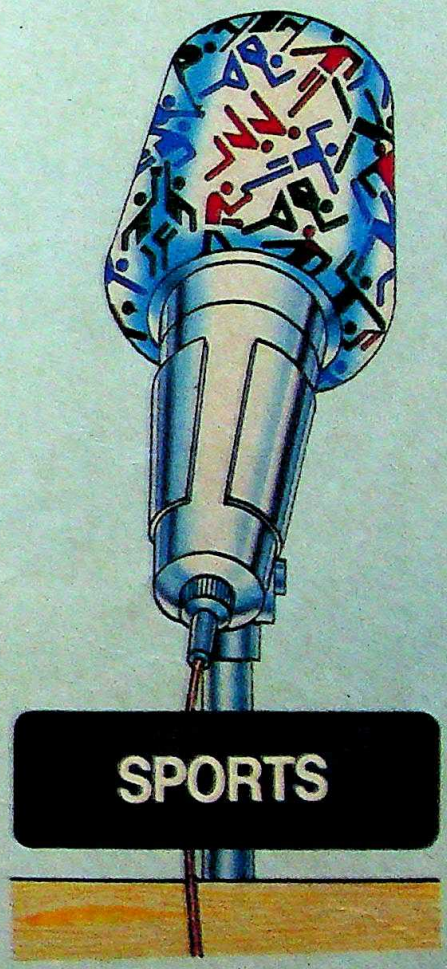
Since this is a ranking, and not a grading system, no two persons can have the same rank.

Explain your first choice.

This is the next step. Thus, if person 'X' is your No. 1 choice, then in not more than 50 words you have to tell us why.

The entries will be evaluated by computer to determine the national average. An entry that ties in closely with the average will make you a contender for the awards associated with this series of polls.

These eight personalities have all made contributions to the current resurgence of Indian sports. Now, you have the chance to speak out on their merits.



The response to the first two polls has been overwhelming. The remaining polls—on the top achievers in business and culture, and on the government's major initiatives, will appear in the next three issues of INDIA TODAY.

Opinions Today is your chance to speak out. Make sure you do.

The awards.

For this poll.

First : Weston colour TV & VCR, courtesy WESTON ELECTRONIKS.

Second : Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Third : Weston 2-in-1, courtesy WESTON ELECTRONIKS.

Consolation : Annual subscriptions to INDIA TODAY.

Across six polls.

First : Return First Class air tickets for two to Los Angeles, courtesy PAN AM.

Second : A specially commissioned painting (30" x 40") by M.F. HUSAIN.

Third : PC Junior computer with printer, courtesy EIKO COMPUTERS.

Consolation : The World and its People—a twenty-seven volume set.

Turn overleaf to express your opinion.

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OPINIONS TODAY

Your chance to speak out

Rules and regulations.

Since the entry forms will be processed by computer, it is important that you follow these procedures carefully. Incorrect or incomplete entries will be rendered invalid.

1. You can voice your opinion only through a valid entry form, such as the one below.
2. In case you have difficulty in obtaining the entry form, please mail a stamped, self-addressed envelope marked 'Opinions Today' to us at INDIA TODAY, 316 Competent House, F-14 Connaught Place, New Delhi-110 001.
3. An individual can send in only one entry form per poll.
4. The entries will be evaluated by means of a software package, specially designed by Tata Consultancy Services. The package will be run on a Burroughs B 6900 mainframe.
5. Important : while filling in this entry form, please ensure that you leave one square blank between the various units in your name and address.
6. All the eight options in each poll have to be ranked from 1 to 8. No two options can have the same ranking.
7. The name should start with the family name, followed by the first name.
8. Also ensure that you enter your first two or three initials in the space provided.
9. The date of birth should start with the date (two digits), followed by the month (two digits) and the year (again two digits). For example, if your date of birth is February 9, 1956, it should be entered as 090256.
10. Please tick the appropriate square, for other details such as sex, education, occupation.
11. In your address, please also give the pin-code number.
12. Please ensure that you fill in your particulars consistently across all subsequent polls.
13. In every poll you will have to explain the reasons, in not more than 50 words, for your No. 1 ranking. This is the 'tie-breaker'. Be sure to write the tie-breaker. You can miss out on the big awards if you don't. However, if your entry ties in with the national average, you will still be entitled to receive consolation prizes.
14. The entries will be evaluated by a panel of judges.
15. The results will be published in the forthcoming issues of India Today. The winners will also be notified separately by post.
16. Employees (and their relatives) of Living Media India Pvt. Ltd., its associate companies, Tata Consultancy Services, and Interface Communications Pvt. Ltd., are not eligible to participate in this opinion poll.
17. India Today will not be responsible for any postal delays.
18. The decision of the judges will be final and binding and no further correspondence will be entertained on the decisions.
19. ALL ENTRIES MUST REACH LIVING MEDIA INDIA PVT. LTD., P.O. BOX NO. 29, N.D.H.O. NEW DELHI-110 001, BY THE LAST DATE INDICATED ON THE ENTRY FORM.

ENTRY FORM : 3

Please fill in BLOCK CAPITALS

NAME : Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____ Surname _____ First Name

DATE OF BIRTH: D D M M Y Y SEX : M [1] F [2] INITIALS : _____

EDUCATION : Professional [1] Post-graduate [2] Graduate [3] Matriculate [4] Others [5]

OCCUPATION : Service [1] Business [2] Housewife [3] Student [4] Others [5]

ADDRESS : _____

Have you participated in any previous Opinions Today poll? Yes [1] No [2]

CITY _____ Pin-code _____

OPTION NO.	PERSONALITIES	RANKING
1.	VIJAY AMRITRAJ	
2.	KAPIL DEV	
3.	MICHAEL FERRIERA	
4.	SUNIL GAVASKAR	
5.	PRAKASH PADUKONE	
6.	RAVI SHASTRI	
7.	GEET SETHI	
8.	P.T. USHA	

Please give reasons for your No. 1 ranking : _____

Signature of participant : _____

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Your opinion must reach us by 21.8.1986

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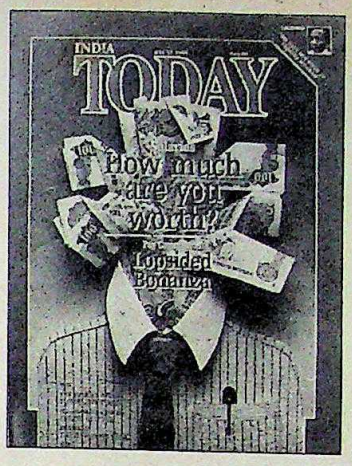

ILLUSORY BENEFITS

There was much hue and cry in the Government and administrative circles that a better-paid employee would shun corrupt practices ("Salaries: How much are you worth?", July 31).

Will the recent recommendations of the Pay Commission make the files move in government offices without greasing the palms of the employees? Will the hike remove bureaucratic red-tapism? Will the hike induce improvement in public services? The answer probably is in the negative. As such, is the hike not a premia for inefficiency and corruption?

Lucknow **NARENDRA M. PANT**

■ The Pay Commission report has some inherent defects. There are few fringe benefits for the lower middle class. The Government has sought to satisfy them through salary raises. As they shall have to pay more tax, the real raise shall be only a bare minimum. The Commission has a pro-rich manner of fixing pay-scales. It should reconsider its adulterated policy.

New Delhi **ARCHAN MEHTA**

■ In the Fourth Pay Commission's report, one minor consideration has become obscured—what return to society is made by these legions who are employed at some public cost? The cost of Rs 1,000-3,500 crore per annum to provide for the bonanza is only small change and no great burden, if only we could get a competent and effective performance from the beneficiaries.

Bangalore **G.S. CHANDY**

ADULATION GALORE

Your cover story on Kapil Dev ("India's Greatest All-Rounder", July 15) was indeed timely. Even allowing for Gavaskar's tremendous career as a batsman, we must admit that India has never produced such a "total" cricketer as Kapil before. India's exploits in the arena of one-day cricket owe a lot to this prodigy from Haryana.

Calcutta **SANKAR KUMAR BANERJI**

■ I felt sorry for Kapil Dev when he said that the Gavaskar chapter in his book was included without his permission, obviously expecting his fans to believe that Vinay Verma, his co-author, wrote the book without recording any input from Kapil. Moreover, Kapil also didn't get the time to go through the Indian edition, or else he could have had the offending chapter taken out. I don't think Kapil will ever be able to set the record straight on this one.

Calcutta **KALYAN NEGAL**

■ For a magazine that prides itself on its keen professionalism, savvy and insight, your large-scale Kapil adulation bordered on the kind of knee-jerk reaction that makes the disclaimer kind of hard to follow. Doubtless, Kapil is a grand player, but the folly of recognising the May rains as monsoons is strictly reserved for meteorologists, not sports journalists.

Dallas **V. PADMANABHAN**

GANDHI CONFUSION

In your article ("Mischievous Content", June 30) your correspondent asserts that documentary footage of Indira Gandhi's funeral was shown in the Bandung File programme on the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). There was footage of Mahatma Gandhi's funeral, but at no point does the programme show Mrs Gandhi's funeral or by implication suggest that the VHP was responsible for the anti-Sikh riots following her assassination.

London **VASUDHA JOSHI**

This was due to an editing error which is regretted. **—Editor**

FRESH FACES

Ramesh Sippy has done a good job by not taking a popular screen face. This adds more authenticity to the serial. ("Buniyaad: The New-wave Saga", July 31). In most of the serials I am struck with the quality of acting of the many new faces who are giving wonderful performances despite their being non-entities in the film world. It is going to bring down the star race that often

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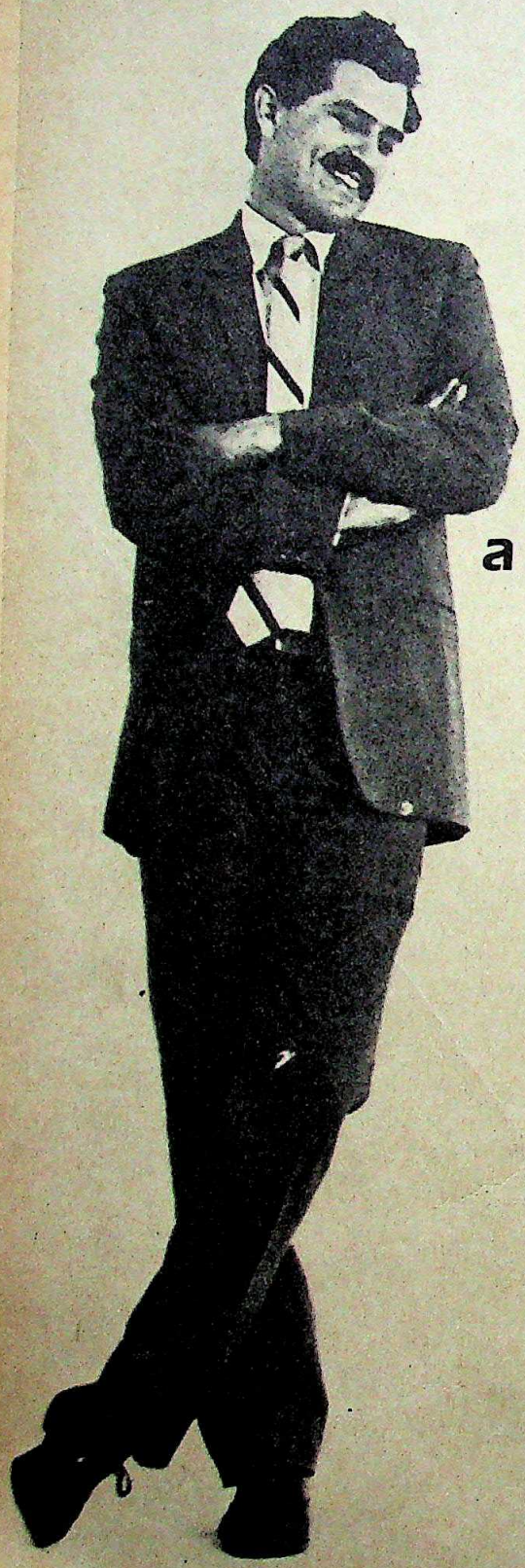

It needs
a lot of developing to match
the HCL Busybee.

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In just one year since its launch, the Busybee has been steadily growing. In all directions. Local Area Network... Multi-terminal capabilities... Bi-lingual capacity... Mainframe Linkage... and this is just the beginning.

While everyone was shouting themselves hoarse about their little geniuses, the HCL Busybee was growing quietly. In all directions. So today, it is the most powerful and versatile IBM compatible PC/PC XT there is.

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damaged our film industry. The new faces, if given a chance in films, will certainly bring down star values.
New Delhi PRABHAKAR S. HARSOLE

LAUDABLE EFFORT

The Parsi community ("Unholy Furore", July 31) forms but a decimal of our 700 million population. If a religion of this minuscule community has decided for the first time to talk about itself and its prophet through the film *On Wings of Fire*, the effort should be lauded rather than its wings be clipped before it can even fly. Admittedly, the movie may have failed to evoke the desired interest and response and the conceptualisation could have been better, yet it did not call for injunctions and radical statements insulting religious beliefs.
Baroda NAZNEEN VIMADALAL

IRREVERENT LEISURE

Your editorial ("State-sponsored Absenteeism", July 31) is appropriate. Such is the alchemy of Indian custom that reverence for the departed gets immediately converted into leisure for the living. We, as a nation, seem unable to pay homage to our illustrious dead except by giving ourselves a holiday.
New Delhi Air Cmde A.L. SAIGAL

■ Congratulations for your eye-opening criticism of the ways of mourning in our country. In a developing country, we cannot afford such a criminal waste of manpower. I agree with the civilised ways of mourning suggested by you.
New Delhi KAMLESH G. VARYANI

SOUR GRAPES

The venomous utterances of Badal ("Militant Poses", July 31), show his true colours. It is clear that Badal and Tohra can go to any length for their selfish motives. Badal cannot reconcile himself to the fact that he is no longer chief minister. By speaking the language of the militants he thinks he may regain this coveted position. Similarly, the day Tohra was forced to resign as the SGPC chief, he began to find faults with the present Akali Government.
New Delhi SMITA NARANG

CELLULOID HERO

MGR's indecision and inconsistency have been ruling Tamil Nadu politics for a long time ("The Glitter is Gone", July 31) and people now wonder whether there is any government at all, let alone an administration. With only celluloid glitter ruling the roost, it seems the "revolutionary hero's" efforts to make Jayalalitha the chief minister may succeed where his arch rival Karunanidhi and the Congress(I) would fail.
Madras A. SESHAGIRI RAO

CASTE BIAS

In your report ("The Odd Man Out", July 15) there seems to be a deliberate twisting of facts to prove that the CPI(M) is ridden with communal factionalists. V.S. Achuthanandan is called a fanatic Ezhava. And E.M.S. Namboodripad, who stands apart from caste politics, is made out to be a caste-conscious leader.
Durgapur T.P. BENNY

■ According to you, caste factors have played a role in fomenting the CPI(M) crisis. The Ezhava group (led by Achutanandan) is trying to oust the Nair group led by Raghavan. It adds that Achutanandan has the support of E.M.S. Namboodiripad, "himself a Nair". Namboodiri brahmins wouldn't take kindly to being branded Nairs, but perhaps EMS, as a Marxist, won't mind.
Trivandrum S. RADHAKRISHNAN

The error in calling E.M.S. Namboodiripad a Nair is regretted. —Editor

POPULAR ACCORD

Rajiv Gandhi has shown his calibre by solving the Mizo problem ("Quest for Peace", July 31). Though some critics are against the accord, the people of Mizoram have expressed their solidarity for the accord. It is now time for Rajiv Gandhi to see through the speedy implementation of the accord.
Gwalior KAMLESH PRASAD

DOUBLE STANDARDS

I was surprised to see a sympathetic and heroic profile of V. Prabakaran ("Profile of a Tiger", June 30). The support of the Indian Government and the media for the LTTE is highly hypocritical. Though we criticise the Sikh terrorists who want to divide our country, we support a group which wants to do the same to a neighbouring country. From the Sri Lankan point of view, the problem of LTTE is not different from the problem of Sikh terrorism.
Washington P. JALOTE

BIASED REPORT

Your report ("Fires of Hate", July 15) is highly biased in favour of the PAC. The brutal attempt by PAC jawans to make Allahabad a graveyard of Muslims and the brave resistance by the community is absolutely true. It was not a riot, but a war between Muslims and the PAC.
Bhopal S. HAIDER

HOLIDAY TIPS

Your article ("Indians on the Move", July 15) was timely as lack of information on where to go and what to see do discourage some tourists, especially those with a tight budget and limited time. State tourism departments just publish newspaper advertisements but when written to, do not care to reply. Providing cheap accommodation, but not compromising much on facilities, is therefore welcome.
Jeddah MOHAMED ALI

■ Your coverage of domestic tourism was excellent and I hope that tourists begin going to places which are less known and attract less crowds, but are equally interesting and have sufficient accommodation. Hopefully, the Himalayan states should try and develop three or four places in each state. A similar effort could be launched by the southern states as well. Only then would most of the now over-crowded hill stations be better off.
Stockholm K.C. BATRA

BUREAUCRATIC PAWNS

Your article ("Transfer Tremors", July 15) was shocking. Administrators have always been pawns in the hands of politicians, but will no longer meekly tolerate and succumb to politicians' pressures. Their excessive interference will inevitably generate a new breed of politicians, most of them from these frustrated administrators. This may be a fitting reply to incapable and incompetent politicians.
Satna JAIDEEP MITTRA

■ Does your correspondent sincerely believe that these angels from the IAS and the IPS will put the poverty-stricken state on the path towards progress if they were to be left undisturbed? I have my serious doubts. Their track record has not been very inspiring for the last 30 years.
Bahrain ANANT SAHAY

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COMMUNALISM

A Failure of Leadership

COMMUNALISM—Hindu, Christian, Muslim or Sikh—Nehru warned in 1955, is disruptive, separatist, and a trend imbued with hatred. "If we maintain this kind of communalism," he said, "India will cease to be what it is. It will go to pieces." Today, more than 30 years after that warning, the communal poison has spread throughout the land like an odiferous gangrene eating away at the very innards of the country's body politic. And there seems to be no leader in sight either capable or willing to stem the venomous tide. And as the evil has spread it, has created within its course permutations and combinations of hatred and suspicions which have bludgeoned into disuse all norms of reason, common sense and compassion.

AJIT NINAN

Today, India lives in an atmosphere in which its people appear to have been vaccinated against the natural—human—response of loathing against communal convulsions. They seem to be inured to the daily atrocities in which man kills man in the name of religion or community or caste. So deep are these divisions that ordinary Hindus—perfectly reasonable, even kindly folk—applaud sectarian violence because "it is time we taught them a lesson," or because, "they deserved it". In Assam, where economic insecurity and mass xenophobia erupted in the communal havoc called Nellie there is now trouble over teaching the Assamese language in schools. The same linguistic tension—an outgrowth of unchecked communalism—holds a taut grip over Goa and Belgaum. In Punjab, the traditional and time-honoured bond of brotherhood between Hindu and Sikh has been cut, releasing a migration of fear. In the tribal belt of Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, Christian missionaries are locked in a potentially explosive turf battle with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. In Gujarat, half as many people have been killed within a few days in two gory riots caused by a bloody cocktail of communal and casteist politics, than in Punjab during an entire year. In Uttar Pradesh, hitherto peaceful towns like Barabanki and Allahabad have been rocked by what started out as communal upheavals which later played into the hands of smugglers and criminals bent upon doing mischief and embarrassing the administration.

And each time politicians have "rushed" to trouble spots, clucked their sanctimonious tongues, smiled like jackasses for news photographers and moved on to their business of politicking. What is shameful is that our national politicians have often themselves incited or played opportunistic games with communalism. During the Emergency Mrs Gandhi banned 26 communal organisations—but to no avail. During the following five years there were more than 3,000 communal riots in the country. And the repeated pledges of the National Integration Council to deal with "an iron hand" with communal and anti-social elements have been broken as often as they have been invoked.

But for patchwork "remedies"—the transfer of a district magistrate or a superintendent of police, an inquiry into a PAC firing, dusk-to-dawn curfew orders—Rajiv Gandhi's Government has failed to demonstrate its ability to bottle the communal genie or to launch an all-out attack on the dangerous combination of politics and religion. Nor has the Government taken firm steps to battle communal forces which have crept into the educational system in the form of linguistic chauvinism. Again, Nehru warned against the intrusion of communalism into education in 1948. "Education is meant to free the spirit of man and not to imprison it in set frames."

Rajiv would do well to restudy the thoughts and actions of his grandfather on this burning issue. No one can accuse Rajiv of being a communalist. But his actions—even with the best intentions in mind—on the Muslim Women's Bill and the Ramjanamabhoomi issue—have only helped to compound an already bad situation. Communalism cannot be wished away or solved through mechanistic administrative remedies. What is required to fight it is statesmanship, uncompromising moral courage and aggressive leadership. Rajiv should have visited Barabanki. He should have visited Allahabad—the home of his ancestors—personally. He should have visited Ahmedabad. He may not have been able to solve the immediate problem but his presence would have been a symbolic demonstration—to the country and to politicians—of a national will to battle communalism. It would have shown, most of all, that he cares. And caring, unlike a managerial task, cannot be delegated to others.

If the prime minister can go on a moral mission to the frontline states of Africa and rail against apartheid, surely he can find the time to visit communally troubled areas in his own country and exert the moral authority—given to him by the people by virtue of his election—to openly confront the forces exploiting religion and caste and language and ripping this country apart. During his early days in office people—even his detractors—admired Rajiv for his tough, no-nonsense approach. But now, the very absence of these qualities—as evidenced by a demonstrable lack of leadership on the communal issue—is losing him the psychological edge through which he can assert moral authority. This, too, cannot be delegated. Rajiv—India's leader—must himself take the communal bull by the horns.

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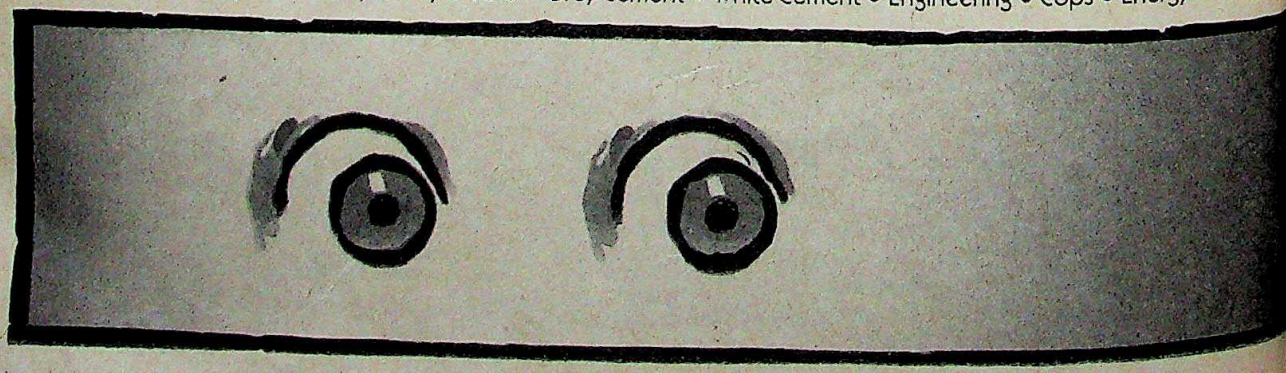

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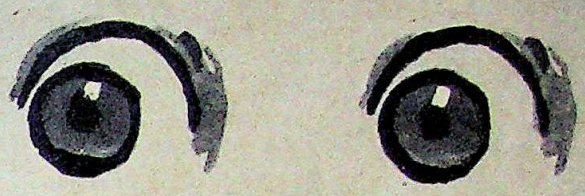

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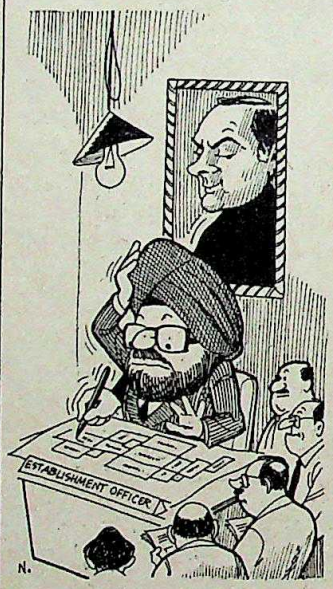
Abortive Attempt

● Rae Bareli is the place where action and drama can take place without any warning and at any moment. And it may not necessarily be of the political variety as a bunch of VIPs from New Delhi discovered to their chagrin recently. The VIPs, led by Union Minister for Transport Mohsina Kidwai and Minister for Civil Aviation Jagdish Tytler, had proudly gone to Rae Bareli to attend the inauguration ceremony of the extended airport facility. And they were flown in a spanking new Dornier 228 by Vayudoot, the third-level airline which often has a hard time making up on the other routes the loss it makes on the flight to the VIP constituency.

For Harsh Vardhan, the ambitious young managing director of the airline, this was a welcome opportunity to show his wares to his ministry's bigwigs. But he was obviously out of luck. As soon as the function ended and the VIPs trooped to the small tarmac, came the shattering report: the aircraft battery was not working. It refused to show any spark of life despite ministrations by pilots and engineers. As the temperature went up under the mid-day sun, VIP tempers rose. It was only hours later that Vayudoot was able to divert its Allahabad flight via Rae Bareli to pick up some of the VIPs. The lesser ones had to rough it out on the dusty roads by night. It is not yet known if Harsh Vardhan has already changed his supplier of batteries or not.

Space Wars

● The establishment officer at South Block, a First Secretary, seems a very busy, very important person. After all, he is the person responsible for allocating office space within the corridors of power which weave their intricate pattern in the building. Senior officials—joint secretaries and additional secretaries—bow and scrape before him. One wants his PA's room shifted next to his. Another wants a room with a view. And with a stroke of a pen, it appears, the establishment officer dispenses Libensraum to eternally grateful bureaucrats. But the truth is that ultimately it is not really the establishment officer who handles the adverse supply-demand balance. The real czar is none other than the prime minister himself. All new allocations of office space—peons and PA's included—are handled by the prime minister's Super PA Vincent George with the approval of Rajiv. Senior bureaucrats are now discovering that their victories achieved in South Block's space wars are not the result of the munificence of the establishment officer but the result of the diktats of their supreme leader.



Nom de Plume

● Who is the real Gaj Singh? The identity of *The Hindustan Times*' media critic remains a mystery. *Sunday Mail* says that the man who consistently lavished praise on Gopal Sharman's TV serial *IndiaAlive* is none other than Gopal Sharman himself. *The Hindustan Times* editor N.C. Menon says with a chuckle that Gaj Singh is not Gopal Sharman and Gaj Singh is a pseudonym. The paper sends the cheque to Gaj Singh (Iyenger) to an address in west Delhi. The surprised old lady who opens the door of the house where all these cheques go does not know any Gaj Singh, or Iyenger for that matter, but points to a house next door. The angry Mrs Iyenger next door can't understand why *Sunday Mail* and *Span* keep calling up about "some Gaj Singh". But she admits there is an Iyenger next door, a Mr Sampath Iyenger, a chartered accountant who had to suddenly go to Madras. Gopal Sharman, "pained and hurt", asserts he is not Gaj Singh: "Those who want to destroy my credibility are behind this because they want to de-stabilise India; and I have spent my life and fortune for my country?" Will the real Gaj Singh please stand up so that India will not be further destabilised?

RAW Diplomacy

● The Ministry of External Affairs is increasingly being forced to rely on raw recruits. Literally. With former RAW chief Ram Nath Kao, founder and guiding spirit behind the hush-hush intelligence organisation, ensconced in the Policy Advisory Committee attached to the ministry alongside fellow former RAW chief, Gary Saxena, it is now the turn of yet another ex-RAW boss Shankaran Nair, to have found a diplomatic sinecure. Nair being missed at his favourite haunt, the Delhi Golf Club of which he is the President, fellow golfers were informed that he had "gone abroad" for an indefinite period. But there was nothing mysterious about his sudden disappearance. He has been dragged out of relaxed retirement and appointed Indian high commissioner in Singapore. His surprise appointment is yet another instance of professional diplomats being sidelined for key diplomatic appointments.

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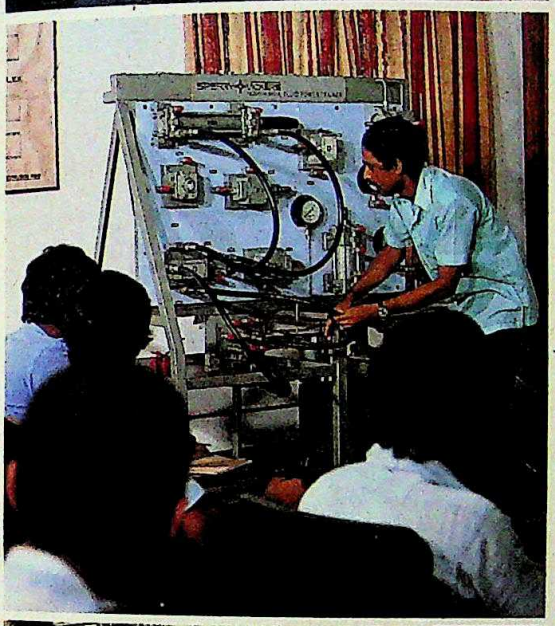

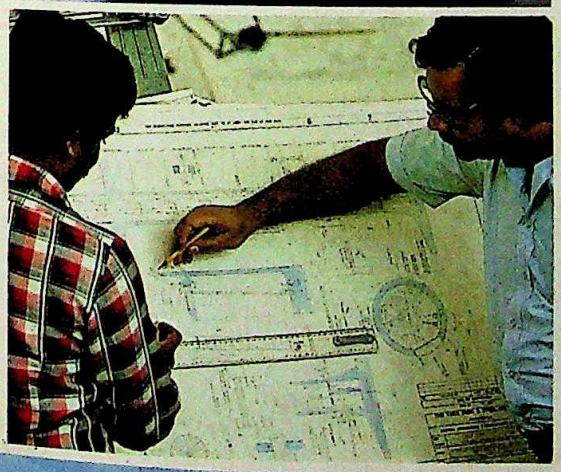

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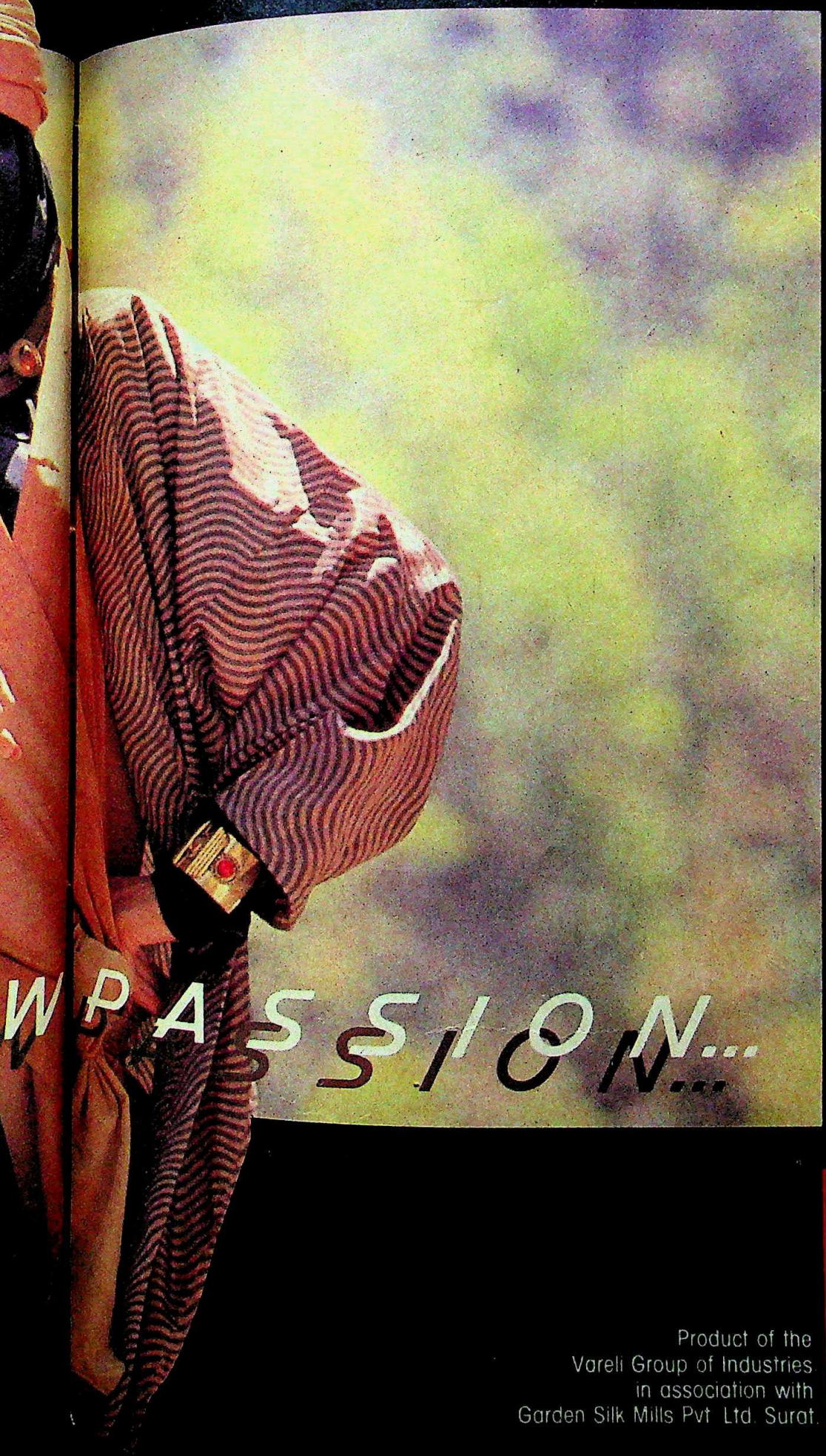

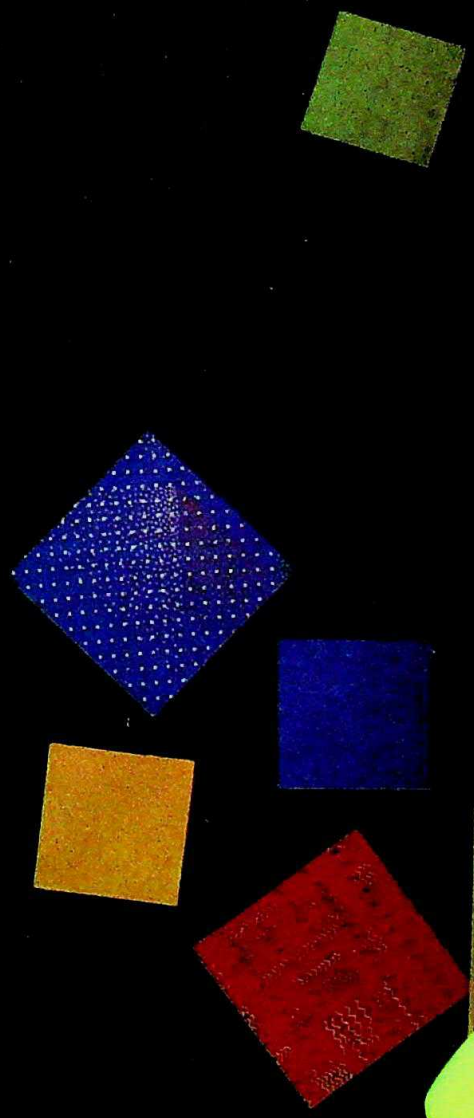

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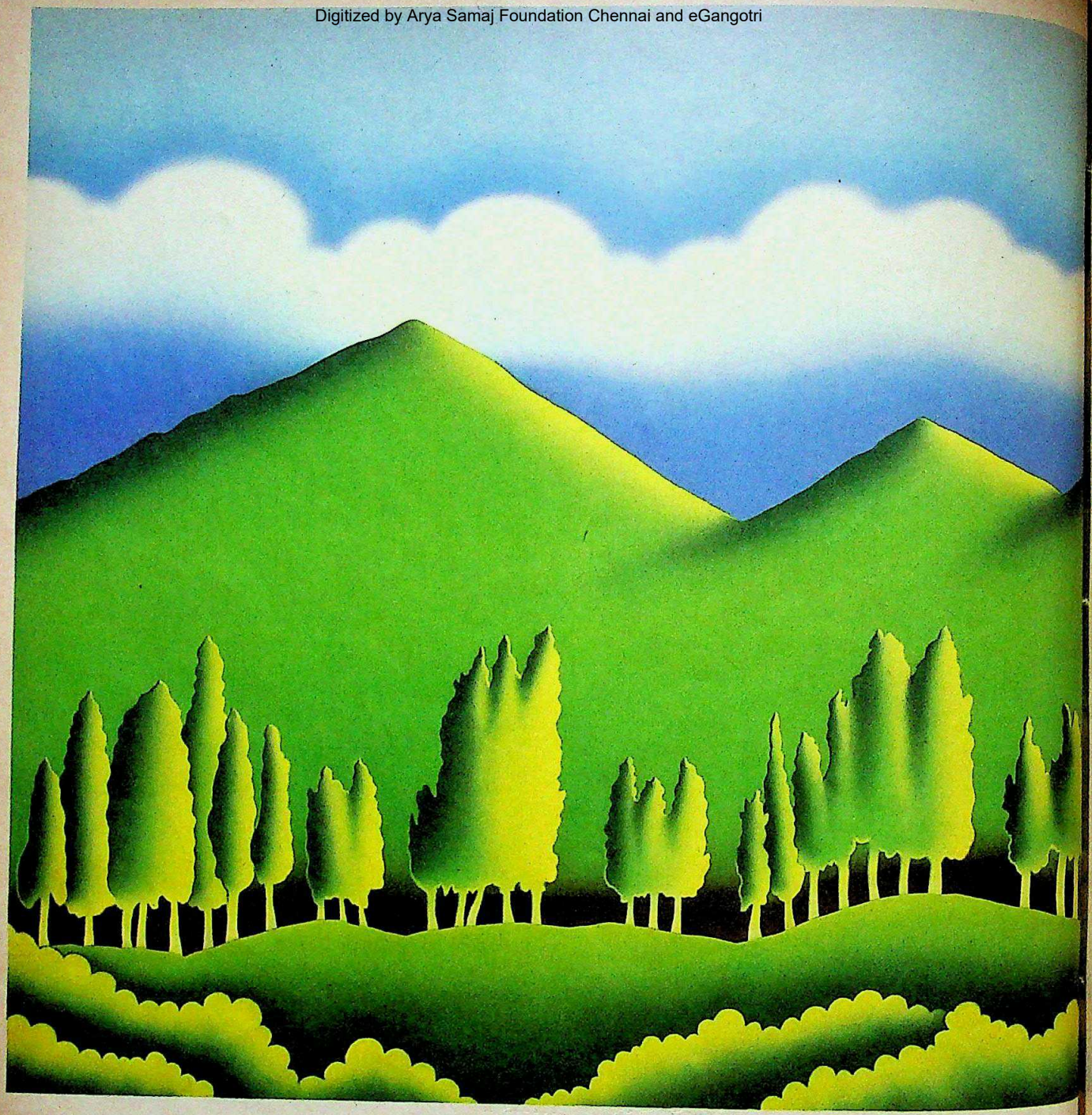

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● *He (Prakash Singh Badal) is at odds with me. But I know he is very fond of me and I would like him to stay in the mainstream.*

■ SURJIT SINGH BARNALA, Punjab chief minister, at the Delhi Press Club

● *If the purpose of the latest Chinese incursion in an elaborate game of political mah-jong is obscure, how it intends the game to progress is still more difficult to fathom.*

■ Editorial in *The Statesman*

● *If people think I picked up this job for the publicity involved, they are being unkind. This is a job where my life is at stake. Even after I finish my job, I will probably not live out my whole life.*

■ JULIO F. RIBEIRO, director-general, Punjab police, in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

● *Knives will be of use if the police are unable to control your enemies when they confront you.*

■ M.G. RAMACHANDRAN at a rally of his Fan's Association in Madurai

● *They (the Tamil militants) fight from here. And no country will help Sri Lanka to fight against India. The earlier we realise this the better it is for all.*

■ VIJAYA KUMARANATUNGA, general-secretary of the SLMP, on India's role in Sri Lanka's ethnic problem in *The Telegraph*

● *The other day I asked a British economist, a Nobel Prize winner who is a frequent visitor to India, what he thought of our economy. He said: "You will muddle through the '80s; it will be very difficult in the '90s, and by the end of the century....phoo!"*

■ KULDIP NAYAR in *The Tribune*

● *Today, the speeches of even the few good* MP*'s that we have—which are sometimes quite extraordinary—are reported in a single sentence in the national dailies. Every banal statement of the prime minister is reported in three-column headlines.*

■ ROMESH THAPAR in *Gentleman*

● *The quality of (news) presentation continues to be appalling. With supreme lack of imagination, Doordarshan now spells out its headlines on screen at the same time as the newscaster reads them out, as is done for the deaf in advanced countries.*

■ AMITA MALIK in *Express Magazine*

● *Sex appeal is an indescribable quality; you either have it or don't. Bombay is really getting to be a desperate scene. Between mamma's little* munnas *and the* paan-bahar *paunchies, sex is as remote as Halley's Comet!*

■ SHARON PRABHAKAR in *Sunday*

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Percussion Pistol.
By Alfred Gauvain of Paris.
First shown at Great Exhibition,
Crystal Palace, London, 1851.

Victoria Cross.
Supreme military honour
since 1856.
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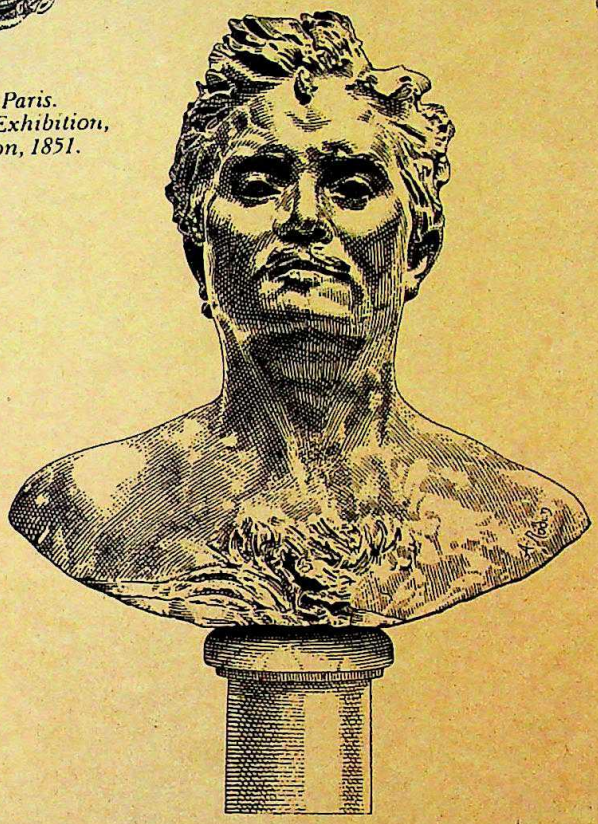

Head of Balzac.
Study in bronze by
Auguste Rodin, 1840-1917.

Waterford Decanter.
Classic full lead crystal
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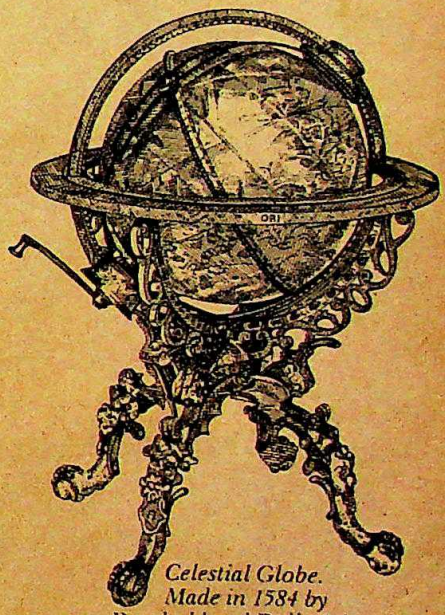
of a master glassmaker.



Celestial Globe.
Made in 1584 by
Reinhold and Roll of Augsburg.
Almost certainly sold in 1854
to Emperor Rudolph II, Prague.

Another certain something that's extravagantly male.

Danish Freehand.
Completely hand sculpted
and finished to bring out
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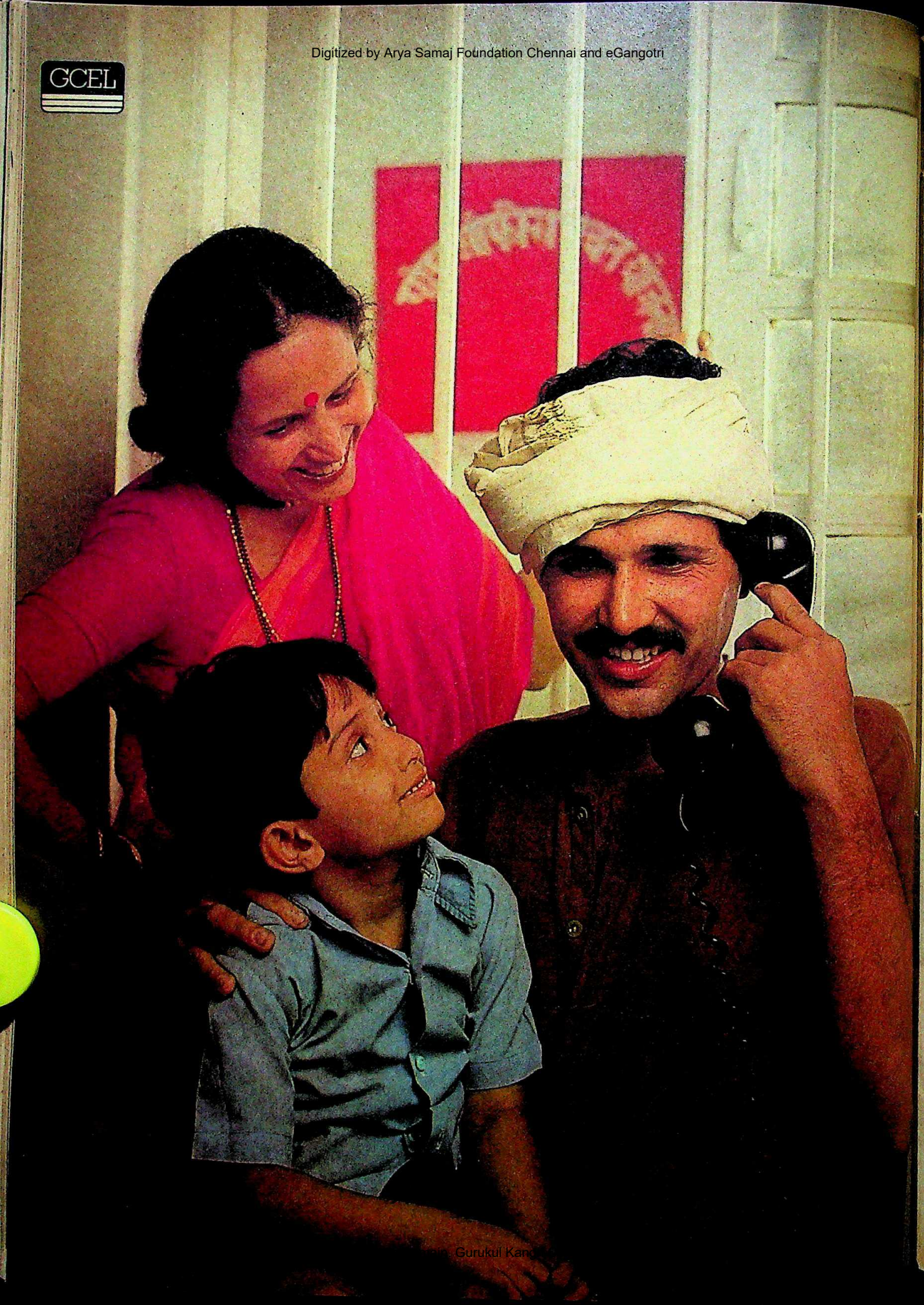

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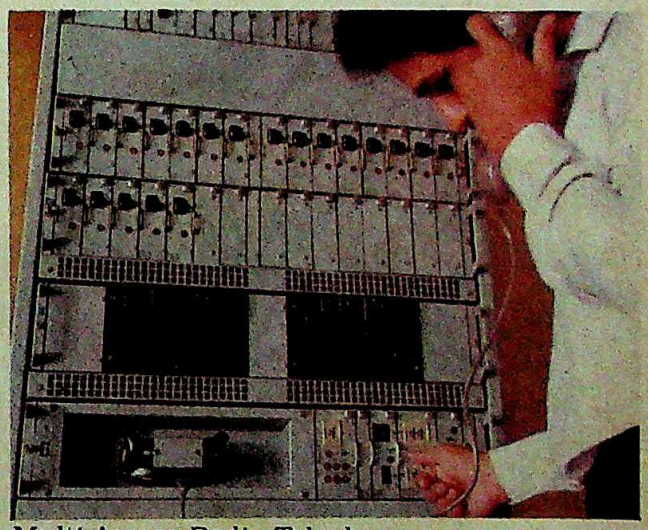

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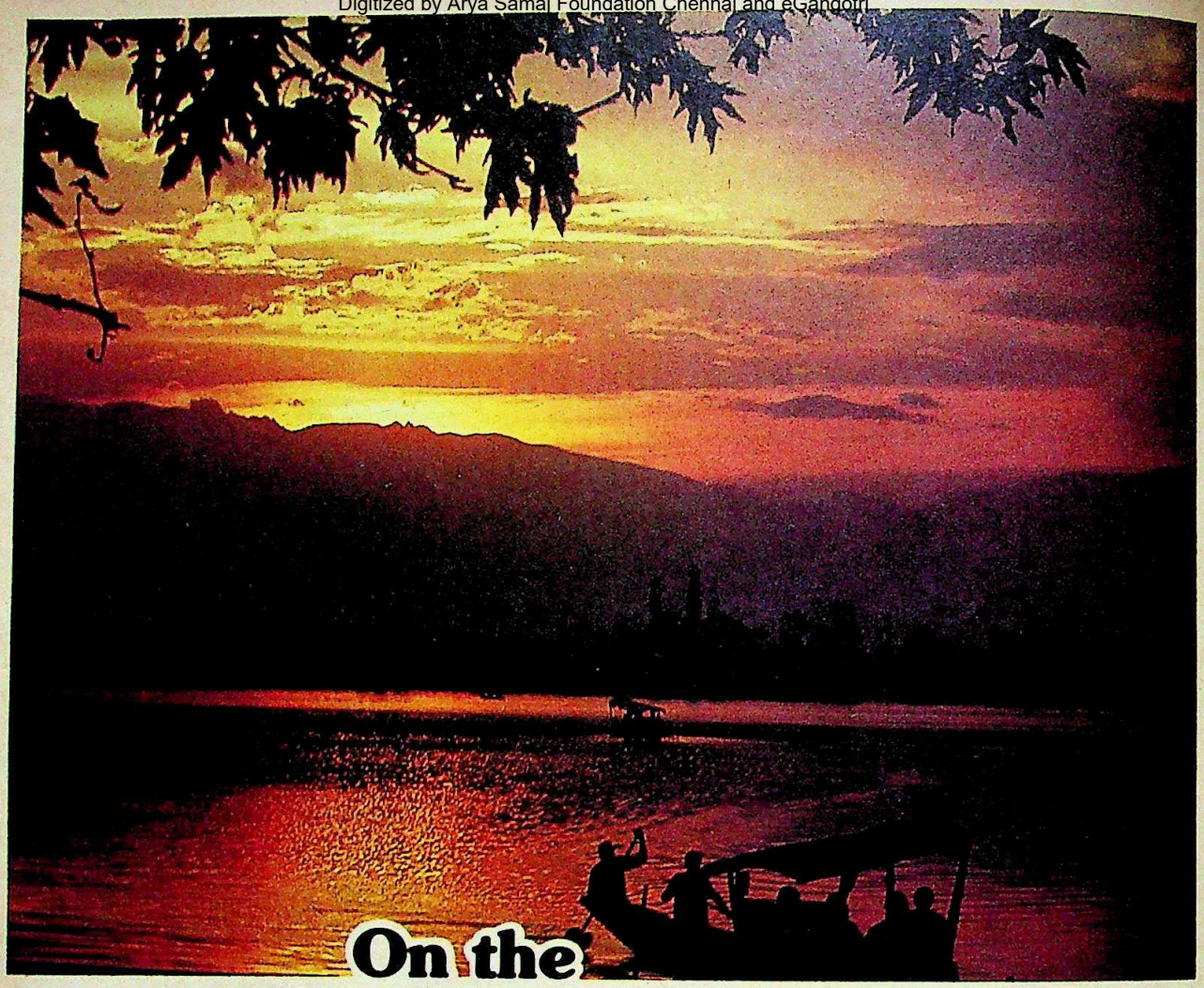

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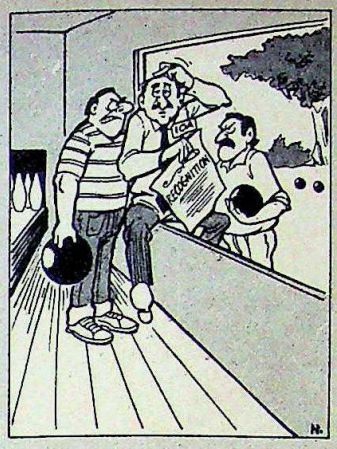
BOWLED OVER



■ The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) seems to be forever sporting two minds regarding the granting of its favours. The latest example of its dual personality was its decision to bestow its official blessings on the Bowling Federation of India formed recently in New Delhi. The IOA appeared so bowled over by its generosity that it even sent its best wishes for the championship conducted by the federation a couple of months ago. But the IOA found itself skittled when it suddenly discovered that it had already granted official recognition to another bowling federation registered in Calcutta.

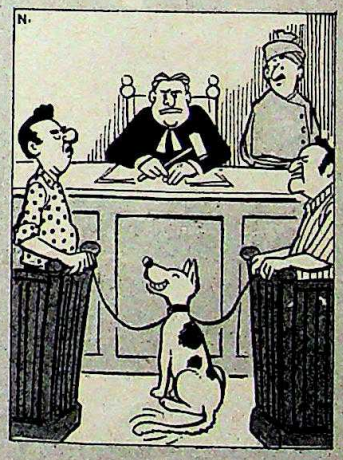
The reason for its left hand not knowing what the right was up to was evidently because the IOA itself seems to be rather confused about the sport and its variations. In Calcutta, not surprisingly, bowling is of the more genteel British variety, played on a manicured lawn in between the tea and the cucumber sandwiches. In Delhi, also not surprisingly, it is the faster, more aggressive and cacophonic American version played indoors in bowling alleys. Having recognised both federations, the IOA is now trapped in the embarrassing position of now having to decide which one gets no-balled.

BRAIN DRAIN

■ The Andhra Pradesh chief minister would hardly be amused to learn that in the heart of his citadel, Hyderabad, there are post-graduate students who believe that NTR actually stands for Nothing To Report. And, there would be small consolation for him in learning that the acronym is not an analysis of his political performance but an abject lack of general knowledge since they also believe that the USSR is the abbreviation for the United States of Soviet Russia. And that is not all. Similar pearls of wisdom were literally littering the floor of the examination room at Hyderabad's Bhavan's College of Communication and Management, for post-graduates.

Apart from NTR, other tragic victims who were unwittingly slandered included Acharya Vinobha Bhave who, according to one bright spark, ran an illegal gun factory in Jammu and Kashmir., while another believed that Mother Teresa "helped the wounded soldiers in Vietnam". The only one of the batch who got it right was the character who described "brain drain" as a "brain wash" which the examination surely was.

DISPUTED DOG



■ King Solomon must be giggling in his grave over the dogged determination of a magistrate in Kerala's Kodungaloor district to decide an unusual dispute. The dispute was dragged into the courts by a Yusuf Kutty who charged that his neighbour had stolen his dog. Kutty had earlier filed a complaint with the police, who made Kutty stand outside the neighbour's house and call the dog out. The dog immediately appeared with his tail all awag but the cops insisted that Kutty cross the road and if the dog tailed him, the issue would be settled: he set off but the dog refused to budge. That ended the dispute and Kutty was sent off with a flea in his ear.

But Kutty was not to be leashed so easily and he moved the court. The magistrate ordered that the dog be brought to court along with the two claimants for ownership. The first sitting proved messy since the dog went wherever it was called regardless of who was calling. When reports last came in, the hearing had been postponed because the courtroom was so full that exhibit A, the disputed canine, was going hysterical answering a barrage of calls from the crowd who had come to witness the dramatics.

DOUBLE TROUBLE

■ There was much merrymaking in a village in Ahmednagar district last fortnight, as the occasion certainly demanded. Kulkarni, the village headman, was "arranging" to marry off his two sons, Kashinath and Gopal, to two sisters Usha and Varsha. But since neither of the couples had set eyes on each other, there were bound to be some slips twixt the cups and the lips. The first eruption took place on the wedding day when Gopal saw that Usha, the bride chosen for Kashinath, was better endowed than her sister. He demanded the pairings be switched.

But Kulkarni ordered the assembled priests to get on with the job as per the programme. By now the guests were quite confused and were confounded further when Gopal disappeared. A frantic search was launched, the reluctant bridegroom found and dragged back with the promise that he would be married to Usha. Now, it was Kashinath's turn. He too vanished and remained untraced till the girls' disgusted parents decided that enough was enough and vanished as well, with daughters in tow.

—Compiled by DILIP BOBB

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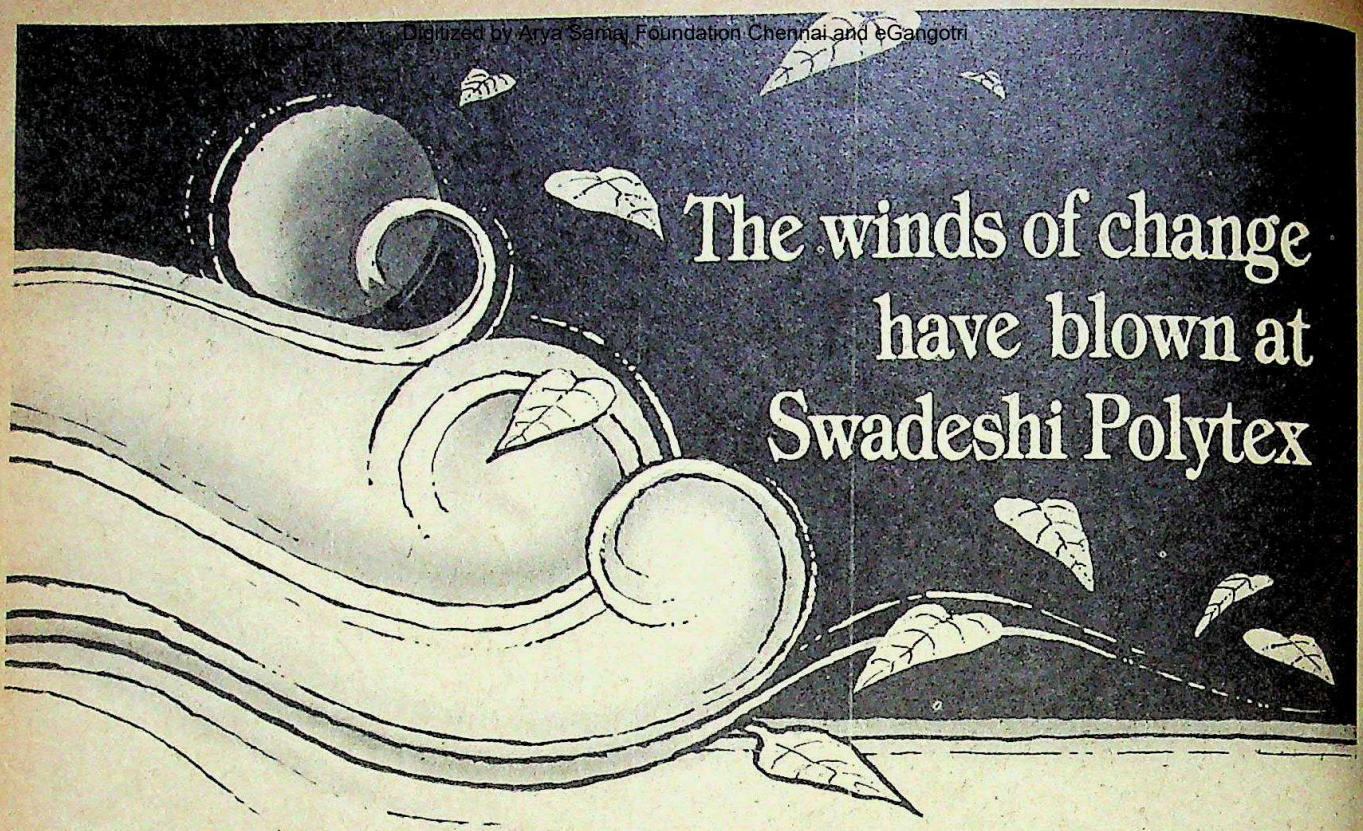

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CONGRESS(I)

Battle Within

Cracks in the ruling party have never been more visible than in recent weeks. Indecisiveness at the top, infighting among the party leadership and weak chief ministers have encouraged a flurry of dissident activity. Assistant Editor PRABHU CHAWLA visited key states and obtained reports from correspondents in other states affected by the dissident fever. His report:

ARJUN SINGH ARUN NEHRU RAJIV GANDHI ARUN SINGH KAMALAPATI TRIPATHI

The AICC(I) office-bearers installed by Rajiv have failed to maintain some semblance of party discipline. The party has been confronted with total confusion over the role and authority of Arun Singh and Arun Nehru—the prime minister's most trusted aids.

BARELY 18 months ago, the ruling party resembled a vast, indomitable empire whose loyal subjects bowed meekly before the iron will of its ruler. Now, the empire is striking back—at itself. All across the length and breadth of the huge, amorphous Congress(I) kingdom, bush-fires of revolt are erupting at an alarming rate. From Guwahati in the far east and Trivandrum down south, battle-lines have been sharply drawn between its regional satraps and factional leaders. And, in New Delhi, the seat of power, senior party functionaries are involved in an unending slanging match in a sordid display of political one-upmanship.

PRANAB MUKHERJEE GUNDU RAO

It is the lack of coordination and cohesiveness at the top which has encouraged the ranks of the dissidents like Gundu Rao and Pranab.

By last fortnight, half of the 17 Congress(I) chief ministers and over half-a-dozen Pradesh Congress(I) presidents were facing a serious revolt from dissidents. At the Centre, the All-India Congress(I) Committee's octogenarian Working President Kamalapati Tripathi was continuing to stoke dissident fires. In the past few weeks, the party has been forced to expel a former chief minister and a Central minister, suspend a former chief minister and a cabinet minister and serve warning to at least two other former Union ministers and a former chief minister for their open defiance. Admitted the party's powerful Vice-President Arjun Singh: "There are some noises

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being made in some places, but it is nothing new in a party which rules the country and has over three crore ordinary members. There is no cause for alarm."

But Singh only seems to be turning a deaf ear to the sound of alarm bells that are being rung loudly and clearly in virtually every Congress(I)-ruled state and by important senior leaders. In Delhi itself, the flag of revolt is still being held aloft in the frail hands of Tripathi. Last fortnight, during his routine press briefing, Tripathi demanded the immediate holding of organisational elections. "The party has become weak because the democratic process within the party has received a set-back by the continuous postponement of elections. Imposition of the PCC(I) office-bearers and other functionaries has caused immense damage to the party." he charged. In a reaction that exposed the widening fissures at the top level of the party hierarchy, the AICC(I)'s portly General Secretary T. Anjiah hit back at Tripathi. "Tripathi's statement should not be taken seriously," he stated and virtually asked him to quit his post before making an issue out of what is a justifiable enough demand on the part of the working president.

Anjiah's ill-conceived diatribe led to a minor revolt in the party spearheaded by another veteran, Karnataka's brash former chief minister Gundu Rao, who termed Anjiah a "buffoon" and demanded disciplinary action against him for insulting a senior party functionary. Tripathi himself reacted with unconcealed anger. "If action has to be taken it should be taken against those who are asking for disciplinary action against me." he declared. What was more surprising was the fact that neither Party President Rajiv Gandhi nor any of his senior party colleagues sought it fit to stop the mud-slinging, shaking the common worker's confidence in the party's leadership.

But in the context of the current internal crisis in the party, perhaps Rajiv's non-intervention is not all that surprising. It is precisely the lack of coordination and cohesiveness at the top which has encouraged the ranks of the dissidents. And it is Rajiv's inaccessibility and selective appointments which have adversely affected the smooth functioning of the party. Chief ministers are forced to wait for days, and in some cases weeks, before their request for an appointment with the prime minister is granted. If the current spate of dissident activities is any indication, it is evident that Rajiv's much touted earlier attempts as the AICC(I) general secretary to build a party of his own choosing seem to have been completely brought to a nought.

The team of AICC(I) office-bearers installed by Rajiv—which was a mix of new and old—has failed miserably to maintain some semblance of party discipline. None of the eight general secretaries can claim to have stemmed the tide of dissidence that has overtaken the states entrusted to them.

To make matters worse, the party has been confronted with total confusion over the role and authority of Union Minister of State for Defence, Research and Development Organisation Arun Singh and Minister of State for Internal Security Arun Nehru—the prime minister's most trusted aides. With Arun Nehru falling sick and Arun Singh keeping a visible distance from the prime minister, party leaders and workers have been busy realigning and readjusting to the emerging new power structure evolving around Arjun Singh. Ultimately, the combination of an ineffective central leadership and weak leaders in the states has palsied the party and triggered off tremors of revolt in many states.

BIHAR

Ineffective Leadership

■ With its background of chaos and drift, it was hardly surprising that in the current round of factional warfare, it was Bihar which headed the list of states where dissident activity is at its height. With the weak-kneed and ineffective leadership at the Government and party level, the dissidents, led by the irrepressible Jagannath Mishra, have revived their offensive against the ailing and embattled Chief Minister Bindeshwari Dubey. Their war cry has taken the form of the slogan they have recently coined: *"Dubeyji doob gaye and Baithaji baith gaye* (Bindeshwari Dubey has drowned and Baitha (PCC(I) Chief Dumar Lal Baitha) is ineffective." Last fortnight, Dubey took serious note of the open derision and frequency with which the slogan is being aired and launched a counter-offensive against his former ally and now arch-rival former chief minister Jagannath Mishra.

Dubey sent an SOS through the state's district magistrates to all his MLA supporters in their constituencies, asking them to assemble in Patna. Despite that note of urgency, only 17 of them showed up and were flown to New Delhi, where the prime minister's aide and Dubey's protector Makhan Lal Fotedar had arranged for them to meet Rajiv. During their brief meeting, they demanded Mishra's expulsion from the party, obviously along the lines of the action taken against Gundu Rao in Karnataka. But even this did not deter Mishra and his supporters from continuing their campaign against the

Jagannath Mishra

Bindeshwari Dubey

With the high command unable to tame Mishra or activate Dubey's government, a truce was unlikely to return to the Congress(I).

chief minister. Mishra had earlier obtained the signatures of over 100 MLA's—as against the 17 Dubey was able to muster—on a memorandum against the chief minister, thus exposing in a most telling manner Dubey's limited following in the Congress(I) Legislature Party (CLP).

Mishra then brought all the three dissident groups on one platform and asked them to sign a strongly-worded memorandum against Dubey to the prime minister. As many as 125 MLA's signed the paper which contained serious allegations of corruption, growing atrocities against the Harijans and other weaker sections as well as total collapse of the state administration. The dissidents alleged that during Dubey's tenure, as many as 90 people have been gunned down by the police in 45 cases of police firing. Said Mishra: "The party is paralysed and the Government is dead in Bihar", and went on to predict that if Dubey was allowed to continue, the party "will be wiped out from the state". Added prominent Congress(I) leader Kamla Nath Singh: "Dubey is in a pathetic state of mind at present. When he was elected the CLP leader with Mishra's backing, he was a unanimous choice and today he can collect only 17 MLA's in his support. This alone shows that he is in a hopeless minority in the CLP." With the high command unable to tame either Mishra or activate Dubey's inactive government, a truce was unlikely to return to the state Congress(I).

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UTTAR PRADESH

Infighting Spills Out

■ In the country's most populous state, with the largest number of MP's in the Lok Sabha, the party has split vertically. While Tripathi's son and state Health Minister Lokpati Tripathi was battling his cabinet colleague Transport Minister Sanjay Singh, a relation of Arjun Singh, over the question of bogus memberships, Chief Minister Bir Bahadur Singh was faced with the problem of defending himself from the anti-Arun Nehru forces led by three of his own ministers who claim to enjoy the support of Amitabh Bachchan, MP from Allahabad. The dissident activity in the state was once again ranged along caste lines. But it was the first time that party rivals were attacking each other in public. Charged Lokpati Tripathi: "I will not name anybody but those who have spent bagfuls of money on the membership are now facing serious inquiries and

Lokpati Tripathi

Bir Bahadur Singh

Tripathi questioned bogus membership while Bir Bahadur Singh had to defend himself from anti-Arun Nehru forces.

may eventually pay for what they attempted to do. There is a boy who is trying all sorts of tricks but he won't succeed." Retorted the boyish Sanjay Singh: "The very fact that some senior leaders and old-timers are working and lobbying against me is proof that I am no more a kid in politics."

While the Singh-Tripathi feud posed no serious threat to the chief minister, the appearance of an anti-government advertisement sponsored by Bachchan in the local newspapers created ripples in the chief minister's camp last fortnight. The offensive advertisement, which almost indicted the state Government for its failure to prevent the Allahabad riots, appeared on July 18, the day the cine star was scheduled to meet the chief minister. Dealing extensively with the riots and their aftermath, the advertisement said on behalf of the MP: "There are many questions in my mind for which I shall be seeking answers when I meet the chief minister today, namely:

► Insufficient financial compensation to affected property and people;

► Administrative lapses, vis-a-vis timely intervention, indiscriminate arrests of innocents and their subsequent care while in custody.

Coming as it did from a personal friend of the prime minister, the advertisement was interpreted as a warning to the chief minister who owed his ascension to Arun Nehru. The advertisement and its loaded political implications provoked a flight of state ministers angling for the chief ministership to Delhi to stake their claim. A visibly-shaken Singh reacted grimly. "I have seen the advertisement. I think he has done a good thing," he declared, keeping in constant touch with his mentor in Delhi, Arun Nehru, who was recovering from his heart ailment. But with the infighting coming out into the open, there was still no signs of intervention on the part of the Central leadership or the PCC(I) President Mahabir Prashad, who has been reduced to a non-entity in the state's politics.

MADHYA PRADESH

Formidable Tie-up

■ Here, the growing party power struggle was being symbolised by the state's two most formidable leaders—former Union ministers P.C. Sethi and V.C. Shukla. After a year of relative inactivity, both leaders suddenly decided to undertake a one-and-a-half-month tour of the entire state to meet the party workers and collect their "views" on various issues confronting the people and the Government. The public relations programme is likely to end by the first week of August. While touring the state, they were careful to ensure that their paths did not cross. While Shukla confined himself to party affairs and refrained from attacking either the Central or the state leadership, Sethi launched a tirade against AICC(I) Vice-President Arjun Singh and his protege the PCC(I) President Digvijay Singh. In an informal chat with the press, he indirectly accused Arjun Singh of creating hurdles for Chief Minister Moti Lal Vora: "People in Madhya Pradesh are saying that Voraji is in constant fear of someone who is running the state through remote control." The reference was obviously to Arjun Singh. The Sethi-Shukla tie-up and their actions created further confusion in the party in New Delhi. AICC(I) General Secretary R.L. Bhatia, who is in charge of the state, had cleared their tour programme. But fellow General Secretary G.K. Moopanar dashed off a circular stat-

P.C. Sethi

V.C. Shukla

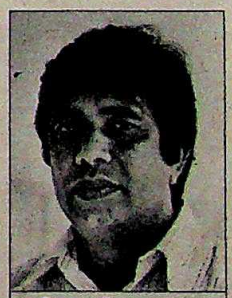
The Sethi-Shukla tie-up and their actions created further confusion in the party in New Delhi.

ing that any public meeting held outside the purview of the PCC(I) and the DCC(I) would amount to indiscipline and would invite action. Vora finally lent his open support to the Sethi-Shukla faction when he justified their tour and said: "I think that the intention behind the tour is not bad. They will submit their report to the prime minister."

KARNATAKA

Fernandes Fails

■ If up north the party was seething with discontentment, the southern citadels of the party were in an equally defiant state of rebellion. In Karnataka, Gundu


Oscar Fernandes

Gundu Rao

Fernandes has failed to build up an organisation and win the confidence of factional leaders like Gundu Rao who openly ridicule his leadership.

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Rao raised the banner of revolt against the leadership and was expelled from the party for questioning Rajiv's authority (INDIA TODAY, July 31). But the decisive action against the former chief minister failed to help the party present a united face. While walking away with two sitting MLC's and over a dozen former MP's and MLA's, Rao threw down yet another direct challenge to Rajiv. Boasted Rao: "Let Rajiv come to Karnataka and win an election on his own. What he is today is purely due to two unfortunate accidents in the country in which two of our important leaders were killed. If those accidents had not taken place he would have been flying Boeings somewhere."

Rao is hardly a serious threat to Rajiv but he has the capacity to do serious damage to the party. It was to minimise Rao's influence over the party that Oscar Fernandes, a relatively junior functionary with a clean image, had been chosen as PCC(I) chief eight months ago. Even at that time, it was widely felt that Fernandes would prove no match for state Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde or even party stalwarts like Veerappa Moily and S. Bangarappa. After eight months, it is evident that Fernandes has failed to build up an organisation and win the confidence of the factional leaders who openly ridicule his leadership. Said one senior leader from the state: "Oscar is too good to be a politician. He was trained by us in politics and now he expects us to learn from him. Is it possible?" But Fernandes insists that he has the qualifications: "Who says that I am inexperienced? I have been a Block Congress(I) committee secretary, a district youth Congress(I) president, a parliamentary secretary to the prime minister and an AICC(I) general secretary. I have travelled all over the country and even abroad with the prime minister." But the fact remains that the Congress(I) is divided into so many groups that Rajiv has not been able to appoint any of the other PCC(I) office-bearers or find a replacement for Bangarappa, who resigned as leader of the CLP following an adverse court judgement.

RAJASTHAN

Stalwarts at odds

■ In yet another important north Indian state, the battle was between two stalwarts, Chief Minister Harideo Joshi and former chief minister Shiv Charan Mathur. Last fortnight, Mathur took the chief minister to task for ignoring development activity in the state. In a press

Shiv Charan Mathur

Harideo Joshi

Mathur reeled out statistics to prove that the present chief minister, Harideo Joshi, was harming the state.

interview, Mathur reeled out statistics to prove that the present chief minister was harming the state. He also claimed the "high command was unhappy with the chief minister", and went on to predict sarcastically that it was Joshi who handed over the Congress rule to the Janata in 1977 and would repeat it again by his non performance. While Joshi did not react personally, his public relations department issued a hard-hitting rejoinder—saying that the Government was still bearing the burden of the maladministration of the previous government headed by Mathur. The state PCC(I) chief reluctantly issued a statement disapproving Mathur's attack and the former chief minister was finally summoned to New Delhi to explain his conduct.

KERALA

Battling It Out

■ This is perhaps the one state where the Indira loyalists are winning the internal war against the so-called "newcomers". During the last four years, relations between the group led by Chief Minister Karunakaran and the AICC(I) General Secretary A.K. Antony were never cordial. But matters came to boiling point three months ago when the then home minister, Vyalar Ravi, was shifted from the crucial home portfolio to agriculture. Ravi, instead of accepting the change, resigned and since then, Karunakaran and Ravi have been fighting as if they belonged to different political parties. Recently, the Congress(I) controlled Non-Gazetted Officers Association formally split between the Karunakaran and Ravi groups. Even though the chief minister's group lost in the Association elections, Karunakaran packed the organisation with his own nominees and called a conference under the leadership of rebel labour leader Karunakaran Pillai. In the meeting, the chief minister declared that his government would recognise the Pillai-led faction. But soon after Ravi directed his supporter R.K. Poduval to summon another conference where Ravi and Ommen Chandy blasted the chief minister. Declared Ravi: "If Karunakaran thinks that he only represents the Congress(I) then he is mistaken. Leaders may be with him but the Congress(I) is with us and Rajiv Gandhi." PCC(I) Chief C.V. Padmarajan was quick to warn that action would soon be taken against those who attended the conference. Retorted Ravi: "We do not agree with certain

Vyalar Ravi

K. Karunakaran

Ravi resigned and since then, Karunakaran and Ravi have been fighting as if they belonged to different political parties.

policies being pursued by the chief minister. But still, for the sake of party unity we have so far avoided any direct confrontation."

WEST BENGAL

Convulsed by Crises

■ If the Karnataka and Kerala problem is basically between Indira loyalists and Rajiv loyalists, a similar predicament confronts the high command in West Bengal where former Indira loyalists, led by the Union Minister for Programme Implementation A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury are seeking their share of the party cake and are up in arms against the leadership of former Indira-baiter Priya Ranjan Das Munshi. In fact, in West Bengal, PCC(I) chief Das Munshi is so involved in trying to hold his party together that he has ceased to pose a challenge to the state's Marxist rulers. Since its drubbing at the mid-June state municipal elections, the party has been

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convulsed by a series of crises, beginning with the dramatic revolt of Dr Sisir Bose. This "bhadralok" Congressman's charge that the party is being destroyed by the undemocratic tendency to foist leaders in an ad hoc manner from above has struck a responsive chord with most leaders in the state. Today, Das Munshi's dominance is being opposed by leaders like Ghani Khan Choudhury, Asoke Sen, Somen Mitra and the overwhelming majority of the state's 54 Congress(I) MLA's.

More worrisome are the signs of growing apathy among the party's grassroots workers—a tendency first hinted at by the failure of Das Munshi's Writers Building gherao call. Announced months in advance as a major party programme, the call evoked little response. And after the municipal polls, party workers from many districts reported that a large number of traditional Congress(I) supporters had abstained from voting, thereby offering a virtual walk-over to Left Front candidates.

All this, claim the dissidents, who today seem to outnumber their rivals, is because party workers have little faith in Das Munshi's leadership. In fact, he has failed to involve all Congressmen in the party's activities. So indecisive is the present PCC(I) leadership that it took over two months to actually suspend three MLA's—Samar Mukherjee, Ananda Mohan Biswas and Dr Sisir Bose—who have sided with the expelled Pranab Mukherjee. Last fortnight, Dr Bose derisively remarked that Das

Das Munshi

Ghani Khan

Today, Das Munshi's dominance is being opposed by leaders like Ghani Khan Choudhury and the overwhelming majority of the state's 54 Congress(I) MLA's.

Munshi has become a "laughing-stock" for not being able to take any action against him.

The only reason why dissidence is not open and vocal is because of Rajiv Gandhi's continued support for the present PCC(I) chief. The prime minister's recent tour of Calcutta has been interpreted as a deliberate expression of solidarity with Das Munshi. "Normally, it is the state party that boosts their Central leader," remarked a Congressman, "but now we have the phenomenon of the central leadership boosting a state chief."

ORISSA

Grab for Power

■ This is the only state where the high command has moved to back an embattled chief minister against his party opponents. But even that has not helped matters. After lobbying for over six months, Chief Minister Janaki Ballabh

J.B. Patnaik

Nityanand Mishra

The major threat to Patnaik is from the PCC(I) chief Nityanand Mishra who wrote a strongly-worded letter to the prime minister against Patnaik.

Patnaik was permitted to expand his cabinet last fortnight as a symbolic show of solidarity from the Centre. Patnaik, inexplicably, was also allowed to include Niranjan Patnaik, who had been forced to resign in the wake of an adverse high court judgement. The cabinet expansion only brought together various other lobbies which were lying in wait to make a grab for power. Now they have rallied behind the powerful Basant Kumar Biswal, known as the super chief minister in the Patnaik Cabinet. Meanwhile, five existing Cabinet ministers have been meeting Central leaders to complain against the chief minister. In addition, those MLA's who lobbied for Patnaik in his recent fight with the media, now feel cheated because they have not found a place in the new ministerial expansion.

But the major threat to Patnaik is from the PCC(I) chief Nityanand Mishra who wrote a strongly-worded letter to the prime minister against Patnaik. According to party sources, at least 12 MP's are with Mishra in his anti-Patnaik campaign. In a joint letter to the prime minister, they have emphasised the fact that the party is thoroughly demoralised due to the fast erosion in the credibility of both the Government and the party. Leading the anti-Rajiv assault is none other than Patnaik's young and ambitious brother-in-law Saumya Ranjan Patnaik, who is also an owner of an Oriya daily *Sambad*. While addressing a public meeting, he stated that Rajiv was not sincere in removing poverty from Kalahandi and instead had made it a public relations gimmick.

ALL this clearly revealed that an environment for direct confrontation between the high command and the dissidents was being created all over the country. The sudden surge in dissident activity is also directly related to the inordinate delay in organisational elections and to the impending assembly elections in Haryana, West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura and possibly Jammu & Kashmir. The national leaders are scrambling to find a foothold in influential party forums like the parliamentary board so they can manipulate the selection of candidates for the Assembly seats. Not that the situation is new. But under Indira Gandhi's leadership, dissidents were given the impression that she was not involved in any factional fights and was thus successful in the role of a final arbiter. But Rajiv has not been able to emulate his mother's strategy. Instead, he has given the overpowering impression that he is a man of strong likes and dislikes and will not rehabilitate anybody he considers bad or unfit for party work. It is precisely due to this that the party is currently divided between Indira loyalists and Rajiv loyalists. It is hardly a coincidence that all those who were considered very close to Indira Gandhi are being axed systematically.

During the last five years, Rajiv has not been able to evolve a system for party functioning and is still vacillating between his fanciful ideas of running the party on corporate lines and banking on a mix of the old guard and new faces. He has still not been able to find enough people from the solid phalanx of over 550 MP's and over 2,500 MLA's all over the country whom he can trust and his reluctance to meet senior leaders is seen as the main cause of his current party problems. Said a senior cabinet minister: "He can still reverse the trend only if he meets more politicians and people. In politics, there is no substitute for interaction with people." It is a lesson that Rajiv will have to learn fast if he has any intention of stemming the growing rot in the ruling party.

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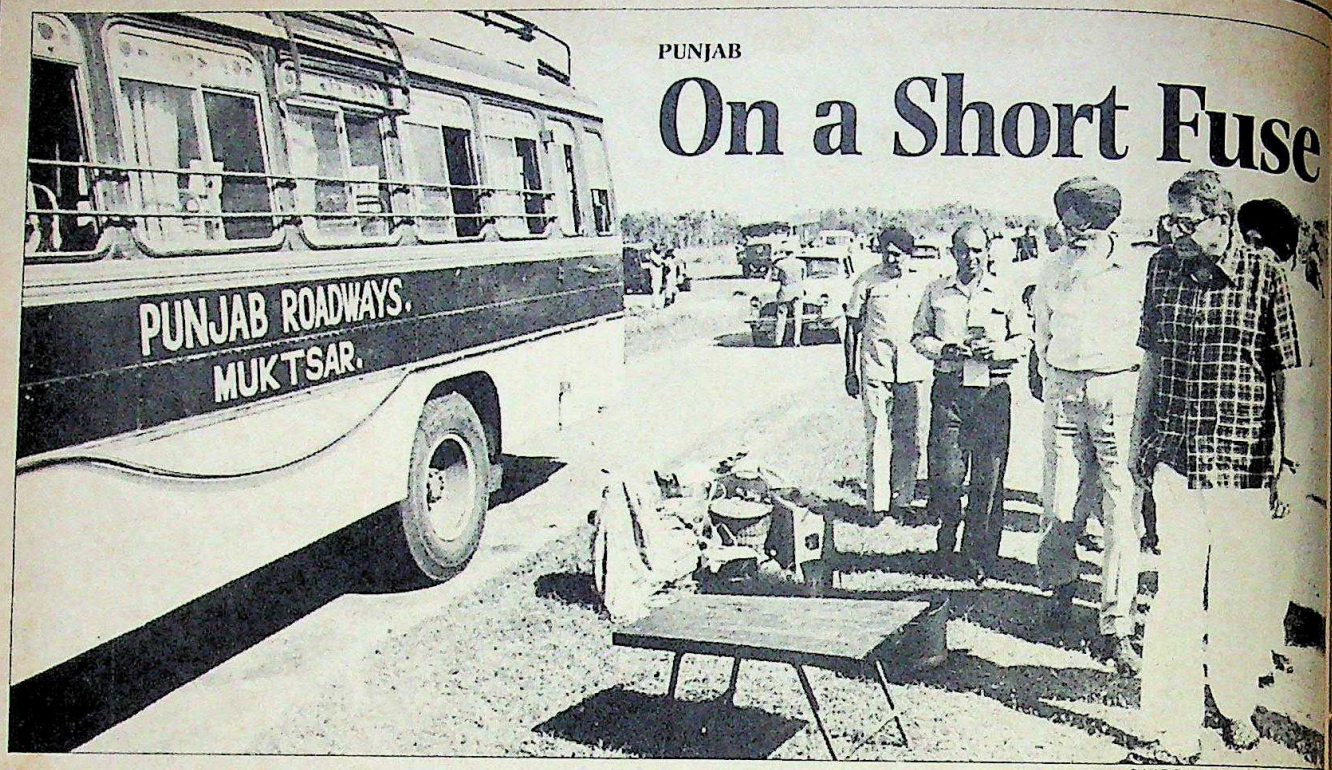
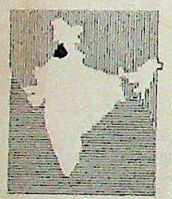
PUNJAB

On a Short Fuse



SWADESH TALWAR/Indian Express

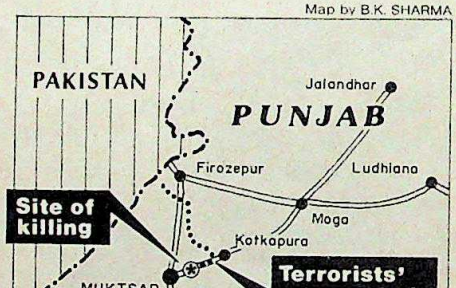
Barnala and Ray at Muktsar site



IN LUDHIANA'S Brown Hospital sits Chand Kaur, sobbing, cursing and swearing angrily and often incoherently. "I fell at their feet. I said we are Jat Sikhs, your people, though my husband has cut his hair. But they pushed me aside, saying, 'Go away, we must finish all these people quickly'," she says, describing the harrowing moments on a lonely stretch of a link-road near Muktsar that left 14 bus passengers dead and seven injured, including her husband Surjit Singh. The clerk was shot in the head and may never recover his sight.

But he was one of the fortunate few who still lives to tell the gory tale, for hardly one of the bullets that the four murderers—armed with automatic pistols and Sten guns—fired in the state transport bus that morning missed its target. Despite heavy automatic firing, not a single bullet had struck the body, roof or the seats of the bus which now stood as mute evidence of the outrage: blood dripping from the creeks in its body and flies swarming all over its bloodied insides. Said a haggard-looking Surjit Singh Barnala as he returned from the scene of the slaughter: "The terrorists definitely want a communal divide and violent clashes as only that can cause the migration of Hindus away from Punjab and of the Sikhs towards it." Soon enough, his cabinet was pleading with the

Map by B.K. SHARMA



Centre to prevent reprisals outside Punjab at any cost as that could foul up the communal atmosphere in the state.

In terms of the number of lives it consumed, as well as political fall-out, this was the worst carnage of all in the five-year history of blood, gore and terror in Punjab. In 15 frenetic minutes in the early hours of July 25, the terrorists had succeeded in putting the clock back on the hopes generated exactly a year ago when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the late Sant Harchand Singh Longowal signed the peace accord in New Delhi. Now, as the whole northern region of the country seethed with rage and indignation, a fresh fear psychosis spread among the Hindus in Punjab and as vicious riots broke out in parts of the capital the terrorists were probably laughing up their sleeves.

Last fortnight, they seemed to be winning as tension descended over north India. At Shimla and elsewhere in Himachal Pradesh, Sikh shops were ransacked and several bus passengers beaten up. In Ambala, a Sikh was stabbed to death and, as tension rose in several cities in Punjab, the army, for the first time since the accord was signed, staged flag marches in the volatile border towns of Amritsar, Tarn Taran, Dera Baba Nanak, Fatehgarh Churian, Batala and Gurdaspur.

Barely had Union Home Minister Buta Singh finished making a statement to Parliament on the Muktsar killings after his hurried visit to the spot that reports of heightening tension began to come in from several west Delhi colonies, where mixed Hindu and Sikh populations have lived under a fair bit of tension for several months now. The resettlement of Sikh widows of the November 1984 riots and then the Hindu migrants fleeing from Punjab had not exactly helped remove communal distrust in this sprawling gentrified lower middle-class ghetto.

Early next morning the area was aflame as hundreds of Hindus, led by the Punjab migrants, came to the streets in Tilak Nagar where a huge crowd of commuters waited for buses, and began a *siapa*, the noisy, Punjabi-style public mourning where women wail and beat

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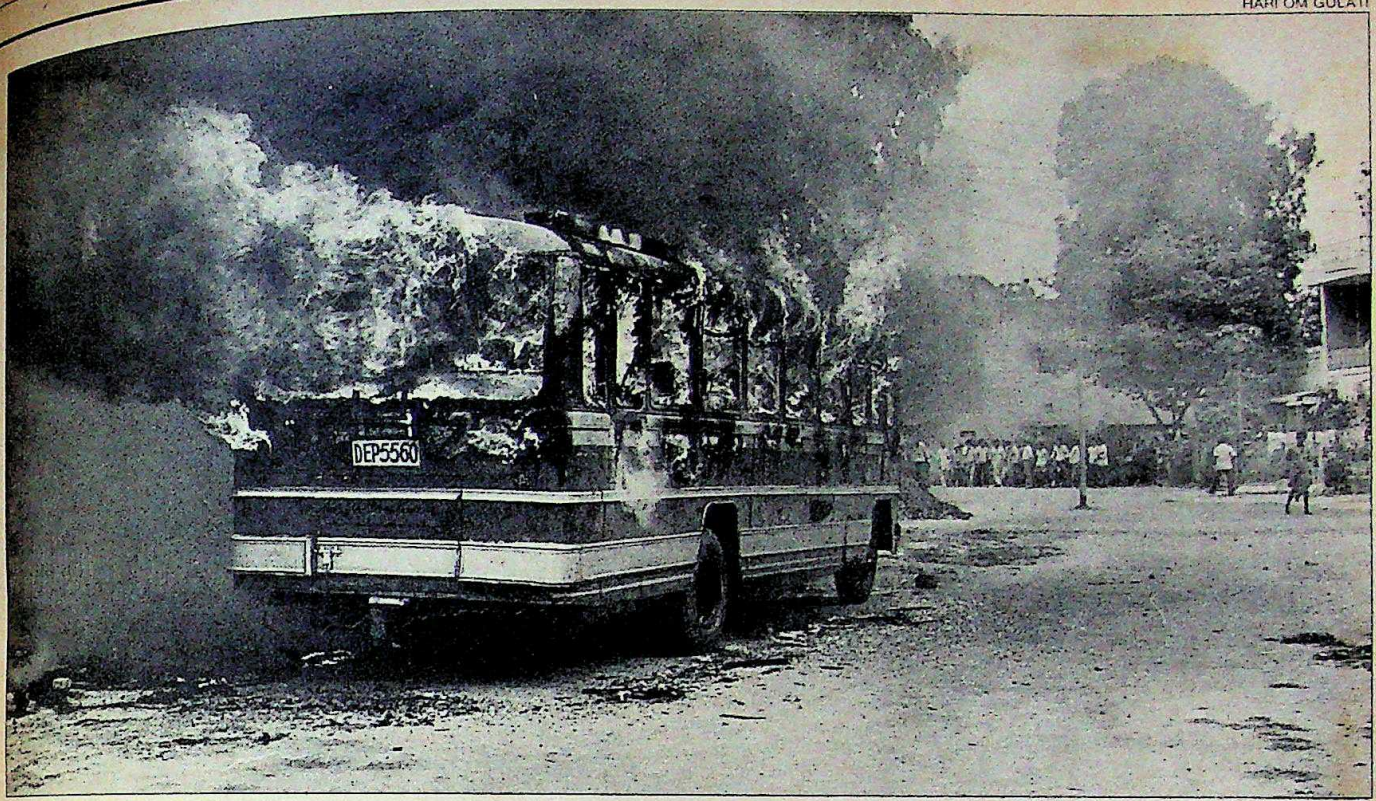
HARI OM GULATI



Rioting in Delhi: sharp recoil

their breasts and thighs. Tempers ran high and group clashes broke out in an area where Sikhs are not hopelessly outnumbered and where they had remained prepared for just this eventuality.

As stones and soda-water bottles flew and a pyromania reminiscent of November 1984 seized the rival mobs, streets were soon littered with debris and blood. "I will never understand how people's moods transformed so fast. A minute earlier, we were all quietly waiting for our buses. Now, several (people) were throwing stones and burning vehicles while still clutching their lunch-boxes," recalls an incredulous Mathew Koshy, who was desperately trying to get away from the scene on the afternoon of July 26. The violence, however, was not unanticipated. "It was expected, a consequence of the militant Hindu revivalism that has been visible for some time," said Delhi Police Commissioner Ved Marwah.

Trouble soon spread to nearby Janakpuri, Hari Nagar and even the business district of Karol Bagh as angry mobs—several of them led by people carrying *trishuls*, the symbol of the militant Hindu—asked shopkeepers to pull down shutters. Buta Singh and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K.L. Bhagat, who visited Tilak Nagar, were heckled by angry residents and until the Gurkhas of the army began to march across the area, there was no sign of any force controlling the violence.

But the situation, this time, was significantly different from what had happened in November 1984. At the very outset, the prime minister called up Delhi Lieutenant-Governor H.L. Kapur to put down violence effectively even if it meant calling out the army right away. The administration also requisitioned the services of an air force helicopter for aerial surveillance of the capital. Also, this time, Sikhs were standing up to the mobs. In fact, three of the men killed in police firing were Sikhs. According to senior officials, they were shot while they were sniping from roof-tops at the attacking mobs.

YET AGAIN, rumours of killings and counter-killings had left the capital perilously close to the edge of the short fuse. "It is madness. People rioting in Delhi are only serving the cause of those who killed innocent people in the bus in Muktsar," said retired lt-general Jagjit Singh Aurora, the new Rajya Sabha member from Punjab. Extremely worried by the fall-out of the killings at Muktsar, the Union Cabinet resolved to put it down in the most effective manner possible. The police had been ordered to shoot rioters, and to shoot to kill.

Just like the reprisals elsewhere, the killings in Muktsar too were not entirely unanticipated. Because of increased pressure from the police, the terrorists had not been able to do anything of significance for some time and an impression was growing that they were on the defensive. In such a situation, they were bound to try and pull off something spectacular. A day before the killings, Punjab police chief J.F. Ribeiro had warned Ranjan Gupta, the Faridkot district police superintendent, of the possibility. The police were expecting an attack on some VIP's.

But the terrorists stuck to their favourite target, the transport buses, which they have now hit four times with success, beginning with the midnight massacre of eight Hindus at Dhilwan near Amritsar on October 5, 1983, that saw the fall of the Darbara Singh government. Even this time, their planning was meticulous and they left no tracks for the police to follow. They forced a farmer to give them a ride on his Ford tractor to an irrigation channel about a kilometre away and then disappeared on foot. Police dogs were able to trace the smell for another 8 km towards the township of Gurharsahai and then lost it. The place is just about an hour's drive from the border. But the police suspect that the murderers are still hiding in the area.

There was also added cruelty this time in the manner the killings were executed: letting out women and children, making the clean-shaven men bury their heads between their knees and then shooting each one turn-by-turn while shouting, for the benefit of the survivors, that they

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wanted to teach a lesson to "these fat Hindus". The objective was obviously to cause as much indignation among the victims' communities as possible. It was achieved the next morning as people received their newspaper copies. Riots broke out in west Delhi soon afterwards.

YET ANOTHER significant fall-out of the killings was the confirmation of the security machinery's long-standing fear that the moment pressure is put on Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts, the terrorists will spill over into the adjoining districts, particularly Ferozepore, which too shares a long border with Pakistan. Some indications to the effect had been available of late: the killing of six car passengers last month and the increasing intelligence about the movements of known extremists. Last fortnight itself, at the village of Marmaloo near Muktsar, five terrorists looted the passengers of a bus at gunpoint. But they were chased, caught and almost lynched by the villagers, mostly Sikhs. Still, these men were relatively smaller fry and the terrorists in the region now have their own murderous pantheon led by none else than Gurjit Singh, a relation of Bhindranwale. Intelligence sources confirm that he returned to Punjab from Pakistan about three months ago and commands a group of 30 armed men. Gurdev Singh Usmanwala and Gurdev Singh Satianwali are his deputies.

Last fortnight, the CRPF killed two Sikhs related to Usmanwala in an encounter near Ferozepore and intelligence reports received at Chandigarh had spoken of a furious Usmanwala asking his followers to "teach them a lesson". Besides these three, the police suspect that Waryam Singh, whom an intelligence officer in Chandigarh described as a "satanic killer", was among the Muktsar killers. The quartet figures on the "hit-list" of 38 prepared by Ribeiro, who asserted that the killers will be caught. Said he: "Morale, both among people and the forces, is much higher in this region than elsewhere. They will surely catch them."

But if the latest outrage heavily dampened the recent feeling of police success in its drive against the terrorists the blame for this, at least partly, lay at their door. Earlier in the fortnight, they had launched with much fanfare Operation Mand, a massive overkill to clear the flood-prone, desolate riverine strip of land along the Beas River of terrorists. Helicopters, bull-dozers and mechanised boats were used in the campaign—from which much was expected. In the past, the police had lost the trail of fleeing terrorists on the fringe of the Mand region and there was suspicion that an isolated island in the Beas was the haunt of several terrorists, confirmed by the fact that a surveillance helicopter overflying the island was fired at last month.

BHAWAN SINGH

Tilak Nagar during the violence

The operation produced dazzling results; not so much in terms of captures of arms or criminals but in terms of publicity. Headlines talked of the capture of 200 terrorists and of the destruction of the "Khalistan capital". But all that the police had to show after the film-style spectacular were four pistols (two of them rusted), some ammunition, remnants of a crude arms factory, four cots and several illicit liquor stills.

Not a shot was fired in the 40-hour operation over the 240-sq km area and, in the end, the police were only embarrassed by the claims made in the publicity blitz. "The media played up the whole thing far out of proportion with the reality. We never claimed destruction of the 'Khalistan' capital and clearly stated that 200 persons had been picked up for questioning," said a defensive Amritsar Police Chief Mohammed Izhar Alam. But Kanwaljit Singh, minister of state for home affairs, claimed that the operation has finally brought the Mand area under government control.

The fact, however, remains that the whole show was put up on the eve of the monsoon session of Parliament to pre-empt the Opposition onslaught. It achieved that objective, but the highly-publicised claims raised expectations to dizzy heights and these suffered a sickening jolt with the Muktsar carnage and yet again caused a crisis of credibility for the police despite the impressive list of successes in days preceding the killings.

The killings also provided fresh ammunition to the Government's critics within the sharply-divided Akali Dal, led by the controversial Revenue Minister Major Singh Uboke who had earlier dismissed Operation Mand as "Operation Fraud" and loudly complained, at a cabinet meeting, that "innocent Sikh youths and even women" were being harassed and tortured by the security forces. The Cabinet meeting last fortnight became particularly scrappy for Barnala as even several of his supporters spoke against the police action. The result was the first unsavoury meeting between Barnala, who thinks he can't afford to alienate his partymen beyond a limit, and Ribeiro, who was in no mood to relent. "I know the compulsions of politicians," he said, "but fighting terrorism is a lot more important than conceding to their demands."

It is also a lot more difficult, particularly now, with counter-violence threatening to spill into the neighbouring regions and the Punjab cities where the Hindus are in a majority. Anything could set off a major catastrophe: the terrorists pulling off another raid of the Muktsar kind, a few deaths in rioting in Delhi or elsewhere, an attack on a VIP. A year after the accord signed in Delhi, Punjab is yet again poised on the edge of the precipice. Worse, it threatens to draw the whole nation into the bloody slush of communal hatred and terror.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA with GOBIND THUKRAL in Muktsar

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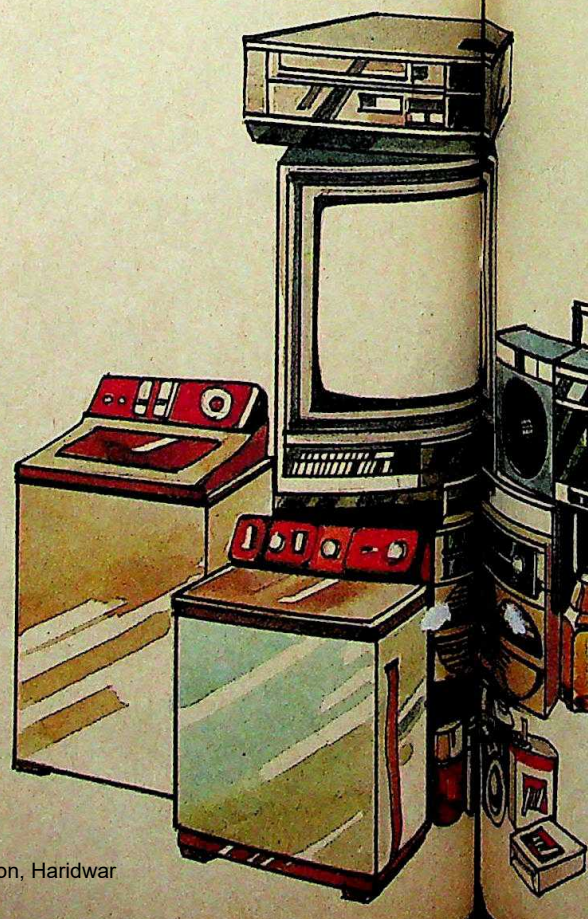

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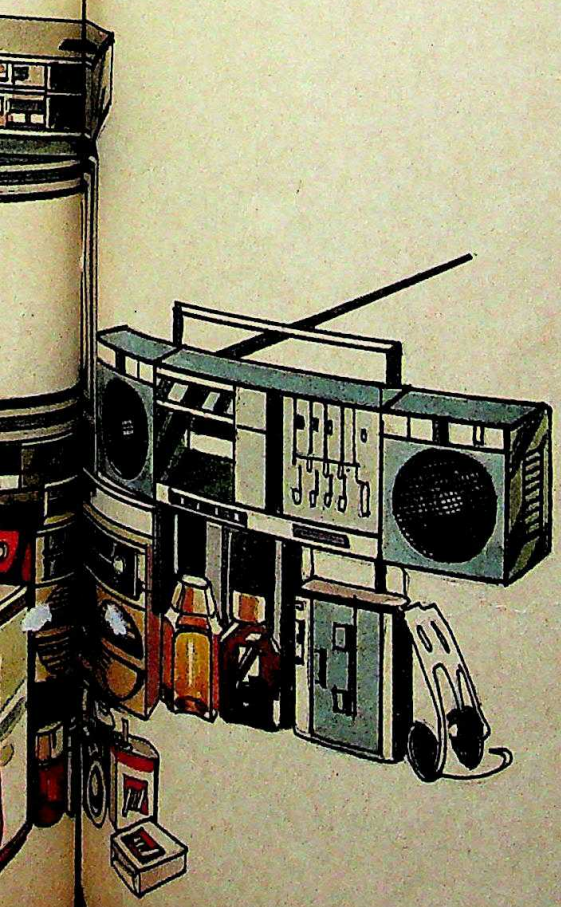

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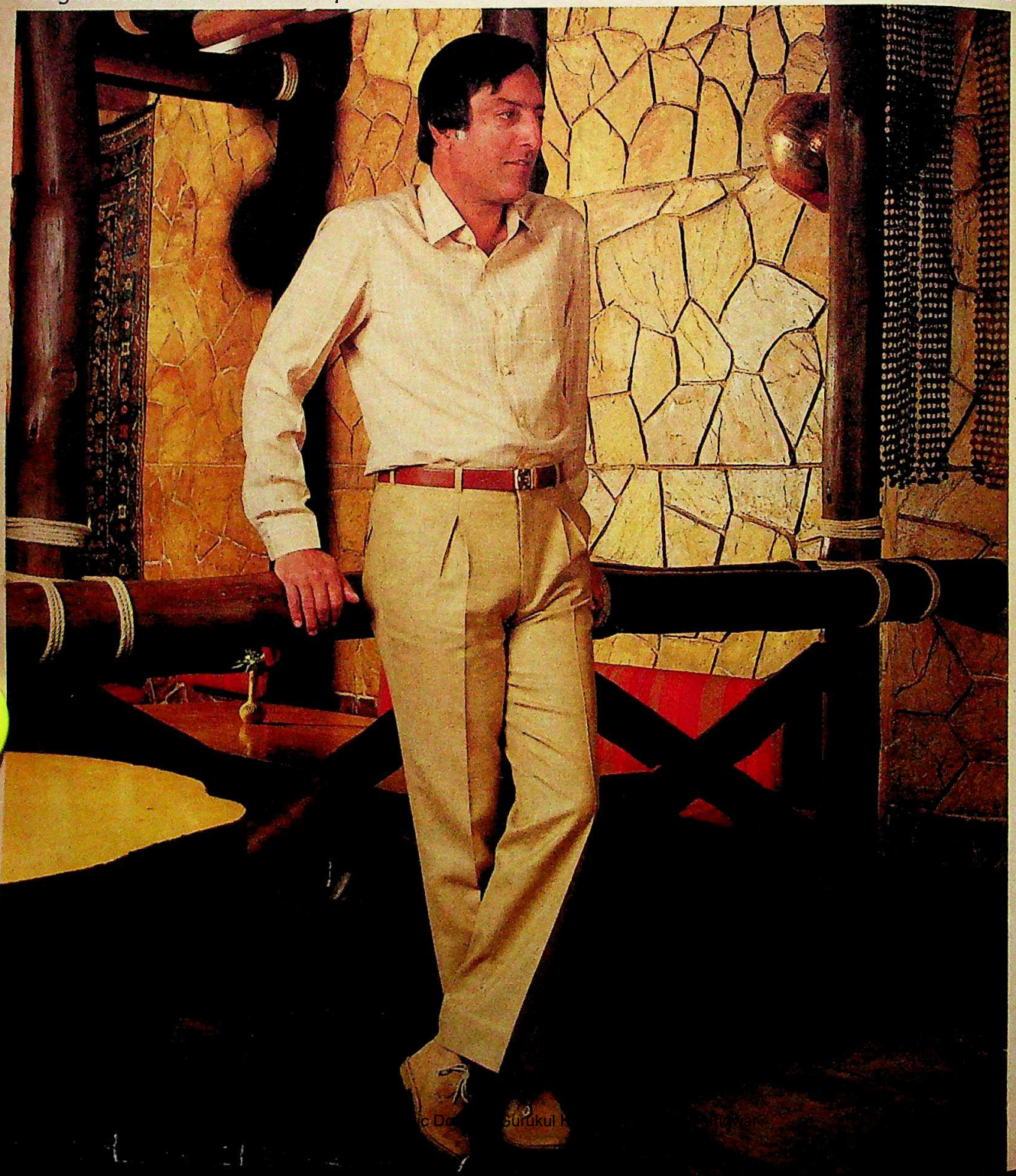

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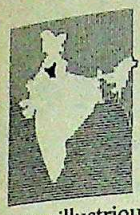
HARYANA

Lal vs Lal



TWO MONTHS after Bansi Lal took over the reigns of the Haryana Government, he still finds that he has time for little else than undoing the damage that his not so illustrious predecessor Bhajan Lal had wrought in his seven-year stewardship. "The state has been mismanaged and every day murky deeds come to light," says Lal, who has struggled to find time to counter the political challenge he faces from the Lok Dal leader, Devi Lal.

Bhajan Lal, possibly the slyest operator in contemporary Indian politics, had his tentacles spread far and deep and Lal has had to move on several fronts at the same time. Last fortnight, Bhajan Lal was given a ticket to the Rajya Sabha to keep him at arm's length so as to minimise his potential for mischief. But here too Lal has taken further precautions. The other party ticket was given to his resourceful son Surinder Singh, who can keep a close watch on Bhajan Lal's doings in Delhi.

Lal has also moved swiftly to streamline the administration and stem the rot of corruption. Says he: "I will thrash the corrupt and the inefficient and make them work honestly." Over 280 officers—ranging from the rank of secretaries to tehsildars—have been transferred. Some 20 non-MLA chairmen, vice-chairmen and advisers of state corporations appointed by Bhajan Lal have been sacked.

In a swift operation, Lal ordered the takeover of a dozen silica sand quarries near Faridabad which were a source of patronage for Bhajan Lal. Currently a high-level probe is on to determine how many benami shares Bhajan Lal and his business associate, Pokharmal, had in the quarries.

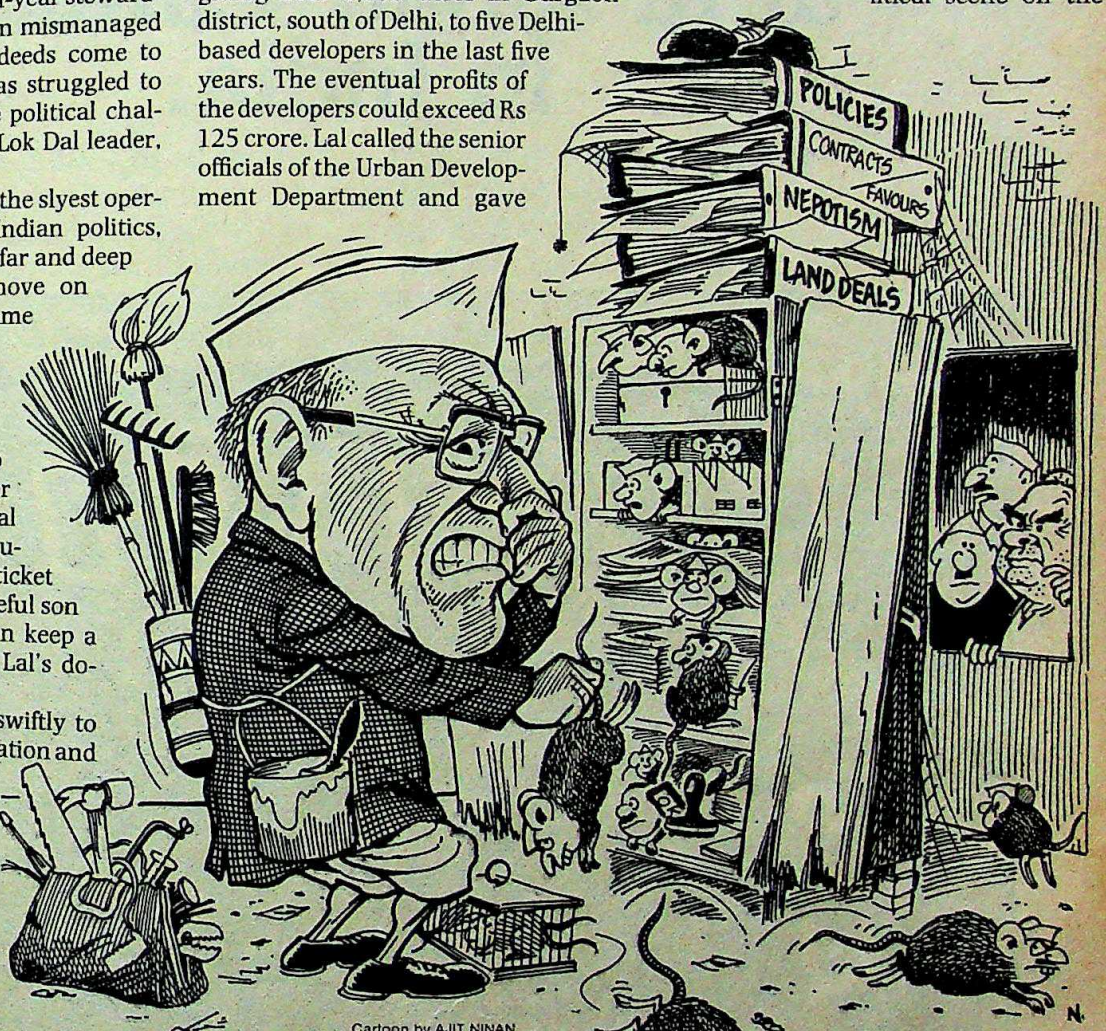
Lal then moved against the irregular allotment of 180 residential plots in six towns which Bhajan Lal had given four days before he resigned. Three applications had given the address of a petrol pump, while one had not given any address at all. In some cases the date of application and in others the size of the plot allotted had been missed out. Since the allotment letters were still in the process of being issued, Lal cancelled all the 180 allotments. "I am not running a club," he quipped later.

Bhajan Lal's Government had also twisted the law in every possible way in giving over 4,150 acres in Gurgaon district, south of Delhi, to five Delhi-based developers in the last five years. The eventual profits of the developers could exceed Rs 125 crore. Lal called the senior officials of the Urban Development Department and gave them a mouthful but the problem is thousands of innocent buyers have invested their money in the properties. However, the new Urban Development Secretary R.S.Mann, a no-nonsense man, has already started moving to limit the damage, cancelling the allotment of some 800 acres to the leading land firm, DLF, which had orginally been allotted 2,000 acres.

But the decisions that clearly show that Lal means business pertain to Bhanu Industries, the Hissar-based combine run by Bhajan Lal's son-in-law, Anup Bishnoi. The Haryana power board has been asked to recover arrears amounting to Rs 80 lakh from the firm and explain how this happened. Bishnoi's units were getting round-the-clock supply of power but now the board has been told to treat them at par with the others. And the quota of molasses allotted to Bishnoi's distillery has been reduced from 55 to 25 per cent of the state's production.

Even Devi Lal, whose continuing campaign against the Punjab accord has kept Haryana's political scene on the boil, has stopped saying that the Haryana Government is now corrupt. Lok Dal sources admit that Bhajan Lal would have been a walkover for them in the coming assembly elections but the Jat from Bhiwani is a different proposition. But Lal is the first to admit that he still faces an uphill task. "I know the job is difficult," he says. As fresh evidence of Bhajan Lal's deals continues to emerge, Lal's words might turn out to be an understatement.

—GOBIND THUKRAL



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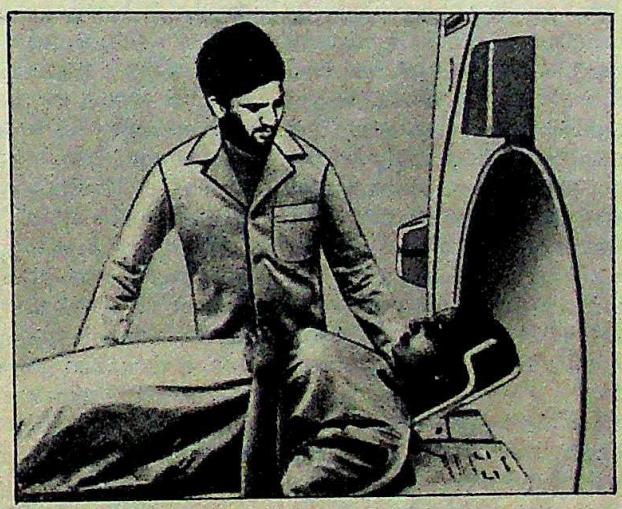

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EYE-CAMP VICTIMS

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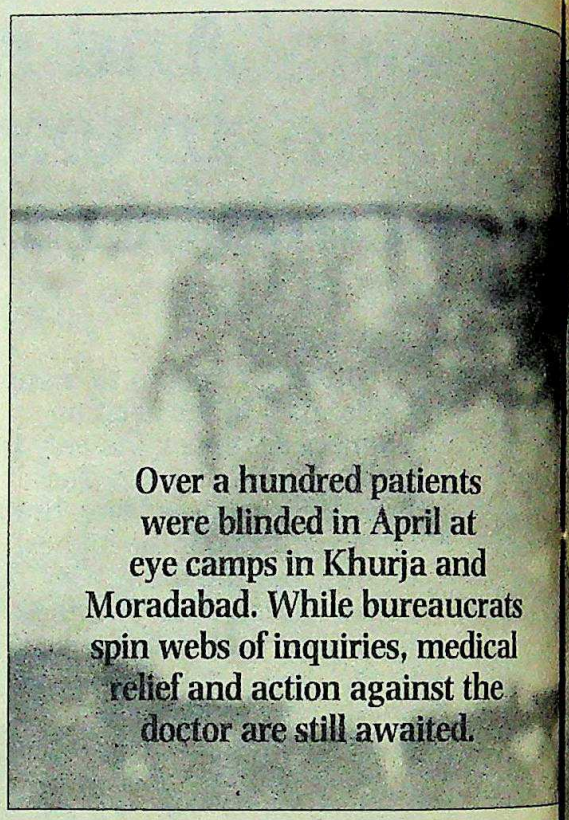

Over a hundred patients were blinded in April at eye camps in Khurja and Moradabad. While bureaucrats spin webs of inquiries, medical relief and action against the doctor are still awaited.

ON APRIL 22 at 4.00 p.m., cataract patients at the eye camp organised by the Adarsh Sarafa Club in Moradabad, watched flabbergasted as the operating surgeon, Dr R.M. Sahai, 49, suddenly announced that it was too hot and suspended operations for two-and-a-half hours leaving eight patients already administered local anaesthesia lying on the operation tables. The patients were understandably agitated. But the real reason for the sudden disappearance of the doctor was graver than the April heat. For this was when Sahai's junior doctor, Rajesh Sekhri, broke the news to him that many of the 108 patients on whom Dr Sahai had performed cataract operations the previous day at Khurja, 200 km away, had developed severe infection in the eyes.

The news must have rung loud alarm bells for a surgeon as experienced as Sahai, who says he performs an average of 12,000 cataract operations every year. But assuming, he confessed later, that it was a "minor problem" and after ordering the despatch of equipment and some members of his team, he resumed operations at 6.30 and even continued with the scheduled 150 the next day while Dr Sekhri, who had never handled a calamity of such proportions earlier, was left to deal with a stream of patients complaining of acute pain, pus formation, watering and bleeding in the eyes. Eventually, all the 108 cataract patients lost vision in the operated eye. In Moradabad the toll is gradually mounting as official inquiry teams are still trying to locate all the victims. Till last fortnight 11 more of the 390 operated had been found to have lost sight taking the total number of unfortunates to 119.

Though a spate of newspaper reports last fortnight highlighted the tragedy of the victims and the indifference of the doctors and officialdom, there is little hope of any immediate retribution or relief to the unfortunate victims. The Uttar Pradesh Government has received two official reports on the tragedy, but neither report categorically blames any particular individual or set of equipment.

Further, while a criminal case under Section 338 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) (causing grievous hurt by act of negligence) was filed against Sahai and his team over a month ago, progress has been tardy. The station house officer of the Khurja police station, O.S.Rathor, says he has little time for the investigation because of his routine duties and has asked the Government to transfer the case to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). But the state Government is yet to take any decision on his request. And though Khurja's Sub-Divisional Magistrate Shatrughan Singh, who conducted the first of the two inquiries and found prima facie evidence of negligence against Sahai's team, has also recommended that the state Government give interim relief ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 2,000, the Government has yet to decide—pleading that investigations have yet to be completed. The state Government has now decided to ban Sahai and to take a written undertaking from camp organisers that patients would be kept in post-operative care for at least seven days.

But for Khurja's eyeless, all this is cold comfort. "*Taarif mein lut gaye hum to Jaipur wale ki*, (We have been duped by the fame of the Jaipur doctor)", cries Har Pyaari, 70, still in agony with pain and constant watering from a shrunken grey jelly mass which was once her right eye. The sight in her other eye is also fast deteriorating making it difficult for her to work. But she refuses to consult a doctor now. "Even if I can't see at all I won't get an operation done," says a visibly-scared Pyaari.

Har Pyaari: painful agony

"*Pakistan ke doctor bahut behter hain* (The doctors in Pakistan are much better)," says Ummo Begum, 75, who had come from Karachi to visit her daughter. Convinced by Dr Anil Aggarwal, who organised the camp for the Lion's Club, that Dr Sahai was an extremely competent doctor, she agreed to the operation. Today, sitting sullenly on a *charpai*, she says: "*Ab wahin ja ke dikhaungi. Yahan koi fayeda nahin.* (I will only see a doctor there; there is no point seeing one here)."

A frail and sobbing Moharshree says she went to show her right eye. But the doctors insisted on operating her left eye which today is a gaping hole veiled by a wrinkled eyelid. With not a soul to call her own, and unable to see more than diffused figures, the 68-year-old-woman is living on neighbours' sympathy.

Word of the tragedy had first

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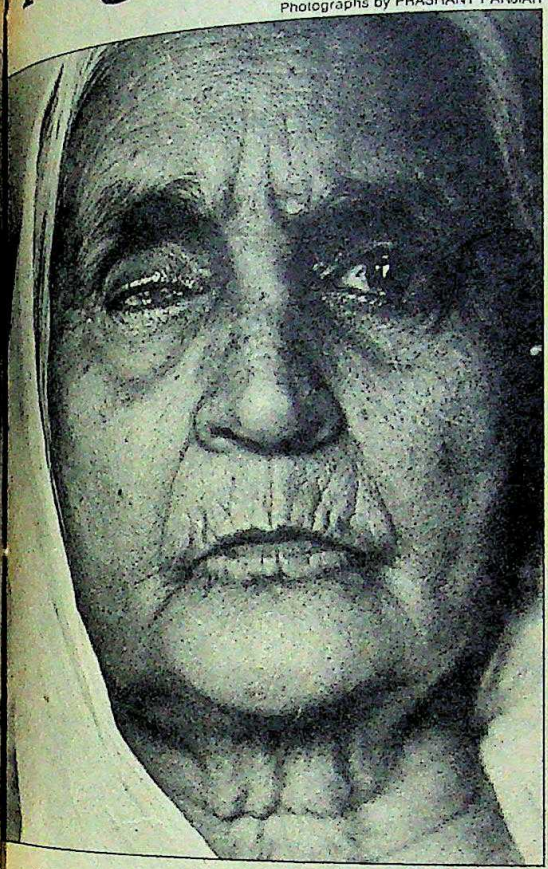
Negligence

Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR



leaked out in May, but the issue really snowballed after Singh submitted his report on July 14. Singh's report was supplemented on July 23 by a report by O.P.Gupta, deputy director in the Health Department.

Both the inquiries concluded that the most likely cause of the disaster was the saline solution used in treating the anterior chambers of the eye after the operation. Dr L.P.Aggarwal, former director of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, also carried out an inquiry at Dr Sahai's behest and came to the same conclusion.

But while Dr Aggarwal found no other reason, the two official inquiries felt that Dr Sahai's team must share part of the blame. Singh is more inclined to believe that the solution was contaminated post-manufacture, implying that it was contaminated while in the possession of Dr Sahai's team. The reports also point to other examples of negligence by Dr Sahai's team which could have led to the infection. Five cryo-probes (needles kept at a very low temperature and used to puncture the cataract) were used over and over again as the operations were rushed through. The linen on the nine tables used for the operation was not changed at all. The equipment used for the operations had been sterilised in Jaipur, more than 24 hours earlier, when it should have been sterilised there. However, Dr Sahai denies that he and his team can be accused of negligence.

Singh's report is much harsher on Sahai for his "indifference towards (the) patients" after the infection was detected. Dr Sahai returned to Khurja on April 23 and spent the next day there, administering strong antibiotics to the patients. He came back on April 28 but flew to Rome for a conference on May 2. His plea is that since the treatment had been decided upon and his team of seven opthalmologists were qualified to treat the patients, his presence "would at best have provided psychological relief".

But Singh says the infection could have led to meningitis, and as Sahai should have been aware of this, his behaviour was "most condemnable". A precious 48 hours were wasted before Sahai turned his attention to his victims at Khurja. By that time the damage had been done. Almost all private practitioners consulted by the victims told them that had they come within the first 24 hours their eyesight could have been saved. By both Sahai's and Sekhri's account to Singh, they were hopeful of saving at least 15 to 20 per cent of the cases even until April 28 and yet Sahai did not consider it necessary to camp in Khurja to try and save as many as possible.

Sahai was not doing charity. In Moradabad Chief Medical Officer R.C.Johri says Sahai's team was paid Rs 40 per operation besides free lodging, food and transport. In Khurja the Lions Club spent Rs 8000. But Sahai denies he took money.

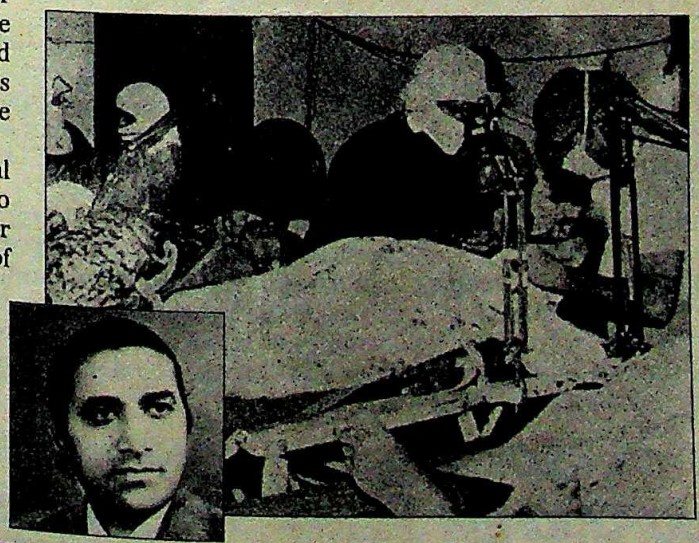
In his 25-page first information report (FIR) lodged on June 27, Singh has sought the prosecution of Dr Sahai and his team members under Section 338 of the IPC which recommends imprisonment for two years. But Sahai, who feels that the saline solution was to blame, says: "I have been crucified in this episode."

State Health Secretary Shyam Suri admits that the tragedy—and the widespread publicity it has received—will have an adverse effect on the eye relief camp project organised under the 20-point programme but says the Government is powerless to ban voluntary organisations from organising the camps. Of the 2.5 lakh operations conducted in the state till now, over 80 per cent have been performed by the voluntary organisations. "We don't have the infrastructure to even depute inspection officers here leave alone conduct these camps ourselves," says Suri.

Meanwhile, passions continue to run strong in Khurja, best known for its pottery. Anger against the doctors and the camp's organisers is still palpable. The Khurja victims have come together under the banner of Netra Peedit Kalyan Samiti to file a case in the Supreme Court against Sahai and the Lions Club. Says a belligerent B.C. Govil, secretary of the committee: "The doctors and the Lions Club will have to suffer as much as we have." Maybe they will, but there is one gift nobody can bestow on the unfortunate 119: the gift of sight.

—TANIA MIDHA in Khurja with DILIP AWASTHI and SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

Sahai (inset) at the Moradabad eye camp: indifferent attitude



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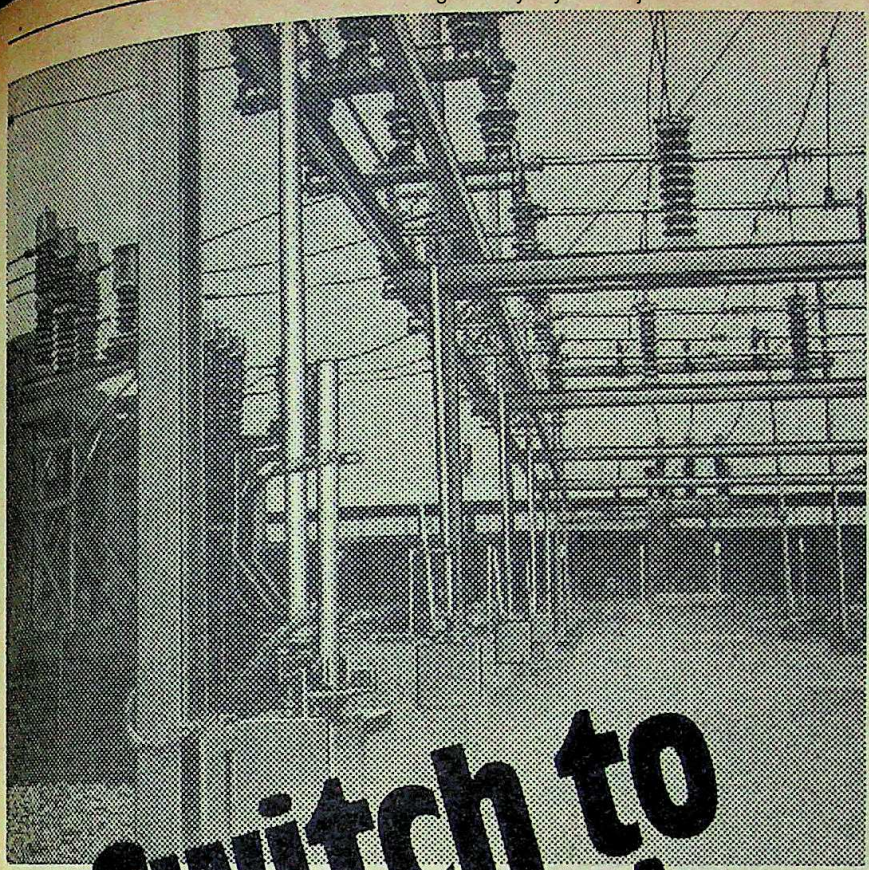

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ANDHRA PRADESH

Political Stunt

DRESSED in flowing saffron, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao was in his element. His cabinet had just had a short-notice meeting in Hyderabad's historic Jubilee Hall, the first time that it had met outside the secretariat. And now he was informing the 3,000-strong cheering crowd of supporters of the momentous decision that the Cabinet had taken: to increase the reservation for the backward classes in colleges and Government jobs from 25 to 44 per cent. "You are not backward. The society is backward and we have taken this step to reform the society," he thundered, as fire-crackers greeted the announcement of the hike in reservations. And when Rama Rao added: "The law that prevails today is for big fish to eat small fish and our government has taken the side of the small fish in this battle," he almost brought the house down.

But neither all the brouhaha which surrounded the announcement, nor the subsequent campaign whipped up in favour of it, have been able to hide the fact that this was yet another decision that the populist Rama Rao was herded into taking. And like many other decisions taken by his government in haste, this also has led to a reaction which Rama Rao could not have foreseen. Though a Gujarat-style anti-reservation stir is yet to materialise, students in colleges across the state have been split into "forwards" and "backwards" and the growing antagonism is posing a threat to law and order in over 15 towns where students have gone on strike and called bandhs.

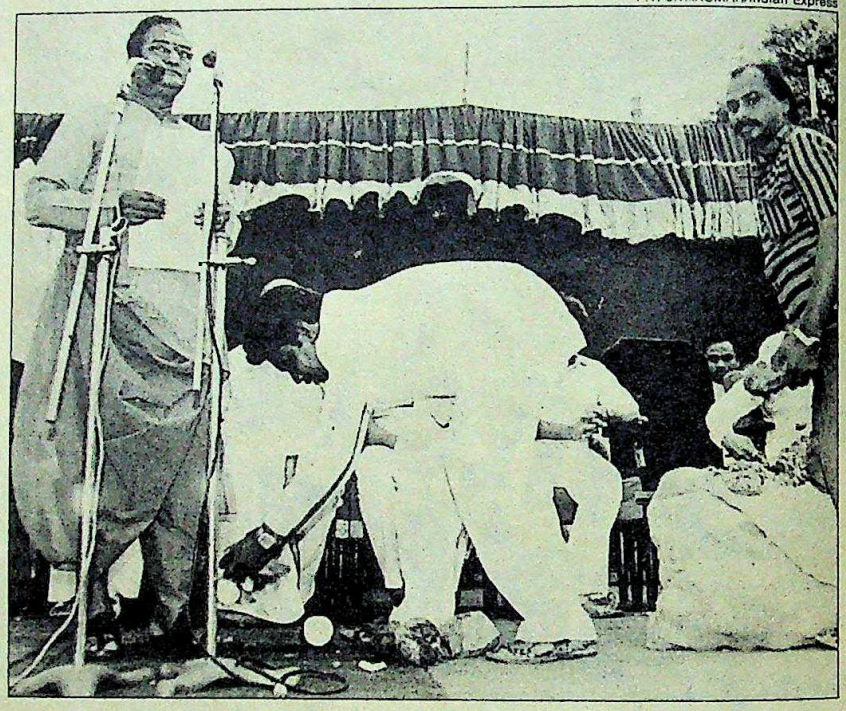
The sequence of events leading to the Government's decision tells its own tale. The Rama Rao Cabinet had its fortnightly meeting on July 1 but there was no mention of this major decision that day. But between July 1 and July 4, Rama Rao received intelligence reports that a convention of leaders of backward classes, mostly owing allegiance to the Congress(I) and scheduled to be addressed by Union External Affairs Minister P. Shiv Shanker, was likely to swing the backward classes solidly behind the Congress(I). With an estimated 200 representatives from each of the 100-odd backward castes in the state likely to attend the convention, it could turn out to be the most impressive collection of backward caste leaders in recent times.

As the backward castes comprise 52 per cent of the state's population of over 60 million, Rama Rao was understandably alarmed. On July 4, he ordered that the N.K. Muralidhara Rao Commission report on reservations submitted in 1982 (before he came to power), be examined. The same day he decided that the commission's recommendation—to raise the percentage from 25 to 44—would be immediately accepted by the Government. Members of the Cabinet were informed of the emergency meeting scheduled for the next day, and of the agenda. Rama Rao added his own bit by stipulating an income limit of Rs 12,000 annually for those eligible to benefit from the new policy.

Rama Rao's decision managed to take the sting out of the convention but Shiv Shanker called it "a political stunt" and warned: "The hike in reservations is a plot to incite people of the higher castes to challenge the decision in a court of law and thus get the whole process stalled." The convention, which ended in the setting up of the Andhra Pradesh Backward Classes Sangham (APBCS) with Congress(I) MP T. Bala Goud as president, instead turned its ire on the income limit, calling for its withdrawal if the "Government was really interested in the welfare of the backward classes".

Opposition from the higher castes also emerged soon enough. The first banner of revolt went up in Osmania University with the formation of the Andhra Pradesh Nava Sangharshana Samithi (APNSS) "to protect the interest of the forward classes". In less than a week the agitation spread to the districts with students boycotting classes and examinations to take out processions and hold meetings condemning the Government's decision. Says APNSS Convenor K. Ravindra Reddy: "We are not against reservations for the oppressed but against the decision to increase it to illogical proportions."

P.V. SIVAKUMAR/Indian Express



Rama Rao announcing reservation policy: populist ploys

With the pro-reservationists launching their own body—the Andhra Pradesh Sama Sangrama Parishad (APSSP)—which has clear support from Telugu Desam leaders—the stage was being set for a battle of attrition. As experience in numerous states—Gujarat, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra—has shown, it is impossible to appease the upwardly mobile and politically powerful backward castes without triggering violent passions in the higher castes who feel that reservations should have been ended long ago. With the APNSS calling for a state-wide bandh this month, the movement against the increase in reservations was slowly—and ominously—gaining in strength.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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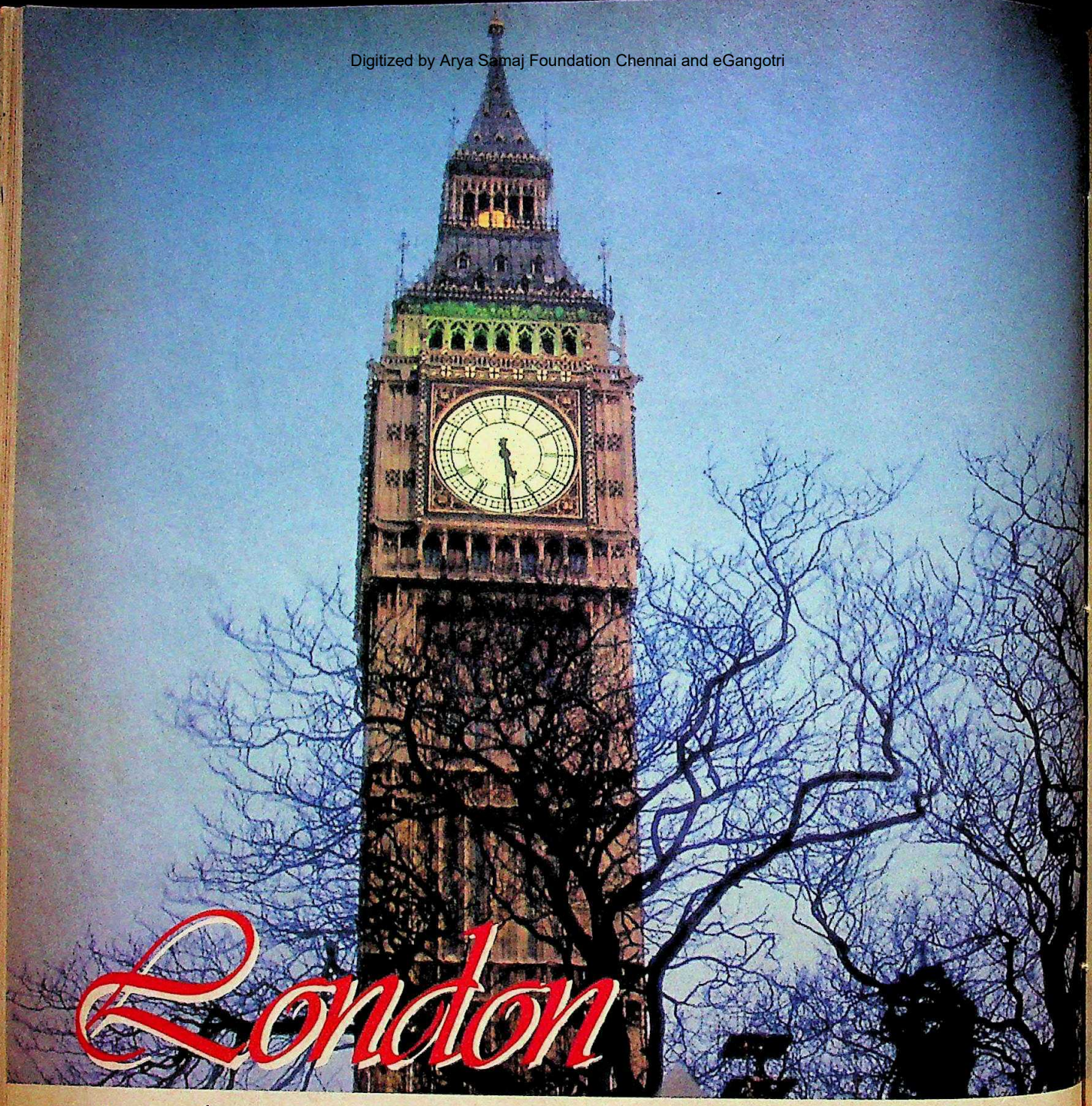

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UTTAR PRADESH

Toothless Act

THE Bir Bahadur Singh Government is realising that catching crooks is easier said than done. When it passed the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Antisocial Activities (Prevention) Act in January with much fanfare, it had seemed that it was only a matter of time before the state's 2,500 listed gangsters would be behind bars. But with 475 of the 771 gangsters arrested in the last six months successfully securing bail, the state Government last month ordered a freeze on the use of the act, tacitly conceding the brunt of the criticism levelled against it: that it is full of legal loopholes and lacunae which make it very difficult to be upheld in court.

Worse, by uniting the state's gangsters in their opposition to the act, the move has virtually boomeranged on the Government. Before the act was passed, two MLA's from Singh's home district of Gorakhpur—Hari Shanker Tiwari and Virendra Pratap Sahi, who are listed as mafia bosses in police files—were at each other's throat. But on the day the ordinance was issued, the two were seen conferring like long lost friends. In fact, most criminals of the state have joined hands to defend each other. At present there are 350 writ petitions against arrests pending in the state's various courts.

The judiciary's opinion on the act was best expressed in a judgement handed down by the high court in April. Deciding the appeal were Justice Sagir Ahmed and Justice B.L. Lumba. The latter, in fact, had been involved in the formulation of this act as the state's erstwhile law secretary before being appointed to the bench in December. But now, speaking as a judge, he joined Ahmed in ordering special judges to ignore sections 2 and 3 in considering the question of bail.

These sections are the teeth of the act. Section 2 defines a gangster but the definition is so loose that it can apply to virtually anybody in the state. Section 3 lists the procedures to be followed in implementing the act but grants powers to officialdom which cannot but be found arbitrary by the courts. Naturally, the court's observation dismayed the administration. Said Mata Prasad, the home secretary: "The court order amounted to striking down the act without saying so." The Government went in appeal to the Supreme Court, which stayed the high court decision.

But this temporary reprieve cannot hide the basic defects in the act. Daya Shankar Misra, an advocate of the Allahabad High Court who has secured bail for over 70 persons held under the act, says several provisions of the act are ultra vires of the Constitution. Others also concur that the act—which provides for a minimum of two years imprisonment for even minor offences— is violative of Articles 14, 19, 21 and 22 of the Constitution as it gives arbitrary powers to the police against the accused. Says a sessions judge, who wishes to remain anonymous: "The fundamental right of a citizen to have equality before law becomes meaningless when a law itself calls somebody a gangster." Adds a high court judge: "It is the first act of its kind where the police is the sole authority. The executive and the judiciary find no mention in the act as far as implementation is concerned."

Worse, instead of providing for a system of checks and balances, the act vests all the powers in lower-level police functionaries who can use it to settle personal scores. Unlike the National Security Act where the district magistrate issues the warrant of arrest on the recommendation of police superintendent and forwards the case to the state Government for approval, this act can be slapped on anyone by the policemen themselves.

"We had laid down guidelines by a circular in March that no action should be initiated without concurrence of senior police officials, and of the district magistrate when required," says Director-General of Police (DGP), D. K. Aggarwal. But the fact remains that most of these guidelines are not incorporated in the act. A review committee set up by the DGP found that of the 60 cases that came up before it, 33 were too flimsy to justify prosecution.

The Opposition, which had resisted the act from its conception to the passing stage, has been no less vocal in taking it apart. Lok Dal's Virendra Verma, in a complaint to the prime minister, has stated that 25 party workers were being held under the act on "totally fictitious grounds."

Chief Minister Singh, however, refutes all allegations of political misuse. "Go to Etah and Basti and you will find that not one Lok Dal worker has been held under this act without a criminal history," he charges rhetorically. The act has gone a long way in "curbing gangsterism," says the chief minister. Facts, and the Government's moratorium on its implementation, do not bear this out. Hopefully, the Government will come forward with a more tenable act after the ongoing review is completed.

—DILIP AWASTHI

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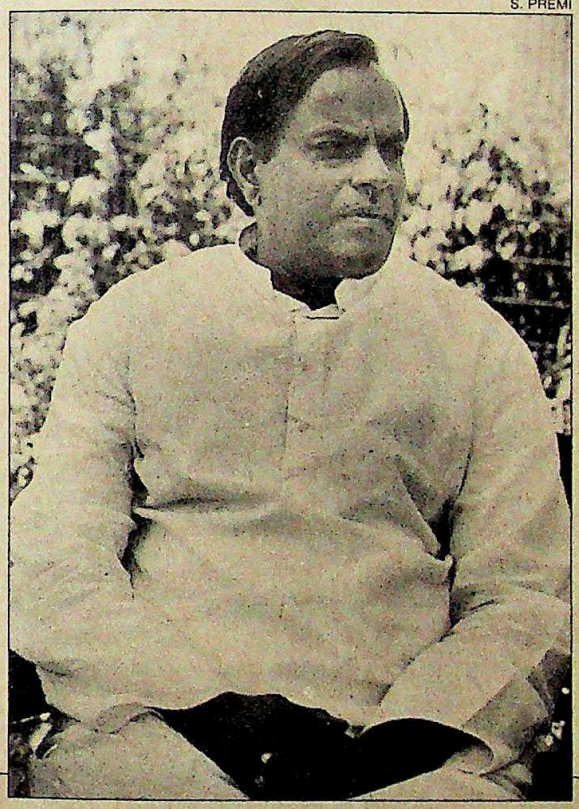

Bir Bahadur Singh

With 475 of the 771 gangsters arrested in the last six months successfully getting bail, the state Government ordered a freeze on the use of the act conceding that it is full of legal loopholes.

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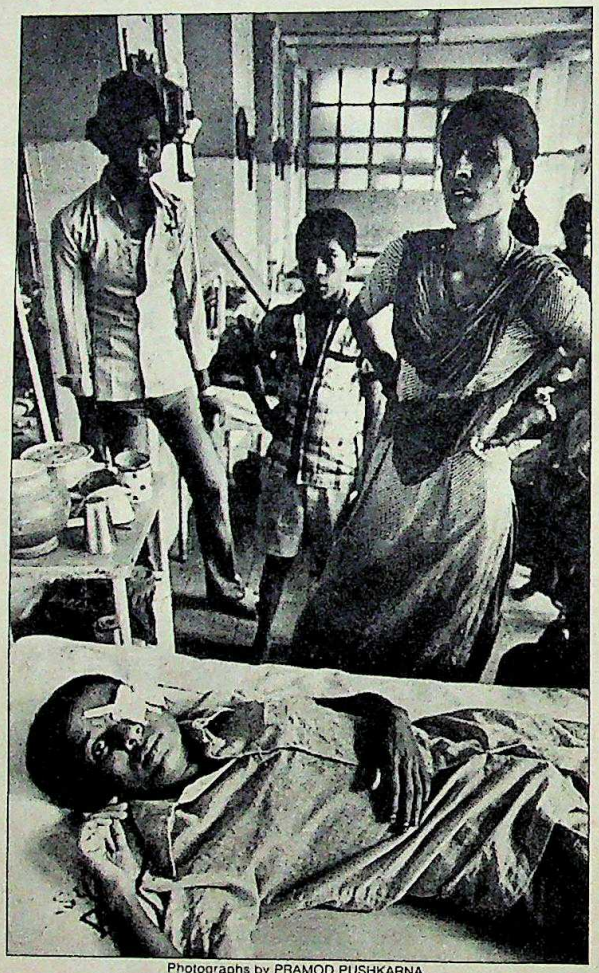
GUJARAT

Ahmedabad's Agony

THE FINAL toll from this year's troubled Jagannath Yatra in Ahmedabad is certain to go beyond the sickeningly familiar statistics of lives lost and property destroyed. The violence and mayhem that accompanied the yatra has widened the chasm between the Harijans and Muslims of Gujarat, adding a new dimension to the continuing caste and communal conflict in the state and threatening the magical Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi and Muslim (KHAM) alliance that saw the Congress(I) romp home in the last two assembly elections.

Tension between the Muslims of Ahmedabad—roughly 15 per cent of the city's 26 lakh population—and Hindus has been festering since the infamous riots of 1969, but the latest conflagration has shown that there is a new solidarity and aggressiveness among the Hindus. Revivalist Hindu organisations have even initiated a move to organise a social and economic boycott of the minority community. As if all this was not cause enough for concern, Chief Minister Amarsinh Chaudhary proved singularly inept in handling the crisis and had to be bailed out by P. Chidambaram, Union minister of state for personnel, public grievances and pensions, who is also holding temporary charge of internal security in the Ministry of Home. Were it not for Chidambaram's post-haste airdash to Ahmedabad, the state's riot toll figure could have well have been much higher than the 46 officially conceded (the unofficial figure is 67).



A young woman hit by a bullet in the Jamalpura area

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Lord Jagannath's temple in the Muslim-dominated Jamalpura area in Ahmedabad is specially revered by Harijans, who constitute nearly a fifth of the city's population, and the rath yatra is the biggest religious event for the city's Hindus. Not surprisingly therefore, the violence at the yatra (INDIA TODAY, July 31)—which also claimed the life of a Harijan home guard—has swept the Harijans into the vortex of the Hindu-Muslim conflict. Said an agitated Kishor Parmar, a street vendor in the walled city: "How can we keep quiet when our yatra is being attacked?"

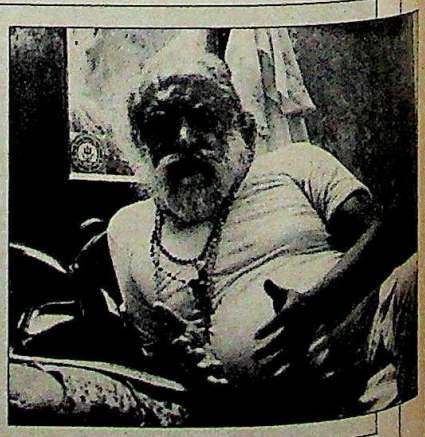
Though the origin of the trouble at the yatra is shrouded in mystery, the Hindus of Gujarat, helped by highly-charged press reports and official bungling, are convinced that Muslims had attacked the religious procession. Curiously enough, Ahmedabad's Police Commissioner B.K. Jha told the press that the yatra had been attacked but somehow failed to point out that the trouble began on a narrow road lined on both sides by Hindu houses. Claims Ibrahim Sheikh, joint secretary of the Majlis-e-Mushawarat: "There was no trouble in the Muslim area. It began in the Hindu area when some yatris raised provocative anti-Muslim slogans, which

"There was no trouble in the Muslim area. It began in the Hindu area when yatris raised anti-Muslim slogans."

IBRAHIM SHEIKH
joint secretary, Majlis-e-Mushawarat

"If we hadn't called for a bandh, Gujarat would have been in flames."

SAMBHU MAHARAJ
leader, Hindu Suraksha Samiti



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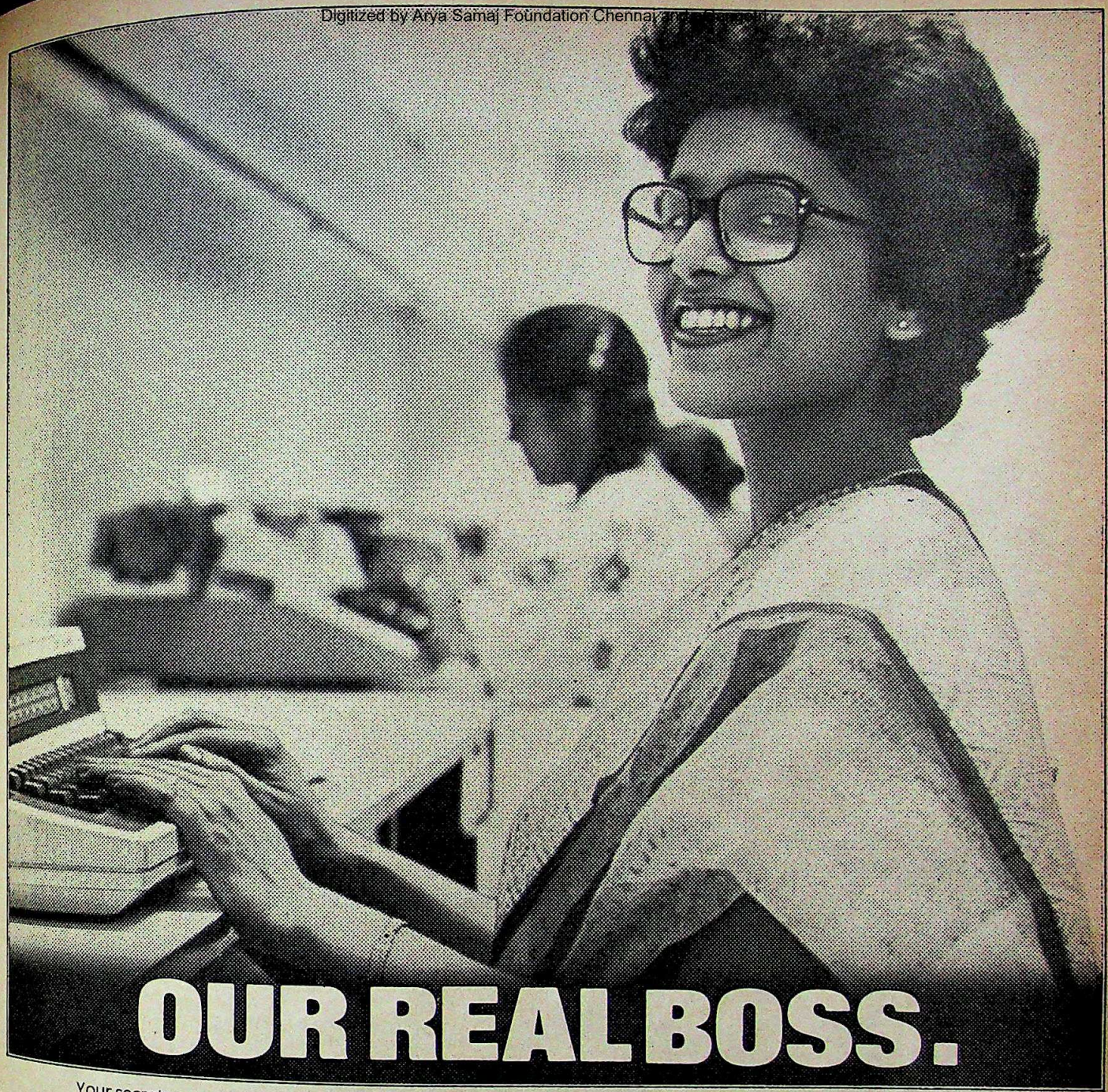

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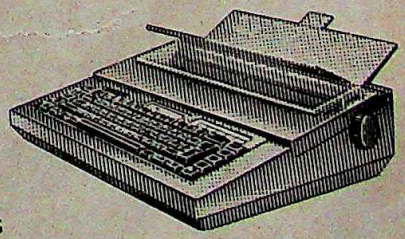

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led to a squabble between the police and the yatris. If the police commissioner had said that the stoning and firing was in the Hindu area, this storm would not have broken in Ahmedabad."

As curfew was imposed in selected areas of the walled city and word spread about the violence, fact soon mingled with fiction and an already volatile situation was made worse by a spate of rumours, the most explosive of which were that Ramharshdasji, the mahant of the Jagannath Temple, had been injured and the raths damaged. The emotional backlash from this became evident two days later when a group of revivalist Hindu organisations led by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad called for a "Gujarat Bandh" on July 12 "to safeguard the cause of the Hindus and protest against the attack on the rath yatra". Rationalised Sambhu Maharaj, silver-haired leader of the Hindu Suraksha Samiti: "If we hadn't called for the bandh, all of Gujarat would have been in flames. The bandh acted as a safety valve for the anger and the indignation Hindus felt because of the attack on the rath yatra."

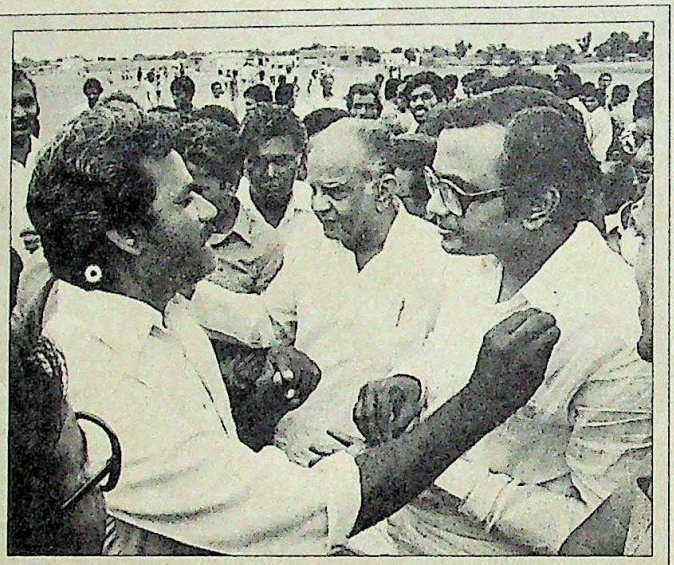
Though the call for the bandh was given by a cluster of religious organisations largely existing on paper, the state came to a grinding halt—with schools, offices, shops, industries and even places of worship downing shutters. "In all my public life I have not seen this unparalleled a bandh," said Chimanbhai Patel, former Gujarat chief minister and Janata Party leader.

IT WAS in response to the bandh threat that Chief Minister Amarsinh Chaudhary exposed his political immaturity. Known to be a weak and indecisive leader, Chaudhary resisted the demand for a judicial inquiry by Hindu religious leaders, apparently on the advice of senior police officers that it would demoralise the police force. But when the bandh proved successful, with the violence spreading to the classier western parts of Ahmedabad and to Baroda, Bhuj, Bharuch and Palitana, a shamefaced Chaudhary had to perforce change his former stand and agree to a judicial inquiry.

The administration's failure—and the local press' lack of restraint—was also brought out in a series of incidents which spread panic and added to the rumour mill. Two young men from Kallol visiting their ailing father-in-law at the civil hospital were thrown off a second floor corridor and burnt to death in the mistaken belief—echoed by police and hospital sources and broadcast on AIR—that they were carrying knives and had stabbed people. A Hindu sub-inspector was stabbed in the back while breaking up a clash between two groups in a labour colony and the rumour was spread that he had been killed. It was only after some days that the truth was published—that the police officer had in fact been rescued by a Muslim who had rushed him to hospital.

An unemployed Muslim worker was smuggled into the Reliance textile plant at Naroda by a Hindu friend with the promise of a job in the factory. But a rumour spread that the Muslim was armed with a knife and had come to poison the factory's drinking water supply and the youth was attacked by an agitated mob of workers. The police managed to rescue him but only after a pitched battle. While newspaper reports continued to give credence to the rumour, the administration did nothing to correct the misconception.

It was only after a meeting with Chidambaram that some Gujarati dailies carried a front-page appeal for peace. "Think of your task as a doctor's applying an ice-pack on a patient with high fever," Chidambaram told the editors. His three-day stay in Ahmedabad also arrested the drift and indecisiveness in the administration's handling of the situation. In a series of quick decisions, Chidambaram put pressure on the police by telling them to restore peace in 24 hours and publicly making the prediction, ordering them to arrest all anti-socials and to impose curfew with total severity. "Policemen were told clearly that that they should open fire whenever there was serious violence," revealed a police officer.



Chidambaram consoling Muslims in Vegalpura

Chidambaram's stay in Ahmedabad arrested the drift and indecisiveness in the administration's handling of the situation.

But by the time the violence was brought under control, fresh dimensions had been added to the divide between the state's Hindus and Muslims. The Akhil Hindu Sanatan Samiti issued leaflets calling for the economic and social boycott of Muslims in Gujarat. Said one leaflet: "If you have Hindu blood, do not employ Muslims or buy goods manufactured or sold by them. Do not use a knife, you can kill them with a boycott."

Admittedly, such organisations do not yet have widespread acceptability but, as the bandh showed, only the naive would underestimate the silent support they command. Said Pravin Sheth, head of the political science department of the Gujarat University: "Such things were also seen after last year's riots but this time I feel the message may get through. There is no doubt that the Hindu backlash has come to Gandhi's Gujarat." Added Haroobhai Mehta, Congress(I) MP from Ahmedabad: "Now I am an MP of two cities—Hindu Ahmedabad and Muslim Ahmedabad." Ahmedabad is no stranger to communal conflicts but the communal passions that have now been unleashed threaten to unstitch the very fabric of Gujarat society and the future of a commercially prosperous city.

—M. RAHMAN in Ahmedabad

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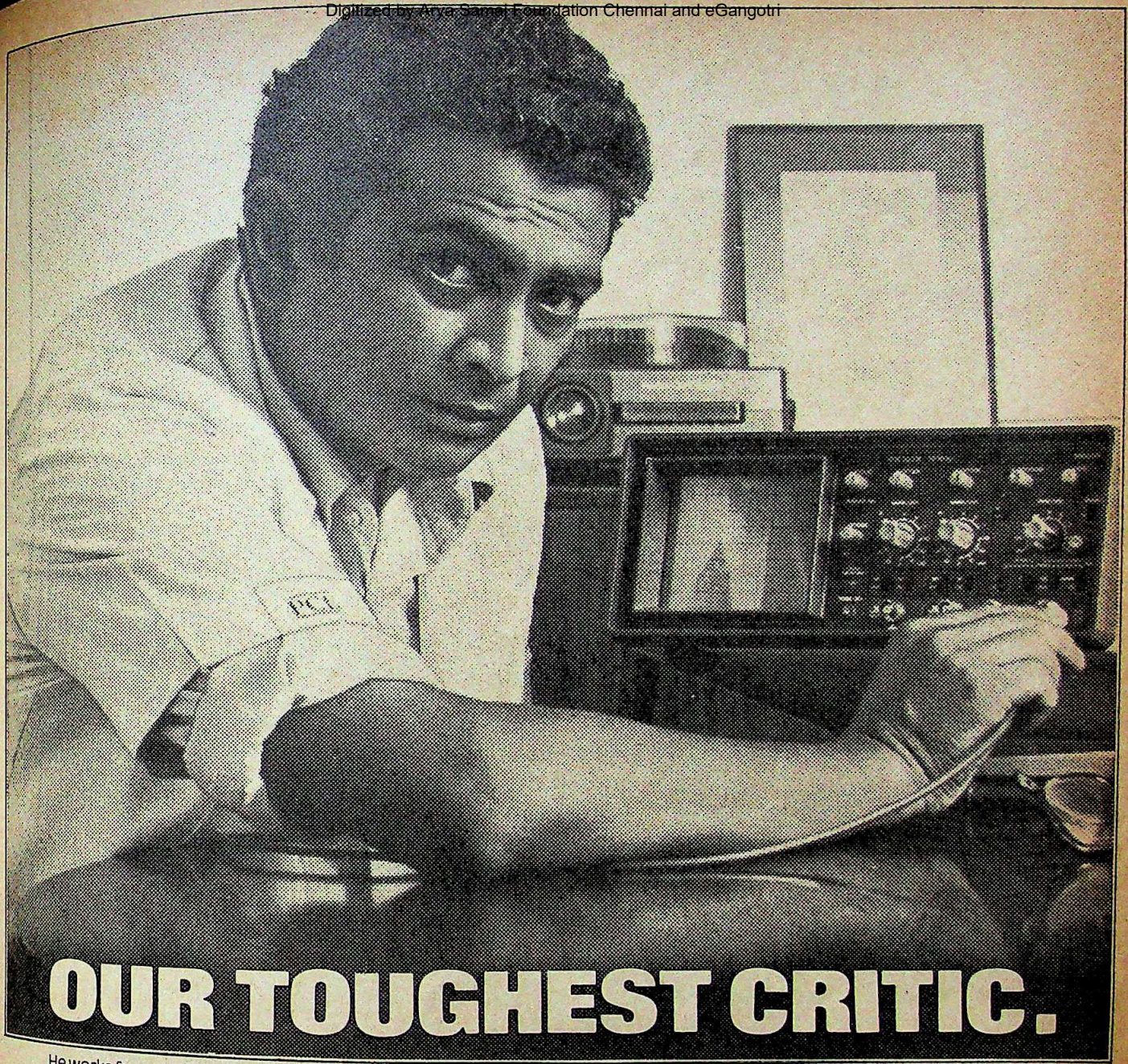

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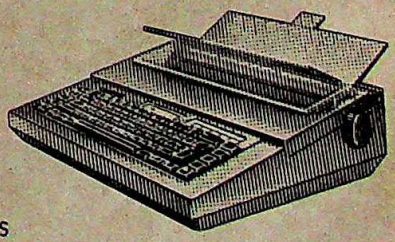

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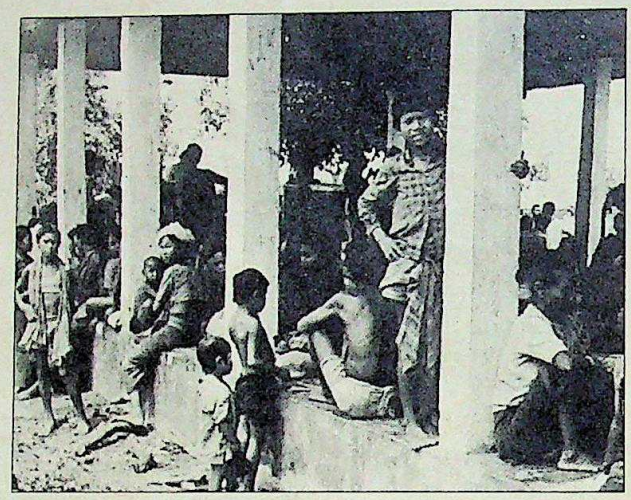
TRIPURA

Chakma Crisis

BY ALL accounts, it seemed to be a diplomatic non-event. But for the 20,000-odd miserable Chakma tribals from Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts, now rotting in makeshift refugee camps in the jungles of southern Tripura, Bangladesh President H.M. Ershad's three-day visit to New Delhi last fortnight was of crucial significance. For the hapless Buddhist tribals, many of whom have been butchered, tortured or arrested in the course of state-sponsored violence over the past three months, their hopes of returning to their mountain villages hinged largely on an Indian diplomatic initiative on their behalf.

A bit of that hope was fulfilled as Union Home Minister Buta Singh took up the question of the Chakma's survival with Ershad, and he promised to "create conditions to facilitate" their return to Bangladesh. But this is not borne out by the evidence on the ground. Fresh streams of disconsolate families have continued to pour in as violence continues to break out in the hill tracts. With the Shanti Bahini, the Chakma guerrilla force, intensifying its monsoon offensive, the Bangladesh Government forces have stepped up their reprisals too.



Chakma refugees at a camp (above); and Shanti Bahini guerrillas: grim scenario

The most violent flare up occurred near Tablacheri, a small village across Silacheri on the Indian side of the border. In a raid in the second week of July, the Shanti Bahini destroyed the village and killed all its 126 Muslim inhabitants and the Bangladesh Rifles escort.

The Shanti Bahini is flexing its muscles again after two years of bitter infighting, which left many of its leaders dead, and the failure of negotiations with Bangladesh's martial law authorities. The second round of talks scheduled on December 26 last year were cancelled unilaterally by the Bangladesh Government, which resumed large-scale settlement of plainsmen in the hills taking the total number of settler families to over 60,000. Now, 39 per cent of the population in the district comprises Muslims, compared to two per cent at partition.

The Bangladesh authorities' response to the Shanti Bahini challenge is cast in the mould of General Templer's infamous Malayan campaign. Templer's strategy was to uproot tribals from small, far-flung hamlets and resettle them in large "protected" villages. Between December 1985 and April this year, Bangladesh troops rounded up tribals from 64 villages and herded them in six large regrouping centres.

Since then, the guerrilla raids have followed a pattern—every raid on an army or paramilitary camp is simultaneously timed with bloody liquidation of the nearby colony of resettlers. But every guerrilla raid has also resulted in even bloodier reprisals by Bangladesh troops, who are accompanied by hordes of Muslim settlers driven by vengeance. "They normally ask our men to line up for beating, torture and death while younger women are separated for mass rape," says Prabhakar Chakma, a refugee in the Korbuk camp. According to reliable estimates, violence in the last six months alone has claimed the lives of over 300 tribals and as many Muslim settlers and soldiers.

For India, the problem is the streams of refugees each raid sends scampering into Tripura or sometimes to Mizoram. Despite concerted attempts by the Border Security Force (BSF) to intercept and push the refugees back, large numbers sneak in. At several flag meetings, the BSF officers have asked their Bangladesh counterparts to end the mayhem but to no avail. The Bangladesh officers, on the other hand, blame India for all their troubles and have even claimed one crore takas as compensation from India.

Neither the Bangladesh authorities nor the Shanti Bahini is in any mood to relent. Says Ushadan Talukdar, a front-ranking guerrilla commander: "Over 50,000 settlers have left Chittagong Hill Tracts in the past three months and Bangladesh forces are too scared to even go on long-range patrols. It is time we consolidated our gains and installed a parallel administration."

There is no relief likely in the near future for the Tripura Government, which, in spite of the Centre's decision to pay for the upkeep of the refugees, is finding it hard to manage the five massive camps it runs along the border. Said an exasperated Nripen Chakraborty, the state's chief minister: "This issue is too important to be left to flag meetings between border forces. Why can't the Centre take up the matter with Bangladesh at the ministerial level?"

That the Centre was in agreement was evident from the fact that the Chakma problem was high on the agenda for top-level talks as President Ershad visited New Delhi last fortnight. But with Ershad dishing out platitudes, it seems likely that Delhi could be faced with the spectre of a Sri Lanka-like situation developing along the eastern extremities of the country, a prospect South Block hardly relishes.

—SUBIR BHOWMIK

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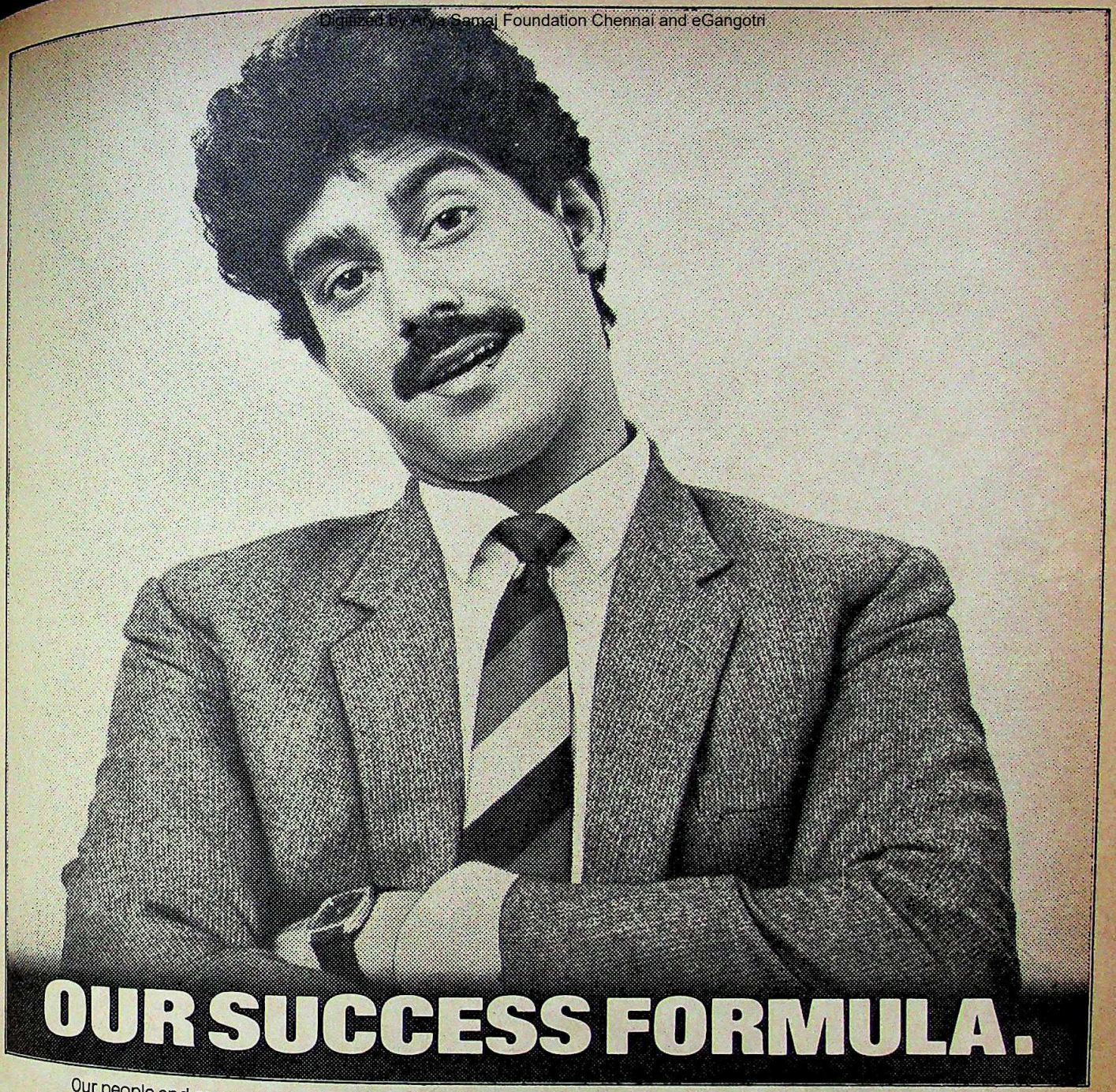

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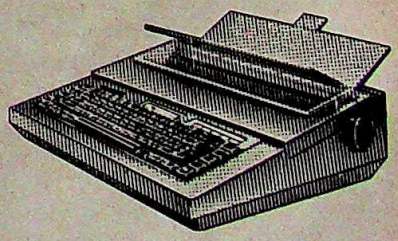

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WEST BENGAL

Jail Storm

POLITICS in West Bengal is sacrosanct, and so are its practitioners, whatever their ideological colours. Thus, when undertrial Naxalite leader Azizul Haque was learnt to be close to death last fortnight, his health eroded by four years of suffering as a common criminal in the state's jails, it was not just the Left Front's political opponents who joined in the condemnations. Equally shocked at the state Government's callousness were several Left Front leaders. Minister for Jails Debabrata Bandopadhyaya of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), even went to the extent of implying that he would have released Haque were it legally possible for him to do so.

Haque, a close associate of Charu Mazumdar, had been released in 1977 but was rearrested in May 1982 as his faction—the Second Central Committee—still continued to espouse the theory of annihilation of class enemies. When news of Haque's precarious health and his request to be released on parole for medical treatment first leaked out from Alipore Jail—Haque claims he was not being given proper medical attention and apprehended a heart attack—Left Front chairman and party State Secretary Saroj Mukherjee remarked that there was no question of releasing any prisoner on parole if he was getting proper treatment.

Stung by the CPI(M)'s insinuation that Haque's pathetic state was primarily due to the condition of the state's jails, two RSP ministers, Bandopadhyaya and Public Works Minister Jatin Chakraborty, rushed to Alipore Jail to take the ailing undertrial to hospital. The RSP ministers later said they were in favour of releasing Haque but Bandopadhyaya pointed out that the state Government could not release an undertrial on parole.

The Haque affair got even curiouser when Congress(I) leader Subrata Mukherjee jumped into the fray. After visiting Haque in jail, Mukherjee piously declared: "I don't believe in Haque's politics but if he is allowed to die without treatment, all of us will stand condemned in the eyes of humanity. We shall see him murdered in cold blood by the Left Front Government." Mukherjee had also apparently found torture marks on the Naxalite leader, who could no longer hold a pen because his fingers had been smashed.

Left Front members point out that the Government could have facilitated Haque's release by simply amending the jail code. Instead, CPI(M) ministers tried to stall matters by saying they would have to wait till the chief minister's return from London. When the PUCL appealed to the Calcutta High Court to release Haque, the state Government's lawyers opposed the move by pointing out that they had appointed four medical experts to treat the Naxalite leader. Chief Justice Satish Chandra rejected the petition.

The smaller Left Front partners feel that the CPI(M) is adopting double standards in its attitude to Haque. One senior Left Front leader pointed out that while the Marxist party had not hesitated to form an alliance with the Naxalite faction led by the late Satya Narain Sinha, it was being adamant about releasing a Naxalite leader on the verge of death.

Moreover, the CPI(M) was still insisting on treating arrested Naxalites as ordinary criminals and not as political prisoners entitled to first class treatment. Says Forward Bloc leader and former minister Bhakti Bhushan Mandal: "It is most regrettable that political prisoners are being detained for years without being tried." This attitude, they say, is a complete reversal of the CPI(M)'s democratic philosophy which had resulted in amnesty for all political prisoners when the Left Front had first come to power in 1977.

Not surprisingly, Haque, a founder of the CPI(M-L), has become something of a cause celebre—especially after his rebuff of both the Left Front ministers and of Subrata Mukherjee. Accusing these politicians of trying to make political capital out of his plight, Haque reminded a delegation of the Indian People's Front that it was during Mukherjee's tenure as home minister in S.S. Ray's regime that over 5,000 Naxalites had been murdered. Haque also criticised Jatin Chakraborty for boasting that he was instrumental in providing a government flat for his wife, Monideepa, when the truth was radically different. By embarrassing the politicians, Haque has showed that he expects no quarter from the system he has been fighting against. His only trump card is the Hobson's choice before the Left Front Government: release Haque or create a martyr.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

AAJKAAL

The fact that Naxalite leader Azizul Haque's health has been eroded by four years in the state's jails, has shocked several Left Front leaders.

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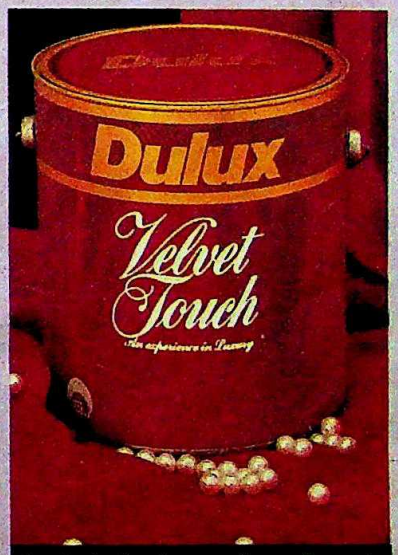

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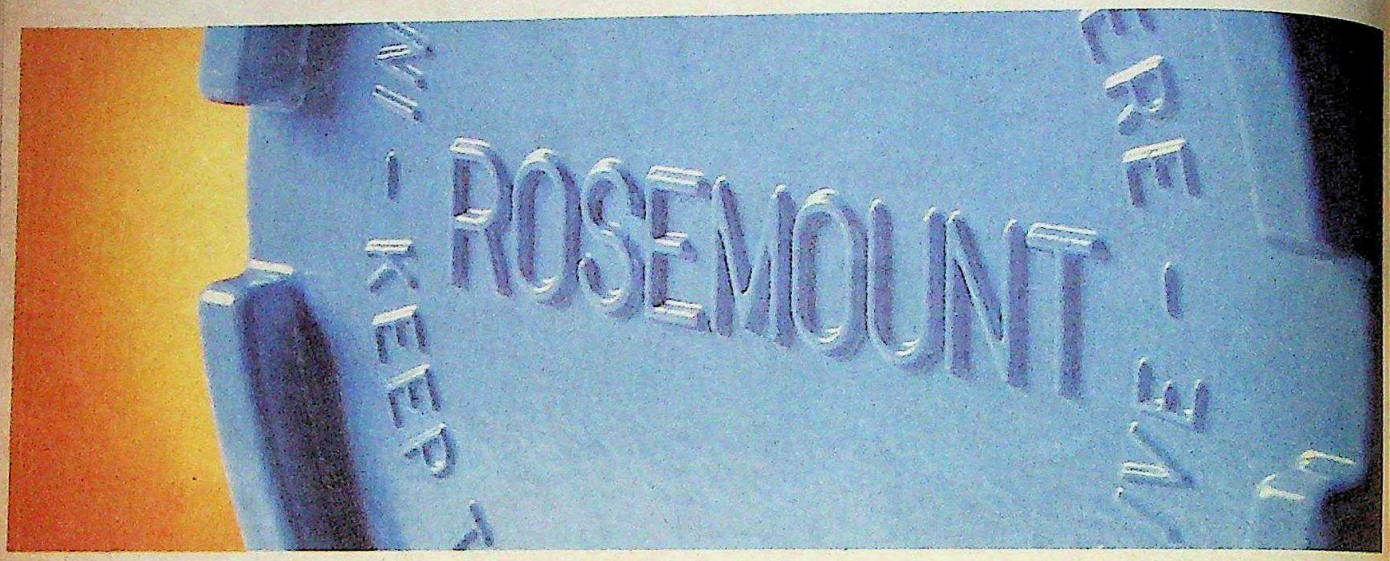

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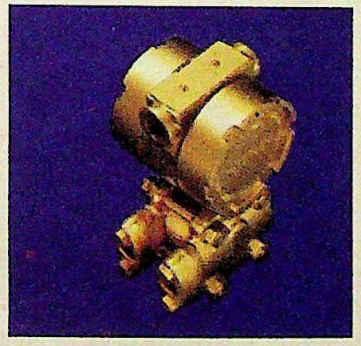

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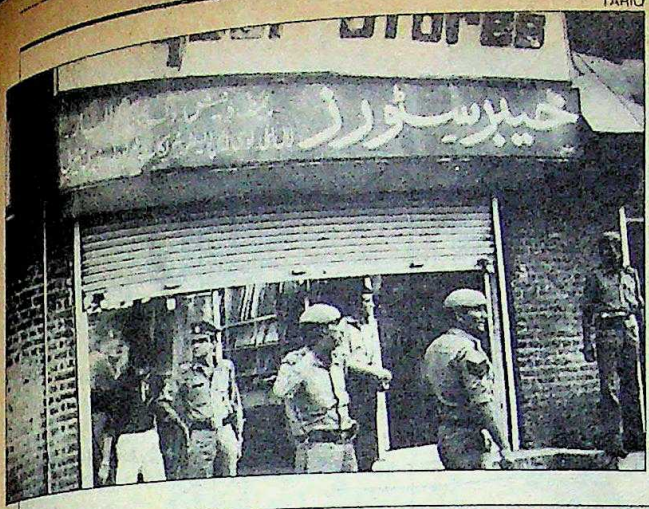

Srinagar Times

BHAWAN SINGH

"For the first time no contravention of any economic law will go uninvestigated."

M.L. WADHAWAN
director general, Economic Intelligence Bureau

"Raids are part of the game but it was as if they had come to nab a terrorist."

NAZIR AHMED TRAMBOO
chairman cum managing director, Tramboo Enterprises

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Treasure Hunt

IT WAS one of the most meticulously planned operations—from arranging quiet transfers of senior policemen having links with the targets to chartering aircraft from the hush-hush Aviation Research Centre, providing sweaters to the taxmen as they landed at Srinagar and catering for packed lunch as they swooped down on unsuspecting victims in raids that sent shock-waves through the Kashmir valley last fortnight and unearthed a Rs 51-crore booty.

In Delhi, 335 officers drawn from all departments of the economic law enforcement wings, had received orders to report at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium at 5.00 a.m. on July 14 from where they were herded to the airport and flown to Srinagar. A total of 71 raiding parties swooped simultaneously on seven leading business families in Jammu and Srinagar at exactly 8 a.m. the next day. Economic Intelligence Bureau chief M.L.Wadhawan was coordinating the operation via wireless.

Raiding Kar business premises (left); the Tramboo and Kar residences

The hit list had been pared down to the seven families after preliminary screening by the EIB, of the initial list of 15 business houses in Srinagar and seven in Jammu. Fifty officers from the IAS, IPS and Forest Service in the state were handpicked for their ability to keep the raids secret. Each was assigned a family and asked to identify the entire family tree, business links, headquarters, all premises used, links with official agencies and any other information. On July 5, Wadhawan reached Srinagar. The hit list was then finalised to seven families—The Mahajans (of the K.C. Group of industries) and the Trehans in Jammu; the Tramboo family, Jamal Siraj, Khwaja Saifuddin, G.M. Khan and Krishan Lal in Srinagar.

Interestingly, not much cash and jewellery was seized during the raids. All told, the amount of cash and jewellery would not exceed a couple of lakhs in the total haul of Rs 51 crore. The bulk comprises unaccounted assets in Srinagar and, in Jammu, unauthorised timber. EIB officials are convinced that reports of impending raids had leaked out in the local press on July 12. This they feel must have warned targets. At one place the taxmen found Rs 95,000 in cash hidden in a car. But the house-owners claimed that the car belonged to a tenant called Raja Ram who was then also raided. The major gold haul was in a trunk lying between the houses of Dr G.R.Tramboo and his sister Mrs G.R.Kar, which contained 240 gold sovereigns. Initially both parties refused to claim the trunk but finally Mrs Kar confessed to have thrown the trunk out of the window in panic when she saw the taxmen coming. In Jammu, the K.C. Group and the Trehans were found to have large timber stocks even though contracting of forests has been abolished after it was nationalised last year. Much of the stocks were yet to be cleared and in both cases a lot of it was unaccounted for. "It was as though they had come to nab a terrorist," says Nazir Ahmed Tramboo, who at 38, heads the Tramboo empire of industries. "Raids are a part of the game, but I strongly object to the manner in which they were conducted," he says, protesting against the entry of Sten gun wielding policemen into his bedroom. "This is absolute falsehood," retorts police chief Colaso."I deny that the police entered the houses at all leave alone bedrooms." Krishan Lal, whose Allied Motors was raided, insists that the raids were part of a vendetta: "The raids

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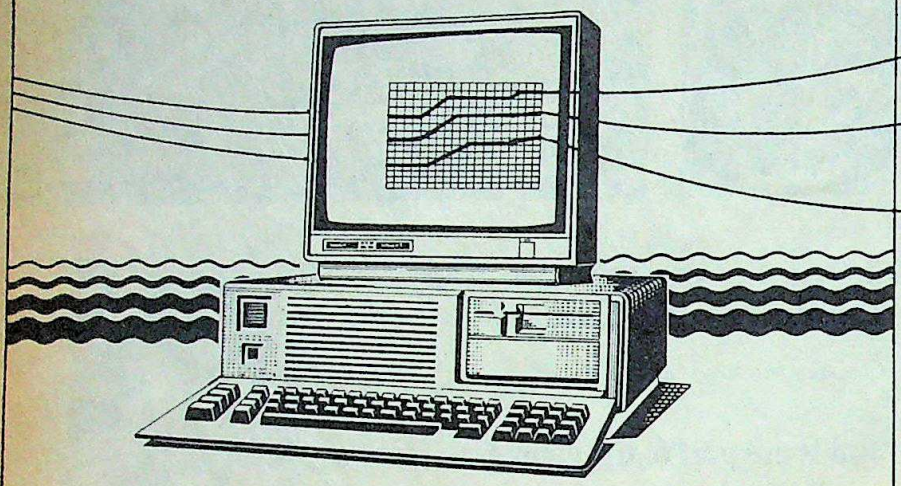

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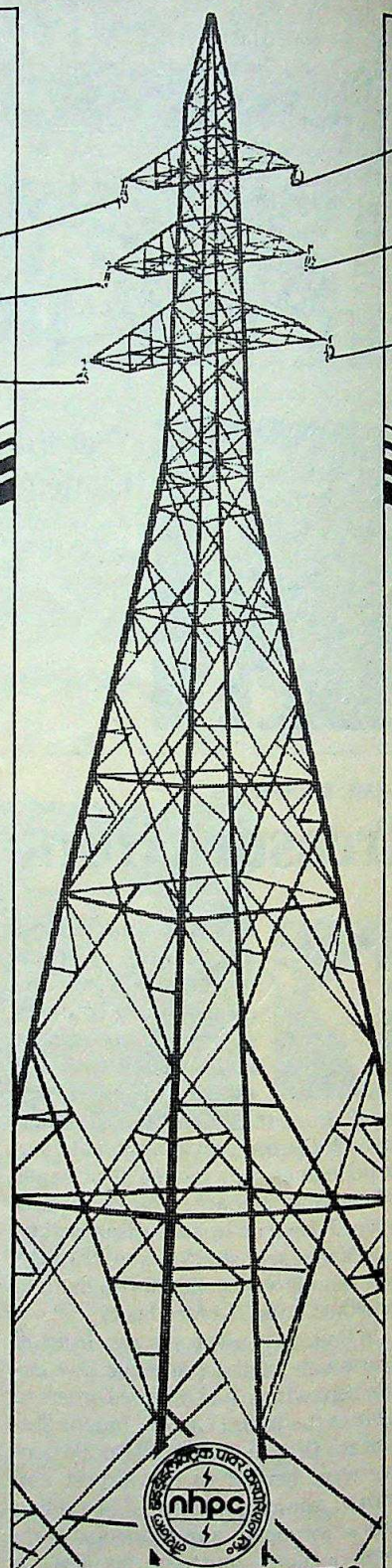

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were vindictive. We've been chosen when *crorepatis* have been left out." The Saifuddin family, whose Saifco flour mills, Alco pencil factory and downtown cinema hall, Neelam, were raided, would not comment on the raids except to claim that the Toyota seized on their premises belonged to a friend.

G.M.Khan of Soura enterprises seems to have been the only one to take the raids in his stride. A day after the raids, he called press reporters over for dinner and talked openly about how he entertained the raiders with *lassi* and tea while they searched his premises.

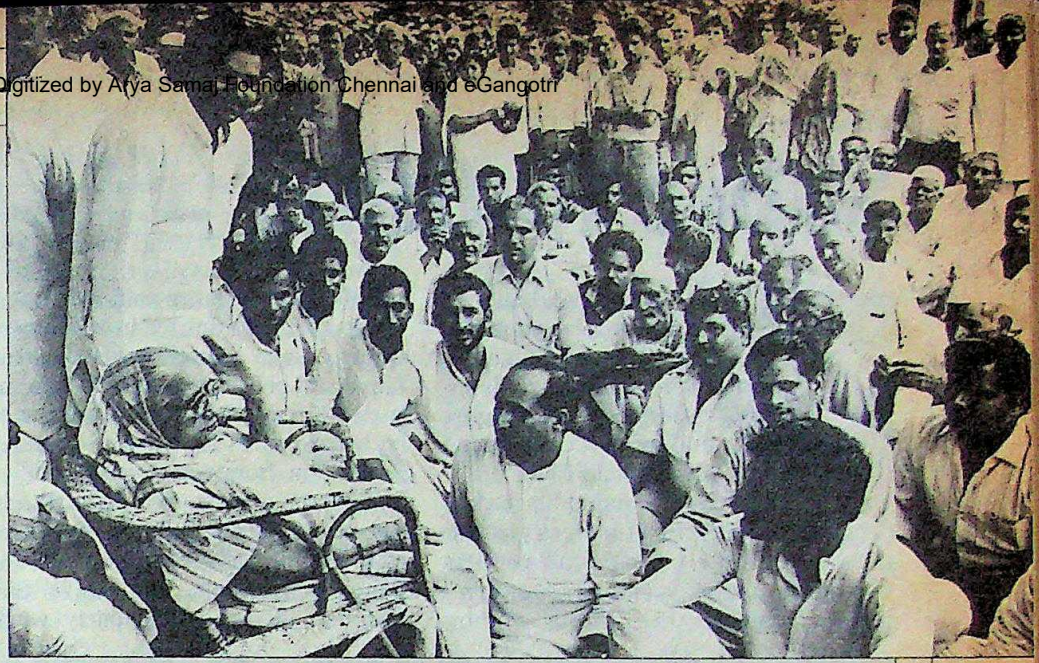
In the last raids in 1981, there were clear political overtones and Sheikh Abdullah had himself reacted violently, stating that the raids were directed at him. This time the choice was made carefully. While the Mahajans have a son-in-law, Janak Raj Gupta, as a Congress(I) MP, Nazir Tramboo is a close friend of Farooq Abdullah and the Saifuddin family is known to be close to former chief minister G.M.Shah. The result is a confused reaction in the lush green valley which is used to colouring any event in political shades. Says G.M.Shah: "I don't know if they are politically motivated or not but they have left out the sharks."

According to Governor Jagmohan, nearly Rs 100 crore are due to the exchequer by way of direct and indirect dues from the industry. Businessmen have made a habit of obtaining stays to delay payments, while tax authorities look on helplessly. So, politically motivated or not, what is evident from the choice of people, the manner in which raids were conducted and the booty collected, is that this time the intention was to reinstate the respectability of the tax enforcement agencies in the state.

—TANIA MIDHA in Srinagar and Jammu

LOK DAL

Family Struggle



Gayatri Devi addressing workers

Not merely is the Lok Dal a family affair but there is a sordid struggle for succession on within the family.

EIGHT months after Charan Singh suffered a paralytic stroke, leaving the Lok Dal rudderless, nemesis finally caught up with the Chaudhury's party. The suspension of two prominent Uttar Pradesh leaders by the state unit's president—a decision later endorsed by the central leadership—plunged the party into a prolonged crisis that split the top leadership down the middle, brought bus loads of slogan-shouting dissidents and supporters to the capital and laid open the deep-seated differences between Charan Singh's son, Ajit Singh, and daughter, Saroj Verma. With the Chaudhury's wife, Gayatri Devi, also demanding that the suspensions be revoked, not merely is the Lok Dal a family affair but there is a sordid struggle for succession within the family.

This set of events, coming within weeks of Singh's election to the Rajya Sabha and appointment as the party's general secretary, caused a severe setback to the carefully-laid plans for the launch of Charan Singh's political heir. The former computer expert, who formally entered politics two months ago, had hoped to make an immediate impact in the party and outside by addressing meetings of party workers in the four Hindi-belt states where the party has a substantial following and by building up an informal think-tank of intellectuals who would help him make an impression in Parliament.

Instead, Singh joined party leaders in trying to resolve the dilemma of upholding the authority of its Uttar Pradesh strongman Mulayam Singh Yadav without throwing out Rajender Singh, former leader of the Opposition, a Jat leader of some standing and a close associate of the Charan Singh family. A three-member committee comprising Singh, Karpoori Thakur and Devi Lal decided to uphold the suspension.

The family drama began later in the day. Saroj Verma, the ambitious and strong-headed elder sister of Singh who resents her brother's status as his father's political heir has been the brains behind the dissidence of Rajender Singh. Verma, backed by 200 slogan-shouting supporters of Rajender Singh, persuaded Gayatri Devi to issue a statement asking the leadership to revoke the suspension.

When Singh reached his father's house, he was gheraoed by the suspended leader's supporters demanding that he carry out his mother's wishes. The gherao was lifted two hours later when, Rajender Singh's supporters say Singh gave the assurance that his mother's wishes would be honoured. But Singh denied this and the crisis only deepened.

Three days later, the 20-odd MLA's backing Rajender Singh brought a 1,000-strong crowd of supporters to the residence of the ailing Charan Singh and got a written assurance from him that the suspensions would be revoked. It was against this background that Party Working President H.N. Bahuguna and eight of the party's top leaders met for seven hours but with Bahuguna choosing to remain neutral and the other eight split equally for and against revoking the suspension, no final decision emerged.

Now that there is a vacuum in the central leadership, disgruntled elements refuse to accept arbitrary decisions of state leaders. Says K.C. Tyagi, party general secretary: "There is a virtual free for all in the party." Till Singh succeeds in establishing his authority in his father's party, the Lok Dal will continue to have convulsions.

—AJAY KUMAR

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TAMIL NADU

Sabre Rattling

IT WAS classic theatre of the absurd, even down to the setting. The stage was the temple city of Madurai festooned with arches and posters welcoming Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran and his flock of party MLA's who arrived in the city astride horses, elephants, tableaus and a variety of other transport. Supporters sang sycophantic songs for their "Anna" and his heir-apparent, film star-turned-politician Jayalalitha.

But it was the dialogue that abruptly cut off the festive mood. MGR, speaking through 1,000-watt loudspeakers, startled even the most faithful of his AIADMK fans when he asked them to carry a knife "for their own protection". His inexplicable statement created a furore in the state and, in political terms, threatened the collapse of the AIADMK-Congress(I) alliance in Tamil Nadu. But more than that, it once again raised questions about the mental capacity of the chief minister. MGR's sinister-sounding fiat was sounded during his largely incomprehensive and disjointed 30-minute address at the concluding session of the All-World MGR Manarams conference attended by over a lakh of his enthusiastic fans, including members of his entire cabinet.

For a chief minister in a democratic country, who himself holds the crucial home and police portfolios, to announce such a call in public was incomprehensibly irresponsible. It invited all-round condemnation from the AIADMK's ally the Congress(I) and its arch political adversary, the M. Karunanidhi led-DMK. Charged P. Thangabalu, a former state Youth Congress president and Rajya Sabha member: "If the ruling party workers have to carry a knife, then who else is safe in this state? Does it mean that the chief minister has lost confidence in his own police and law enforcement authorities? If it is true, then it is a dangerous drift in the administration." Added Karunanidhi: "MGR has lost the right to govern the state. He cannot be trusted as a person who can keep the state together. He has given an open call to lawlessness. He should be sacked."

Similar sounding condemnations appeared in all the leading newspapers. Demanded *The Times of India* in its editorial: "Is it not time to save Tamil Nadu from politicians who, having failed to govern the state, are now encouraging violence as a substitute for politics." But MGR himself remained unmoved by the storm he had created and said that his workers could not depend on police help "which may not be possible because the violence may come too suddenly from the squads being raised by the DMK".

A month earlier, Karunanidhi, while addressing a rally of party workers, had directed his party to raise a parallel army to defend themselves from the "AIADMK rowdies". Karunanidhi justified his stand on the plea that his party's public meetings were being disturbed by AIADMK people and the police was unable to control them. MGR's retaliatory gesture about the knives signalled an ominous warning that political scores could in future be settled through armed street battles between the two rival regional parties. Said a senior leader of the Congress(I) from Tamil Nadu: "It is an invitation to chaos. It is becoming evidently clear that MGR's actions defy any logic and justification."

But MGR's statement at the Madurai jamboree was not the only gaffe he committed in the short span of a week. Soon after his return to Madras, he was confronted with the exposure of his government's non-performance record by the state Governor Sunder Lal Khurana in a letter to the chief minister (INDIA TODAY, July 31). Immediately after the publication of the letter, MGR drove down to the Raj Bhavan and asked Khurana to remove T.V. Anthony from the sensitive post of chief secretaryship of the state and appoint him as chairman of the state

MGR at the Madurai meet: irresponsible

MGR's retaliatory gesture about the knives signalled an ominous warning that political scores could in future be settled through armed street battles between the two rival regional parties. Said a senior leader of the Congress(I) from Tamil Nadu: "MGR's actions defy any logic and justification."

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planning commission. At the same time, he went and sought the governor's approval for instituting a thorough probe into the leakage of highly confidential and important correspondence.

ANTHONY'S ignominous exit within 18 months of his appointment was a serious blow to the already demoralised bureaucracy in the state. During MGR's regime, two other chief secretaries were moved out of office under controversial circumstances. But Anthony's removal came at a time when MGR has been gradually losing control over the administration. Due to his speech problems, he has been unable to convey his instructions and advice to the chief secretary effectively and Anthony had to depend on MGR's personal staff on various administrative decisions. According to senior officials, Anthony had conveyed his unhappiness to the chief minister's office over the delay in certain decisions and lack of adherence to constitutional requirements for taking policy decisions. Admitted a frustrated senior official: "Earlier, the chief minister would speak to all important heads of departments either personally or over the intercom and they were able to put across their point of view, but that communication is completely snapped now. Most of us are totally cut off from him now and we have no means of cross-checking anything or to confirm which decisions are his own."

MGR's health problems have also done serious damage to vital institutions like the state cabinet. According to the governor's letter, which has raised questions about various administrative actions (like the decision to abolish the Legislative Council which can normally be taken only after the Cabinet has approved it), the cabinet has not been meeting regularly to take policy decisions. Earlier, cabinet meetings were generally held once a week but even after Khurana's letter, MGR has not conducted regular meetings.

With an indifferent and increasingly insecure bureaucracy on the one hand, and a chief minister whose health is seriously impaired on the other, it was the Congress(I) which was in a state of panic last fortnight. Aware that its political future was linked to MGR's fortunes, it was busy reviewing its alliance with the ruling party in Tamil Nadu. The DMK has emerged as the main benificiary of MGR's quixotic handling of the political and administrative situation and is now being billed as an alternative to the AIADMK in the state.

Now, however, the Congress(I) seems to have decided to play the role of an opposition party in Tamil Nadu, which, technically, it is. This was evident at the Congress(I)-sponsored panchayat office-bearers conference held in Tamil Nadu last fortnight. For the first time after a lapse of almost five years, various Congress(I) leaders attacked state Government publicly, led by youth leaders like Lok Sabha member Rangarajan Kumaramangalam and Thangabalu.

Even Congress(I) Legislature Party Leader Subramanian gave a call for launching a campaign against the ineffective government. Said he: "We are not in power yet we are accused of mismanagement in the state." Added Kumaramanglam: "If we allow this mess to continue, we will be doomed. Let us tell the people that the regional parties can't perform and now it is time to choose a national party. We should not hobble on the crutches of a regional party."

Sensing the rebellious mood, AICC(I) General Secretary G.K. Moopanar meekly gave his conditional support to the state party's plea for a review of the alliance with the AIADMK saying: "We have no objection to the Congress(I) playing the role of a constructive opposition to the AIADMK Government till the high command takes a decision in this regard." The rethinking in the Congress(I) has also been inspired by the total rout of the AIADMK in the panchayat and council elections. And the Congress(I) is not willing to gamble against the odds in the assembly by-elections likely to be held in the next two months.

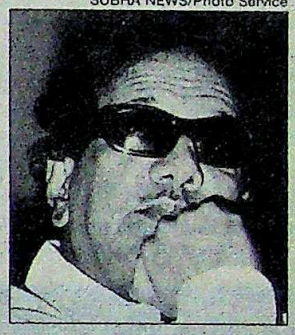
But oddly enough, the Congress(I)'s growing alienation with the AIADMK is proving to be a blessing in disguise for MGR. While the chief minister himself is keeping aloof from the developments, his senior cabinet ministers have started a campaign alleging that the Centre is out to topple the state Government by encouraging the governor to prepare a record against the Tamil Nadu Government. According to AIADMK leaders, the Congress(I) leadership's decision to ease out the MGR Government followed soon after MGR's support to the Janata Party candidate in the Rajya Sabha elections and his refusal to support the new education policy.

In addition, it is also claimed that MGR refused to oblige the Congress when it demanded the dismissal of Agriculture Minister K. Kalimuthu for his diatribe against Union Minister of State for Personnel P. Chidambaram. Reacted a senior minister in MGR's Cabinet: "If recent actions of the Central Government nominees and utterances of the various Congress(I) leaders are any indication, it is clear that a decision has been taken destabilise our government."

Congress(I) leaders were equally quick to refute the allegations. Retorted Thangabalu: "It only shows that they have a guilty conscience and are trying to camouflage their own misdeeds by crying wolf. If they are honest and efficient, no one can topple them and if they are not able to govern then not we, but the people will throw them out." But the more pertinent question being asked last fortnight was whether MGR would survive in office till 1990, when the state's electorate is given the option to eject him from the chief minister's chair.

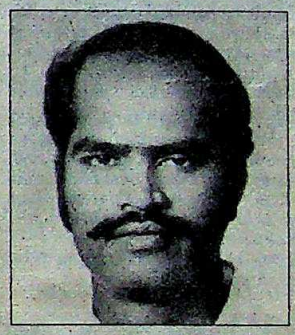
—PRABHU CHAWLA in Madras

SUBHA NEWS/Photo Service



"He has given an open call to lawlessness. He should be sacked."

M. KARUNANIDHI
DMK party leader



"If the ruling party workers have to carry a knife, then who else is safe in this state?"

P. THANGABALU
Youth Congress(I) leader

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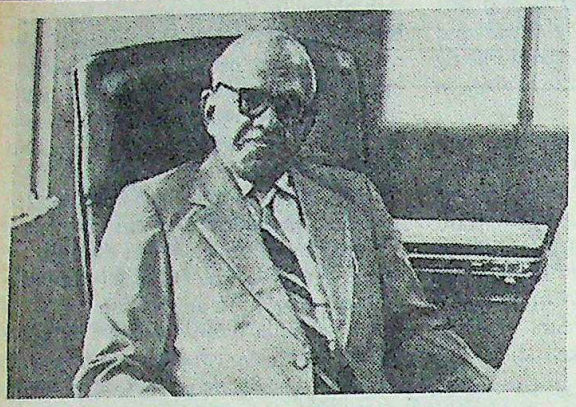


"Fantastic growth during the year 1985-86 Set to create a new record in 1986-87"

Extracts from the Statement of Mr. S.N. Pai, Executive Chairman at the 30th Annual General Meeting held on 7th June 1986

Ladies and Gentleman,

It has indeed been a momentous year for the Company, packed with so much of activity. From almost a non-entity a couple of years back, your Company has made a quantum jump during the year and become a force to reckon with. Indeed, its rapid all-round growth has literally astounded all observers.

SPECTACULAR PROGRESS

In my Statement made before you on the 15th June last year, I had referred to the Company working virtually on a war-footing. During the year, the battles that were fought had indeed turned fiercer. How else could have one achieved the magnificient results that are before you, which are as under:

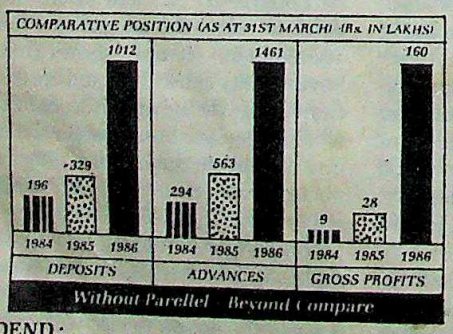
A 207% increase in Deposits (68%), 166% in Advances (91%), 291% in Gross earnings (124%), and 550% in Net Profits (117%) over the previous year's figures.

The percentages shown in brackets above are the corresponding ones relating to the year 1984-85. If the above does not represent a "Fantastic growth rate", as I have been stating for sometime now, I wonder what else is? Ofcourse, the Press has termed it as 'Spectacular'.

Voluntarily fixing for itself at the beginning a high target of Rs. 10 crores for mobilising deposits during the year, announcing it from several platforms during the period, persistently working for it and ultimately achieving it, require, Ladies and Gentlemen, besides human endeavour, quite a lot of divine blessings, which, it is apparent, your Company has been bestowed with. The said factor has enabled your Company to reach an advances figure of almost Rs. 15-crores, comprising of Stock-on-hire (Rs. 8.32 crores), Leased Assets (Rs. 5.18 crores) and Other Loans and Advances (Rs. 1.11 crores).

WITHOUT PARALLEL

This judicious mixture of business, quick utilisation of funds and the remunerative, though competitive, rates obtained and last, but not the least, the hard work put in by the staff, have all brought for your Company a handsome gross profit of Rs.1.60 crores, which is about six times more than what it earned in the previous year. The net profit of Rs. 1.17 crores is over six times more than that of Rs. 18 lakhs earned in the previous year. This has enabled your Company to accumulate Reserves to the extent of Rs. 1.11 crores, as against a Paid-up Capital of Rs. 97 lakhs only, which is a record. These achievements, I assert, are without parallel in the industry and a landmark for your Company.



DIVIDEND:

In the light of what has been stated above, I know that some of you may feel that your Board should have stepped up the dividend from the 20% now recommended. Your Directors did consider this aspect of the matter at length, but felt that there are over-whelming advantages in maintaining steadily a reasonably good dividend of 20% and building up reserves rapidly, which is so essential for a finance company like yours, rather than fall a victim to the present practice of declaring higher dividends even in the formative stages by many a leasing and finance company. While taking the said decision, your Board had also in mind the long term benefits that will be accruing to the shareholders by pursuing such a policy. They had also taken note of the fact that the Company is paying the said dividend at an extraordinarily short time after the close of the financial year, which is to the advantage of the shareholders. It is the intention of your Board to hasten this process still further in future, by paying the same as an interim dividend, even before the close of the year, whenever possible.

UNLIKE OTHERS

It is a matter of pride, for me to say that at present your Company has about 17,000 depositors and 5,000 borrowers, most of them from middle income group. By this wide mobilisation of large funds and their utilisation for assisting mainly small road transport operators and to some extent the consumer durable industry. I feel that your Company is really playing its part in the Nation building activity, resulting in economic growth, which is what is expected of a hire purchase company like yours. This is unlike many other units in the industry. By widely spreading the advances, the risks to your Company have been minimised, ensuring better security to the depositors' funds.

BRANCH OFFICES/SAKTHI SAFE VAULTS

Apart from the above mentioned normal operational features, during the period under review, your Company had engaged itself in a tremendous developmental activity too. The result has been the opening of seven more Branch Offices and the setting up of three Safe Deposit Vaults out of the long chain of Vaults your Company proposes to establish throughout the South. In doing so, that your Company is ful-filling a long felt need by the public, which the Banks have found it difficult to meet with, is abundantly clear, arising out of the very good support that the Company is receiving in this regard. During the year, your Company also held a series of functions to publicise its activities. This process is continuing with greater vigour and several more Branch Offices and Safe Vaults will be opened during the current year at short intervals.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

In the Industry, things do not appear to be as rosy as many would like to make them, due to the several adverse factors that are obtaining at present, giving room for uncertainity. Too many finance/leasing companies continue to surface too often from too many places, while even a large number of the existing ones appear to be groping in the dark. Surely, it is high time the country gets a respite from this rush and the industry is allowed to settle down, before mushrooming further. Certain policies, especially in the matter of dividend, followed by many a company cannot be considered as contibuting to the health of the industry. It is time that a code of conduct is prescribed and observed by all, so as to enable growth on healthy lines. It is hoped that the authorities concerned would act in this regard before it becomes too late.

While on this, I, however, continue to be optimistic in-so-far as your Company is concerned, in view of the several special infrastructural facilities enjoyed by it.

The target for mobilisation of deposits during the current year has been fixed at more than Rs. 20 crores, which, if achieved, will take the advances to about Rs. 30 crores, by which your Company will be creating further history. More innovative schemes and methods are proposed to be introduced to achieve this objective.

Let God bless us all!

Note: This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting of the Company referred to.

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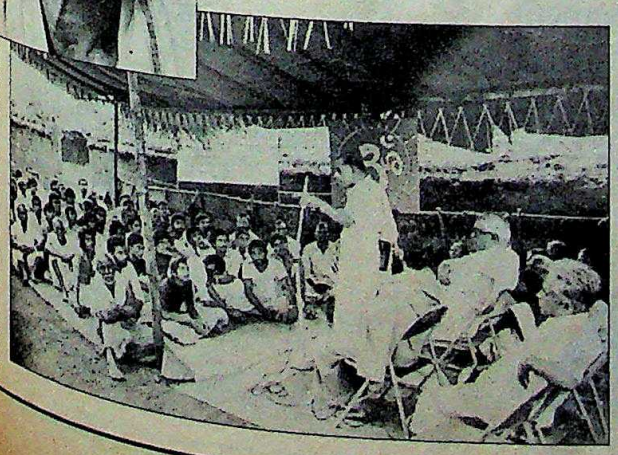
Double Shuffle

WHEN Raghunath Singh, Rajasthan's director-general of police (DGP), opted for voluntary retirement last month, he became yet another casualty of the political power game in the state. Singh had everything going against him: he was tough, honest, brooked no nonsense from the powers that be and, most of all, was said to be a confidant of former chief minister Shiv Charan Mathur. He crossed swords with Chief Minister Harideo Joshi when the latter went on a transfer spree last year and started shuffling policemen like chesspieces. Singh took umbrage and wrote to the chief minister that it interfered with the working of the force. Within days, the post of DGP was split into DGP-I and DGP-II and Singh was made DGP-I with his powers severely eroded. Singh shot off yet another defiant missive offering to take on a non-police job. A week later, he was shifted to an even lower post: DGP, Home Guards. But the Government obviously doesn't forgive or forget easily. On July 3 this year, two months before he was to retire, Singh was shifted to officer on special duty in the Home Department: an insult he couldn't stomach. Said a disillusioned Singh: "Everybody talks of reforming the police. The least they can do is extend support to an honest police official."

Singh: victimised

Warrier's War

KRISHNA Warrier is the man in Kerala who first shot to dubious fame last year when he "banned" the national anthem in a local school, saying it was "not nationalistic". Well, he is obviously not one to sit quiet. The official of a small temple in Palazhi, near Trichur, Warrier has now declared war on the backward communities and banned their entry into the temple. Up in arms, groups of backward class men, backed by Hindu leaders, staged a mass fast before the temple recently and even made offerings. Though the temple's head priest is not averse to offerings from lower caste men, Warrier says: "We will accept offerings only from Nairs and other caste Hindus as per the Gita and I don't intend to go against it." Ever since Warrier became the secretary of the temple's managing committee 13 years ago, he is said to have been running the temple like his personal fiefdom. Even the Nirmalananda Mandal, which owns the temple, has little say. With 395 of the 432 Hindu families in Palazhi belonging to the lower castes, and there being only one temple in the whole village, Warrier's war is obviously going to go on.



Warrier (inset); and devotees on dharna: caste worship

Blind Alley

THE EERIE silence of Ranchi Mansik Arogyashala in Bihar is often broken by the insane screams of its raving inmates. So when the screams of inmate Subodh Singh, 22, rent the air one afternoon last fortnight, the four warders and one nurse on duty dismissed it as a routine cry. It was, in fact, a cry of pain: someone had gouged out Subodh's eyes and he was found lying unconscious in a puddle of blood. The asylum officials said that it was another inmate, Harendra Singh, who had attacked Subodh; and the four warders were duly dismissed for negligence. But Subodh's eyes had been sliced clean out of their sockets, giving rise to the suspicion that it was the handiwork of a professional, maybe an eye surgeon. What would have been otherwise dismissed as a fit of madness thus became a spine-chilling story that has been spilling out of the asylum's corridors for quite some time: that there's a gang of professional "cornea-smugglers" operating inside. However, the asylum's angry young Superintendent B.P. Sinha hotly denies it: "It is impossible as it requires expert hands and proper conditions, neither of which exist here." But Narain Chand De has something else to say. De, a retired warder who used to cremate the inmates who died, says: "Whenever I went to dispose of the body, I found the eyes missing." But so far, it has been hard to prove De's charge.

K.M. KISHAN

Subodh Singh: blinded

Running Oath

COME rain or shine, there are times when one just has to make it. July 21 was one such day in the life of Ras Behari Behera. He had just heard that he'd been made the Orissa's agriculture minister and was to be sworn in at 2 p.m. the same day. And there he was, stranded at Nayagarh, 90 km from Bhubaneswar, with flood-waters swirling all around him. As the hands of his watch inched towards the deadline, Behera began to get the jitters. Governor B.N. Pandey, he knew, was leaving for Delhi, so he just had to make it. He did, finally, in a helicopter and reached Bhubaneswar airport just in time to find Chief Minister J.B. Patnaik and others waiting to see the governor off. So they improvised an impromptu oath-taking ceremony there and then, and Ras Behari Behera thus became the first Indian minister to be sworn in at an airport lounge.

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SRI LANKA

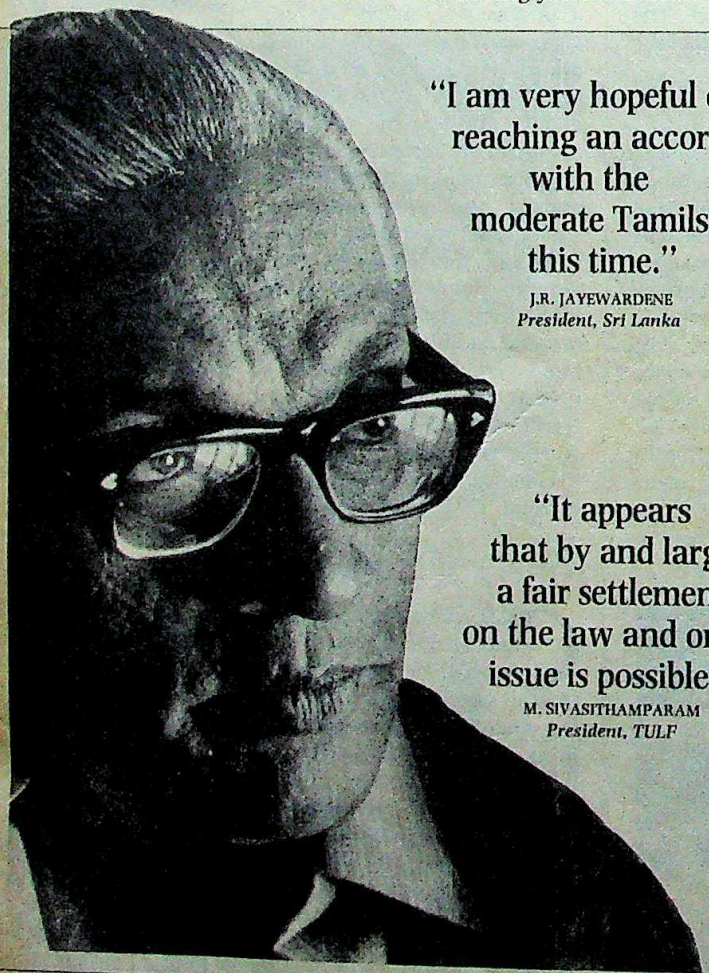
Giving Peace a Chance

LAST fortnight a mellow moon of peace seemed to be finally shining down on Sri Lanka after the seemingly endless summer of ethnic discontent. Over detailed and intricate negotiations spanning 10 days, the Sri Lanka Government and the representatives of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) had, according to inside sources, worked out several delicately balanced points of agreement in Colombo on the new provincial council proposals.

The political parties conference in Colombo also drew to a close after further liberalising the provincial autonomy proposals outlined by Sri Lanka President J.R. Jayewardene. It was clear that much more common ground was established this time than at any other previous attempt. As Jayewardene told INDIA TODAY during the hectic negotiations: "I am very hopeful of reaching an accord with the moderate Tamils this time."

Though the TULF was non-committal about the prolonged discussions, it was quite evident that the party representatives had been eminently reasonable and accommodative during the talks. While carefully adding the qualifying statement that no finality had been reached on any of the proposals in the discussions, TULF President M. Sivasithamparam said: "It appears that by and large a fair settlement on the law and order issue is possible." TULF Secretary-General Appapillai Amrithalingam also spoke about the imperative need to find a negotiated political settlement. Observed a Sri Lankan minister: "It warmed our heart to hear Amrithalingam say after seven long years: our country. He is not talking about a Tamil Eelam, but about 'our country', which includes both Sinhalese and Tamils."

Investigations by INDIA TODAY revealed that the TULF representatives had confidentially expressed broad agreement with the provincial council proposals regarding the law and order set up envisaged. The proposals envisaged that the provincial police commission would comprise of three members—the deputy inspector-general of police (DIG) of the province, a nominee of the President, and a nominee of the chief minister of the province. While the chief ministerial and presidential nominees would balance each other, the TULF apprehended that the DIG would tilt the balance in favour of the Central Government, because he would belong to the national police division. The Tamil party, however, wanted a 1:1

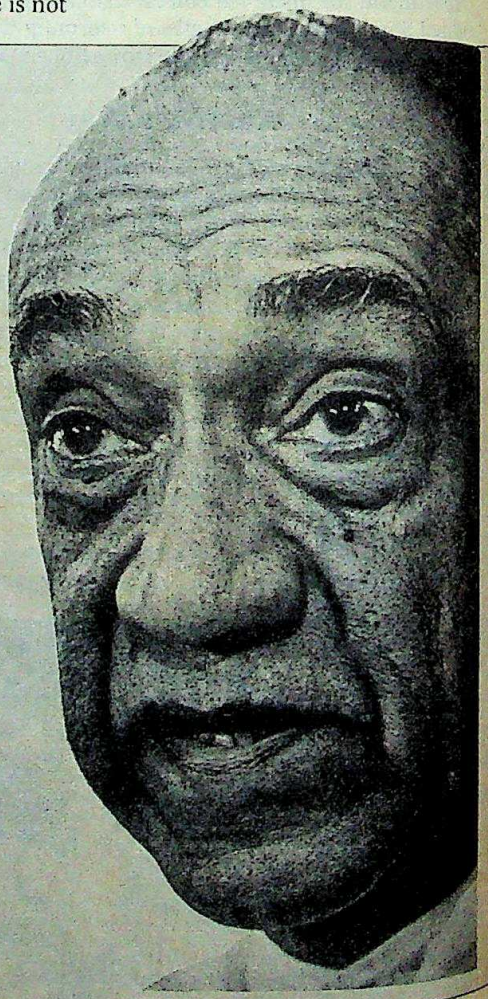


"I am very hopeful of reaching an accord with the moderate Tamils this time."

J.R. JAYEWARDENE
President, Sri Lanka

"It appears that by and large a fair settlement on the law and order issue is possible."

M. SIVASITHAMPARAM
President, TULF



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weightage for the province vis-a-vis the Central Government in the recruitment of provincial police personnel.

The Jayewardene Government was not willing to give in on that point. For one, its contention was that although the DIG of the province would belong to the national police division, he was expected to be neutral. Also, the provincial council proposals explicitly laid down that the DIG would be under the control of the provincial chief minister in the maintenance of public order. For another, this particular proposal about the constitution of the provincial police commission had been sorted out in great detail with India's Union Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions P. Chidambaram, who had led a delegation to Colombo three months ago. Chidambaram, according to Sri Lanka Government sources, had been convinced that the Government had been fair to the Tamils on this point. It was only a question of time, therefore, before the TULF overcame its reservations and concurred with the law and order proposals after speaking to New Delhi.

ON THE land settlement proposals, the former TULF member of parliament from Trincomalee R. Sampanthan, opposed the existence of a category of state lands which could only be allotted by the President. Said a highly placed source: "Sampanthan initially argued that all land had to be vested with the provincial councils which would allot land to the Central Government depending on requirement. But again, thanks to New Delhi's intervention, the TULF hardliners were silenced and Amrithalingam more or less acquiesced."

The only major hitch in a possible settlement seemed to be the issue of the merger of the northern and eastern provinces. The TULF has always been insisting on the merger as a pre-condition for their signing any settlement. And in its counter-proposals presented some time ago, the party had suggested the formation of one Tamil linguistic state. The Jayewardene Government has been insisting that merger is not possible under any circumstances. Argued Jayewardene: "I am opposed to the merger because the majority of people in the eastern province are themselves opposed to such a merger."

But even on this highly sensitive merger issue, there was considerable give and take in Colombo last fortnight. Colvin R. de Silva, leader of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party said: "While the latest proposals have not explicitly provided for a merger of the northern and eastern provinces, suitable institutional arrangements have been proposed. These will provide for provincial councils, especially those in the northern and eastern provinces, to consult with each other and act in coordination on matters of mutual interest. This is the most that we can go. If we merge the north and east, we will only end up by duplicating on a provincial scale the national ethnic problem, because in the merged unit, the Sinhalese and the Muslims will be in a minority compared to the Tamils."

The TULF secretary-general, in a striking volte face, also claimed that what the Tamil groups were demanding was not the merger of the provinces, but the creation of a single administrative unit consisting of the northern province and those areas in the east where the Tamils were in a majority. And he explained: "Whatever non-Tamil speaking areas can be detached from the eastern province may certainly be detached." This was certainly a dilution of the TULF's stand all along.

There were also other conciliatory hints from the Sri Lanka Government. It was informally made known that the Government would be prepared to accord Tamil the status of an official language apart from Sinhala. The Government was also understood to be prepared to repeal the controversial sixth amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution, which required every member of Parliament to take an oath pledging allegiance to the state, and because of which the TULF leaders had lost their parliamentary membership.

The Government was also learnt to be not sticky about a repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act under which, it was alleged, Tamil youth had been indiscriminately arrested. Revealed a top Sri Lanka minister: "We explained to the TULF leaders our problems in giving more concessions to the Tamils. We told them we could go only as far as our unitary constitution permitted. Anything more would make a national referendum necessary, which would defeat the whole exercise."

The political parties conference held in Colombo last fortnight also, if anything, improved on the concessions to the Tamils promised in the latest provincial

S.H. VENKATRAMANI

"There is a large section of middle opinion among Sinhalese and Tamils in favour of a settlement. I see a lot of hope in this for a solution."

COLVIN R. DE SILVA
leader of Lanka Sama Samaja party

S.H. VENKATRAMANI

"The Government would be able to get the provincial council proposal approved by Parliament irrespective of the SLFP's opposition."

LALITH ATHULATHMUDALI
minister for national security

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council proposals. But for the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party (SLMP), the other registered political parties which participated in the conference even went to the extent of endorsing the idea to make Tamil an official language. And the SLMP and its leader, actor Vijaya Kumaratunga, have been trying to establish their own direct equations with the Tamil militant groups. "I have held discussions with the groups in Tamil Nadu to persuade them to talk on the basis of the latest proposals, and I must say I have been able to vibe with them," he told INDIA TODAY in Colombo.

COMMENTED Colvin de Silva of the LSSP: "There is a large section of middle opinion among both the Sinhalese and the Tamils in favour of a settlement. And I see a lot of hope in this for a solution." Even the boycott of the conference by former prime minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike's Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) was not perceived as an obstacle. Said President Jayewardene: "The SLFP boycott did not defeat the purpose of the political parties conference to arrive at a Sinhala consensus." Added high profile Sri Lanka Minister for National Security Lalith Athulathmudali: "The Government would be able to get the provincial council proposal approved by Parliament irrespective of the SLFP's opposition." The ruling United National Party has 138 seats in the 168-member Sri Lankan Parliament. The SLFP has only eleven.

The till now muted opposition by the Buddhist clergy to the provincial council idea is also not being seen as an insurmountable problem by the Government. Said Minister for Lands and Land Settlement Gamini Disanayake: "We are asking the clergy to cooperate with us in this endeavour to find a settlement."

So last fortnight, a negotiated political settlement of the Tamil problem seemed certainly within the realm of possibility. The Jayewardene Government showed itself as being determined to somehow push through a negotiated settlement with the moderate Tamils and try its best to get over the problems posed by hardline Sinhala and Buddhist opinion. The TULF, on its part, was being subjected to the right amount of pressure from Delhi to be reasonable. So much so, that Amrithalingam told the Sri Lankan press that even the boys (the Tamil militants) were not averse to a negotiated settlement provided it fulfilled the aspirations of the Tamil people.

Opinion among both the Tamils and the Sinhalese also favoured an early peace. Said a professor of Jaffna University: "The people of Jaffna are now more worried about getting their foodgrains and essential commodities at affordable prices than about the merger of the northern and eastern provinces."

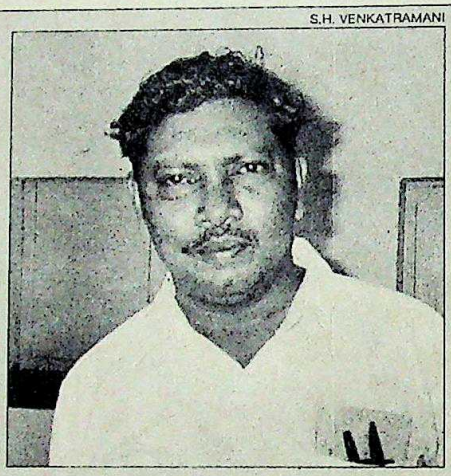
Sources in the northern peninsula confirmed that last fortnight's strike to protest against the Government's new lorry permit issue system had a greater impact than the small procession to protest against the Colombo talks. In the east also, the popular vote is for peace. Says K.S. Sodinathan, administrative officer of the paddy marketing board in Trincomalee: "We are all desperately waiting for a peaceful settlement and for the restoration of normal conditions of life. I am waiting for the day we can live and move around normally again."

The average Sri Lankan's vote for a negotiated settlement and peace is all right, but as Kumar Ponnambalam says: "The success of a negotiated solution should lie in its implementation." And for successful implementation of any settlement, it is absolutely imperative to enlist the cooperation of the Tamil militants. Already the militants have expressed their resentment of the negotiations by blasting a bus carrying Sinhalese passengers from Mahamadua to Vavuniya last fortnight, and reports put the Sinhalese civilian death toll at 39.

President Jayewardene has publicly promised to pardon the militants if they laid down their arms. He told INDIA TODAY that "the question of asking the Government of India to restrain the militants from creating problems in the implementation of the provincial council proposals will be considered later". But in spite of the implied Indian promise to contain the militant threat if the Jayewardene Government is able to hammer out an agreement with the TULF, there is no denying the fact that the tigers and the other militants are the most crucial factors in the ultimate denouement of the Sri Lankan drama.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI
in Colombo and Trincomalee

S.H. VENKATRAMANI



"We are all desperately waiting for a peaceful settlement. I am waiting for the day we can live and move around normally again."

K.S. SODINATHAN
administrative officer, paddy marketing board, Trincomalee

S.H. VENKATRAMANI

"People have had enough of the militants' guerilla attacks which invite army reprisals."

LT. COL. LAKSHMAN WIJAYARATNE
military coordinating officer, Trincomalee

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COMMONWEALTH

Empire Strikes Back

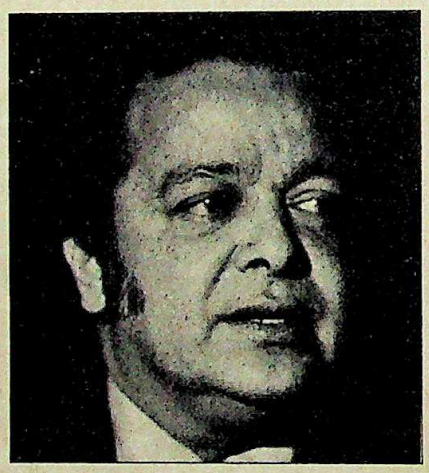
"We danced the fox trot in Lusaka. I believe she will dance a flaming tango in August."
President Kaunda on Prime Minister Thatcher

IT SEEMS an eternity since President Kenneth Kaunda and Margaret Thatcher—who made an incongruous couple as they foxtrotted at the Zambian capital—toasted the end of white minority rule in what was then Rhodesia. Today Kaunda is the most truculent and for many reporters, the most quotable of African leaders on the issue of mandatory sanctions against South Africa, who doesn't flinch from dishing out one public dressing down after another to visiting British emissaries. His latest outburst was reserved for the hapless British Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe sent on "mission impossible" to South Africa by his prime minister.

President Kaunda greeted him last fortnight thus: "As a fellow human being Sir Geoffrey you are most welcome. But as a messenger of what you have come to do in southern Africa you are not welcome at all." He added that the reason he agreed to see Howe was out of "love and respect to that young lady, Queen Elizabeth," and since he was in effect representing the EEC. Continuing his admonishment, Kaunda said: "I'm telling you that because this thing is about to explode, and that you should be encouraging it and pushing it along, is to me completely unacceptable. You and Reagan are kissing apartheid, embracing it and I can't accept that, Sir Geoffrey." Thus when Kaunda threatened a "flaming tango" at this fortnight's mini-Commonwealth summit in London there were not many in Whitehall who doubted him.

As for Howe's doomed mission to South Africa, one British commentator was kinder to him than to his leader: "In his safari through southern Africa ricochetting comically from snub to snub, he has displayed once again his unmatched ability to absorb political punishment." As for his boss who launched him on this disastrous mission, Thatcher has tenaciously refused to comment until the summit, itself began at London's elegant Marlborough House. On the eve of the summit, the British prime minister seems to be in conflict with much of the Commonwealth, directly at odds with the queen at Buckingham Palace, in disagreement with some senior Tories including it appears with her foreign secretary, out of step with much of western Europe and is only backed by arch conservative loyalists and US President Reagan.

It is against this background that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and six other leaders will begin their discussions over sanctions against South Africa which could ultimately pressurise the Afrikaner-dominated regime to dismantle the abhorrent system of apartheid. In fact, some observers feel the London summit could well decide the future of the Commonwealth—a group of 49 sovereign nations located in every continent and ocean.


Ramphal: under pressure

Shridath 'Sonny' Ramphal, the live wire and much maligned secretary-general of the Commonwealth Secretariat, despises suggestions about the possibility of the disintegrating Commonwealth. Time and again he reminds his interviewers that the British prime minister had committed herself at the last conference in Nassau to the "adoption of further measures if adequate progress has not been made". The principal question is what economic measures, what economic sanctions should be applied now. Ramphal feels, to be effective, sanctions must be substantial and concerted but they, need not at this point, be comprehensive or 'general'. Commonwealth Secretariat officials discount that a major row could seriously threaten its future. They recall that South Africa's racism has been at the centre of the Commonwealth's greatest storms over the years: over Sharpeville and South Africa's continued membership of the Commonwealth in 1961, over the Simonstone naval base in Singapore in 1971 to over a decade of conflict on Rhodesia.

Ramphal—who in recent weeks has received an unsympathetic press and been portrayed along the lines of UNESCO's avaricious Amadou Mahtar M'bow, warns that he was speaking "not with some facile belief that we can muddle through things by managing to be nice to each other. The situation is too serious for that." What political observers here are speculating is that if Thatcher refuses to concede ground, will the more hardline African states like Nigeria and then perhaps India, pull out of the Commonwealth altogether? And what would happen to the old "empire" club if it falls apart?

Tory critics are of the firm belief that few would shed an honest tear. Instead in recent weeks, there has been a searching review of the human rights record of those African nations advocating sanctions where political repression is as brutal as in South Africa. Those who have come under the media glare are Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Swaziland, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. But here there were supportive voices too. In a much quoted editorial, *The Guardian* argued: "The Commonwealth, for Britain, has been a living

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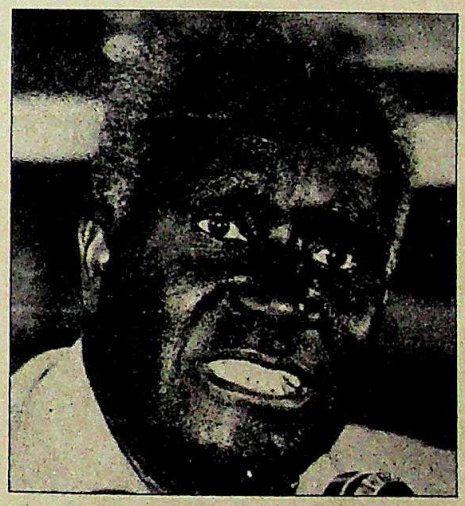
Queen Elizabeth (right) and Prime Minister Thatcher: at odds

symbol that affairs can be better ordered: a collection of ex-colonial states gathering year by year, with some affection, to trade blows and ideas and aspirations. That affection matters. The queen, toiling over years, has done much to cement it. The manner of our colonial departure helped. We are not, in the broad, hated. The people who took up the reins were (and still are) often people educated in Britain, trained here, influenced here. Of course, some aren't terrific democrats. Of course some of them feature in amnesty chronicles of shame....But together—the Canadians, the Australians, the Indians, the Zambians and the rest—they put their joint heritage to benign use and positive dialogue." But there was not a lot of this much-vaunted "affection" in evidence as one Commonwealth nation after another pulled out of the Edinburgh games citing naked British self-interest in its refusal to impose sanctions against South Africa.

Whilst the leaked "news" about the queen's disapproval of Thatcher's stance was being bandied about, and the Edinburgh games headed for a catastrophic financial loss, 10 Downing Street steadfastly stuck to its arguments: that sanctions do not work and ultimately it would be the black children who would die as a result. Against the immorality of apartheid, Thatcher was casting the immorality in southern Africa of throwing blacks out of work and depriving starving children out of food, while also bringing economic hardship on her own people by the application of measures that will not work. Thatcher foresees the South African Government hardening, not softening, in its resistance to change, while inflicting heavy reprisals on frontline states whose economies are vulnerable. She is appalled at the thought of banning purchase of strategic minerals from South Africa when the principal alternative source and beneficiary is the Soviet Union.

However 'Sonny' Ramphal thinks it would be delicious irony, if, after all these years of the South African saga, any Commonwealth leader (viz Thatcher) succumbed now to the Afrikaaner propensity of retreating into the laager of intransigence. The problem—as many observers who have gathered here for the summit see—is that she has painted herself into a corner with perhaps one option for a dignified retreat. That is her distinction between general "punitive" sanctions and minor economic measures. She could then fall back to such further measures as those already imposed: arms sales, inter-government loans, recall of military attaches, a ban on buying gold coins or selling computers to South Africa's security forces. But she "totally rejects" the argument that even black leaders in South Africa and frontline states are ready to accept tougher measures at the cost of greater economic distress. As several commentators have pointed out, the British prime minister stubbornly sticks to this argument even when a whole range of personalities and institutions prefer sanctions. Amongst them: Bishop Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Kenneth Kaunda, Robert Mugabe and others, whose constituencies could be ruinously affected by sanctions.



Kaunda: fearing an explosion

Amongst the opponents of mandatory sanctions in London, there is much talk of rich nations joining together in a new Marshal aid programme to assist black South Africa to "educate itself", to establish its own businesses, trade unions, cooperative ventures and to generally outwit the apartheid structures. This is under the naive belief that Pretoria would passively sit back whilst this great Marshal plan gets underway with the express purpose of implementing a multi-racial democracy.

However, in all these weeks of intense activity, the Thatcher Government did relent briefly to meet with the African National Congress (ANC) leader Oliver Tambo last month. The ANC, founded in 1912 on the model of Gandhi's Natal Indian Congress and whose spiritual leader is Nelson Mandela, had been previously dismissed as a terrorist organisation with communist connections. The British Government seemed to have belatedly realised that the ANC would be the dominant force in South Africa's future. But even now the Botha regime resolutely refuses to negotiate with the ANC for the release of Mandela.

As London prepared for the crucial summit, the daily and rather dismal diet of entertainment on television has been the Commonwealth Games. Presaging the bleak state of things to come, the games opened on a grey and overcast day, and for many of the events, there were just a handful of spectators. The games—branded the "white games" or the "Persil games" (after the advertisement—Persil washes whiter than white) seem headed towards a massive loss. Robert Maxwell, the man who came to rescue the games, is threatening to send a bill for £1 million each to countries like India and Nigeria for not competing.

However, the question in everyone's minds was whether the summit could be salvaged? Commentators predict a patchy agreement, followed by an emergency full-scale meeting of all the Commonwealth nations before the year end. And amongst the venues considered equipped to deal with an emergency session might be New Delhi. What no one seems to want is a scenario where the mini-summit ends in disagreement and a country like India—whose population outstrips the rest of the Commonwealth put together—might even consider leaving the "club".

—RAMESH CHANDRAN

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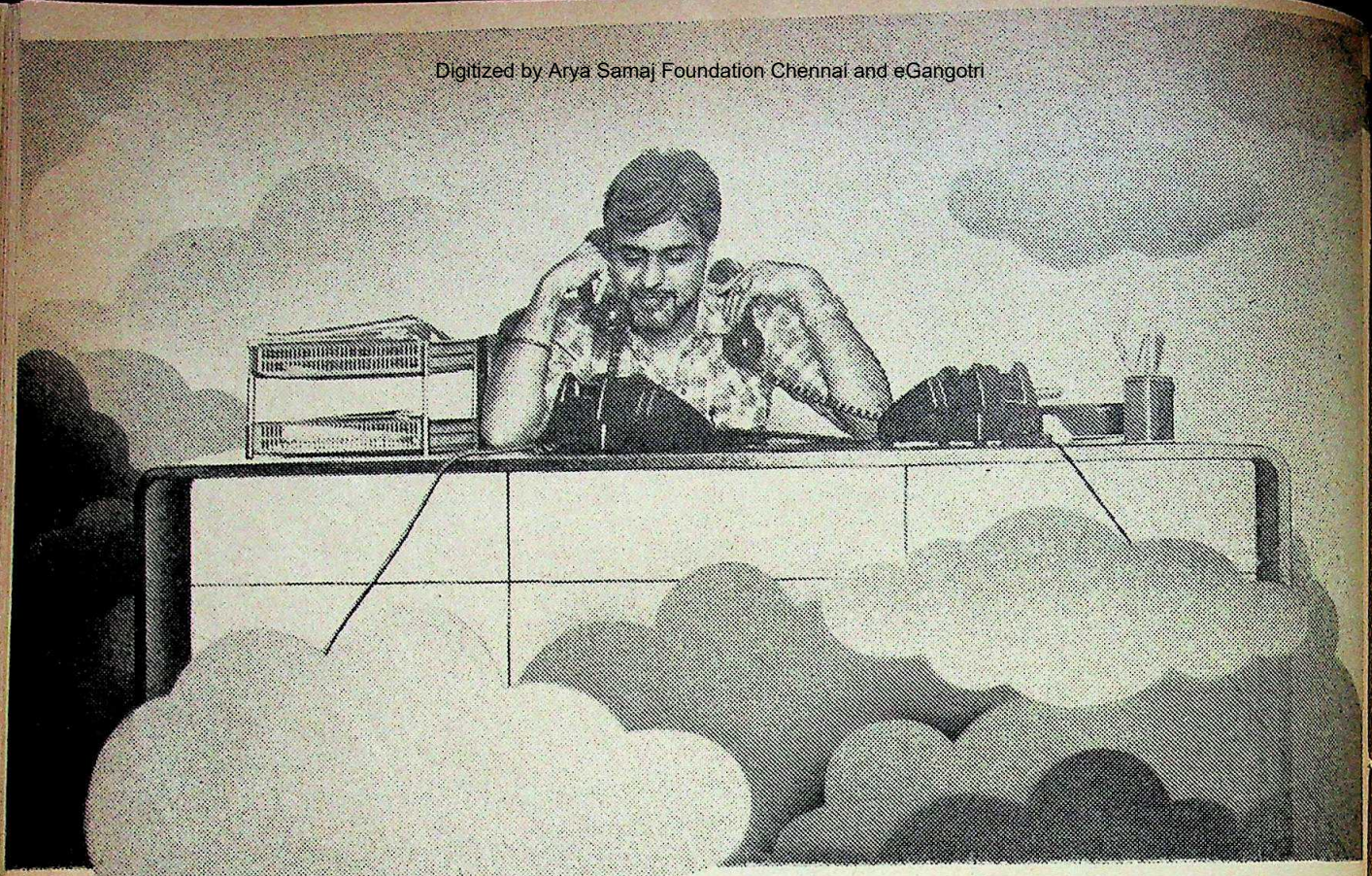

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CHANDRASWAMI

The Con-troversy

RANJAN BASU

INDIAN godmen make good copy and there has been an endless stream of swami's strutting on to centre-stage and capturing media attention. The latest in the saffron star-line is Chandraswami who leaves Rajneesh, Mahesh Yogi and Dhirendra Brahmachari looking like poor relations. Chandraswami's stardom was heralded by London's *The Observer*, which, two months ago, hinted that an Indian guru was involved in the sale of the prestigious Harrods, London's most celebrated departmental store.

The newspaper, in a sensational story, alleged that the guru was responsible for bringing together the Sultan of Brunei and Mohammad al Fayed, the Egyptian millionaire who finally bought Harrods for £615 million. The sale had come as a bitter defeat for *The Observer's* owner, and business tycoon Tiny Rowland, of the Lonhro Group of Companies who tried to buy Harrods. Rowland stuck to his guns even after al Fayed slapped a libel suit against him. *The Observer* also gave an undertaking that it would not go back on its allegations, including the one that Mark Thatcher, son of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, was involved in the sale.

Taking the cue from *The Observer* story, editors Pritish Nandy of *The Illustrated Weekly of India* and Rajat Sharma of *Onlooker* hot-footed to London, to pick up the trail of the elusive swami, who has, in his own country, managed to keep his affairs under wraps. Their efforts, including a joint interview where Nandy, masquerading as an *Onlooker* correspondent while the swami swore to "get that Nandy", finally introduced Chandraswami to Indian readers. "Sensational," screamed the *Onlooker* cover. *The Weekly* followed with an equally forceful "Exposed".

The swami reacted with lightning speed. Within two days, notices were delivered to the two editors demanding retraction of the story, failing which each would face a defamation suit of Rs 1 crore for libel.

Chandraswami's lawyer denies the fact that the swami took $2 million to introduce al Fayed to the Sultan of Brunei and asserts that this is a story being circulated by Rowland. He also denies that the swami taped conversations with al Fayed and used them to blackmail him. Chandraswami claims he has never said that he was close to Rajiv Gandhi. Sharma refutes the charge. "We met him five times and though not all the interviews are on tape we certainly have the part in which he claims that Rajiv Gandhi respects him and is close to him."

Chandraswami (top); Sharma (left) and Nandy: joint effort

Nandy, on his part, bluntly denies having received any notice. He sticks to his story saying: "There are lots of people who are quite willing to go on record in support of the pay-off charge."

As regards the fact that he sat through the interview with Chandraswami pretending to be somebody else, Nandy says: "I tried umpteen times to contact the swami and when it failed I had to resort to this. I went with Rajat Sharma and told the swami that I am Rajat's *chamcha*." Adds Sharma: "We thought we would end up telling the truth but throughout the interview he kept abusing Pritish; so we decided that it would be best not to tell him that Pritish was sitting in front of him. The man's a fraud so what's wrong with using his own tactics on him."

The swami used every trick up his saffron sleeve to prevent Nandy from publishing the expose. Frantic messages were sent to Ashok Jain, owner of The Times of India group that publishes the *Weekly*. Among those who pleaded for him were members of Jain's family, film stars and politicians. And the swami, who in the early stages of his career was reportedly assisted by Jain's father, would have succeeded in his mission but for the fact that *Onlooker* splashed the same story.

Whatever be the truth in the accusations, one fact is clear that the swami's key to the ethereal world of heads and ex-heads of state, filmstars and jetsetters is the mega rich arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi, who he reportedly cured of a disease. He is an integral part of Khashoggi's entourage and has obviously taken advantage of the connection.

When asked why he is keen on making friends with heads of state, the swami mouths platitudes. Says he "I want universal peace and brotherhood and the best way to achieve it is through heads of state of important countries." Notwithstanding his quest for peace, the access that the swami has to an international array of luminaries and the business interests he promotes through them—reportedly for fabulous five figure sums—is going to keep the media interest in him alive for quite some time to come.

—TAVLEEN SINGH

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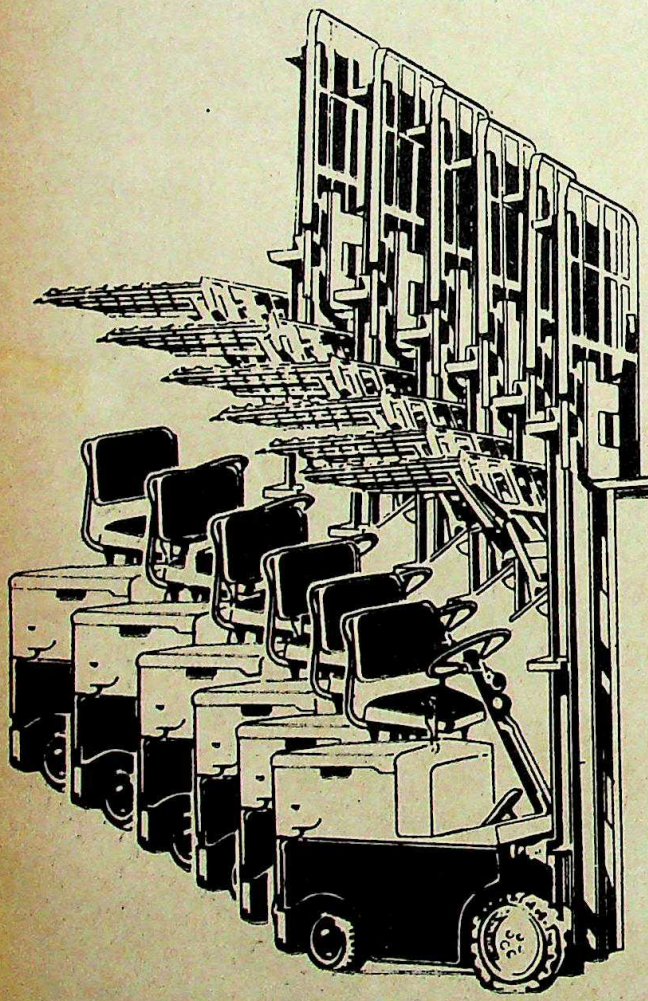

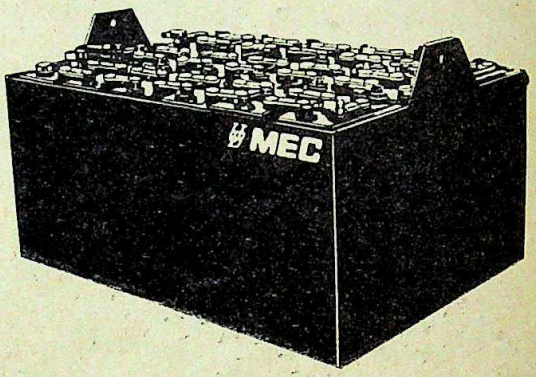

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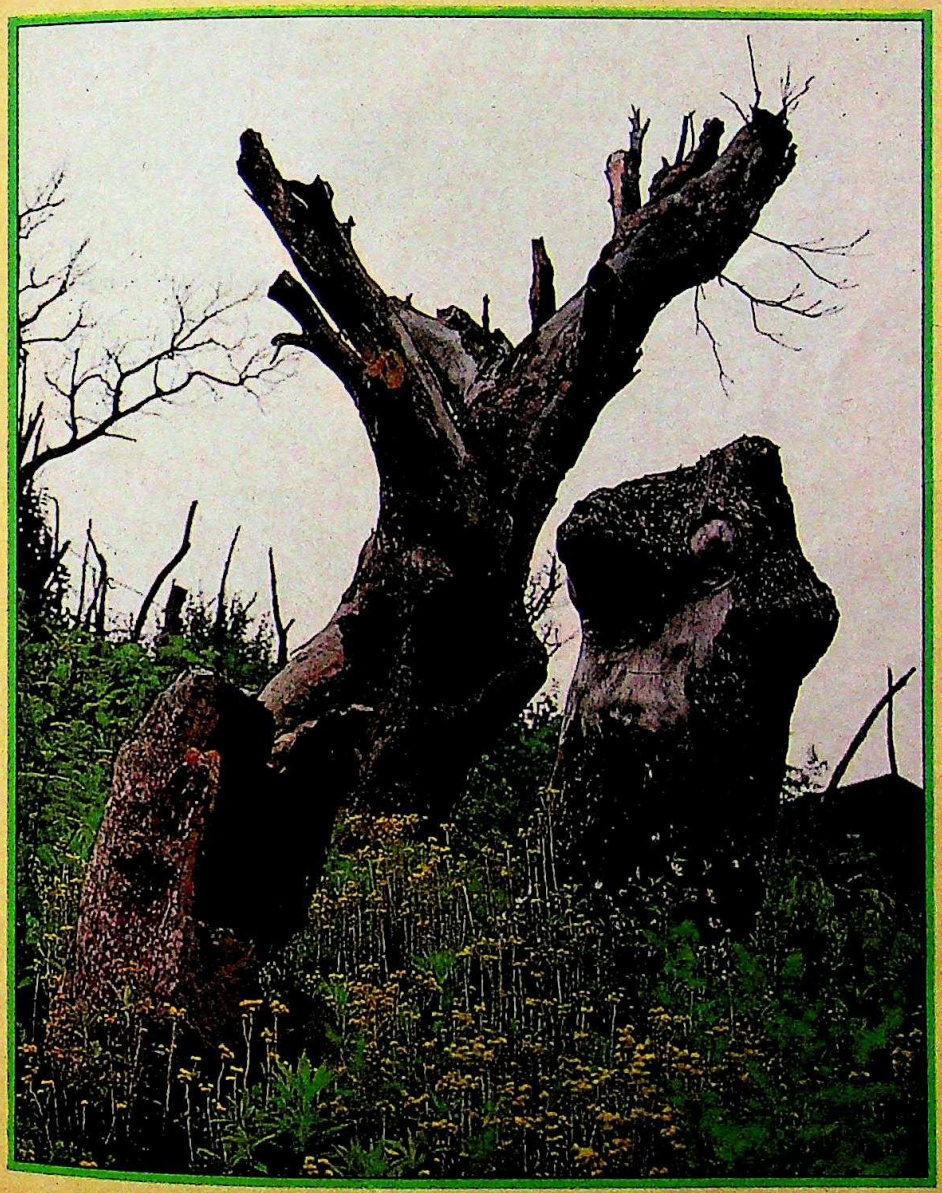
DEFORESTATION

An Environmental Holocaust



The destruction of India's forests has brought the country to the brink of environmental disaster. As they disappeared, the Government—and the people—slumbered, lulled into somnolent complacency by misleading government statistics. But recently—after shocking satellite pictures of India's receding forests and consequent desertification came into focus—ambitious new reforestation programmes were put on government drawing boards. Even though a creaky bureaucracy is now limping into action, it may already be too late to reverse the horrendous consequences of past neglect and inaction. Features Editor INDERJIT BADHWAR reports:

Photographs by BHAWAN SINGH

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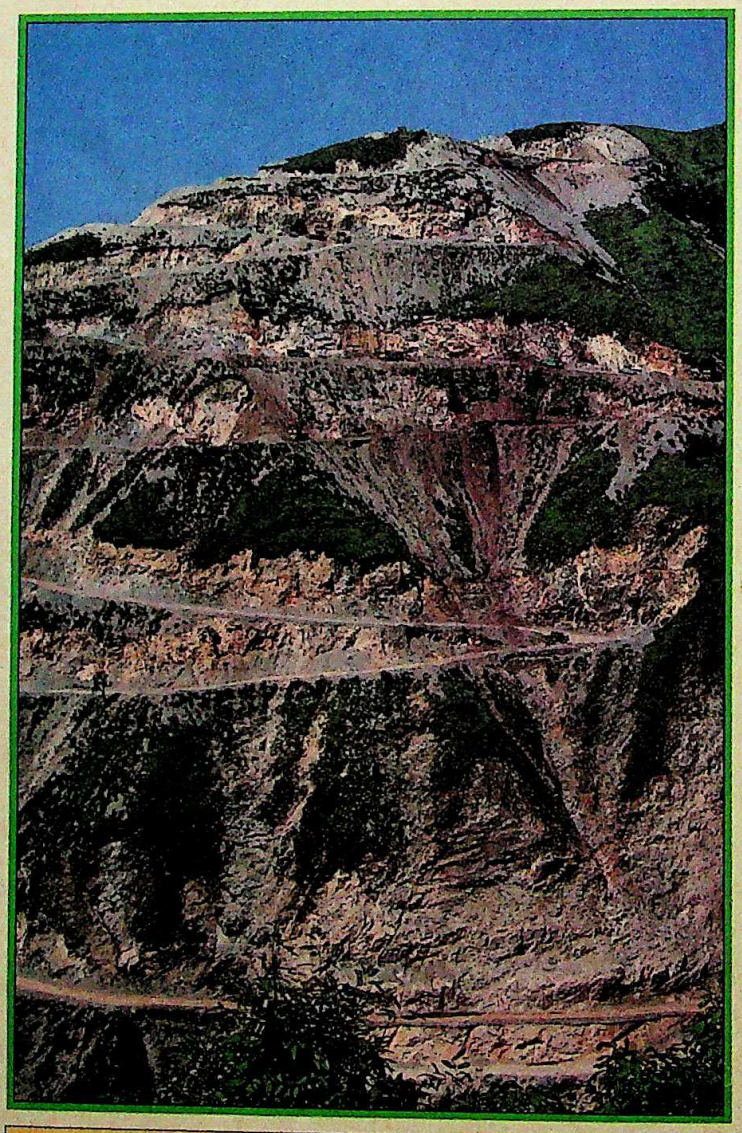
WATER is the essence of earth, plants are the essence of waters." This seminal environmental wisdom, expressed in the *Chhandogya Upanishad* thousands of years ago has been stood on its head in modern India which is rapidly entering the twenty-first century not as a grainbowl but as a dustbowl.

In the savage ecological havoc which now envelops the country like an ominous shroud, India, ultimately, is engaged in a race against time. Within the last decade—thanks to the effects of reckless deforestation which has pummelled and pulverised the earth into millions of hectares of waste land—there has developed a discernible desert that stretches from Rajasthan to west Madhya Pradesh to Maharashtra and Karnataka. At stake is the very survival and continuity of the country's agricultural livelihood.

At the present rate of environmental assault, India is steadily losing more than 1.5 million hectares of good forest land each year. In other words, every five years, forest cover the size of Haryana vanishes, leaving behind constantly eroding soil that can hold neither water nor nutrients. This apocalyptic scenario is not the projection of some distant Jonahs but of experts and scientists. Kamla Chowdhry, chairman of the National Wastelands Development Board warns: "The Gangetic plain could well turn into a desert within the next 15 years if a massive reforestation programme fails to take hold."

Says N.D. Jayal, head of environment for the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage: "Sub-Saharan conditions have already begun to plague several parts of the country which were only recently green and fertile. People sitting in the comfort of their Delhi homes don't seem to realise that every tree that falls or landslide that occurs in the distant Himalayas deepens the survival crisis." Restoration of the land to even a small percentage of its original state, he notes, "is the single most important anti-poverty programme that the Government can take up."

But the Indian Government, until a few years ago kept fiddling with misleading statistics while the forests burned and crumbled. The state forest departments continued to issue optimistic figures about the nation's forest wealth—that more than 22 per cent of the land was under forest cover. But with the onset of satellite imagery the Government received a frightening jolt. B.B. Vohra, now chairman of the Energy Advisory Board, who interpreted the satellite statistics, pointed out that the area under good forest cover was no more than 10 per cent of the country's geographical area. "This trend severely threatens whatever gains may have been made by the Green Revolution in agriculture," notes Vohra. "We are already losing about 50 million tonnes of foodgrains each year on account of the loss of topsoil caused by this devastation of our land. This represents an average of about Rs 6,000 crore each year in loss of food production. Do you wonder then why there is such chronic poverty?"



The Himalayas are dying with the sound of dynamite and axes and scarred by remains of what were lush forests.

According to the National Forest Policy adopted in 1953, one-third of the country's geographical area of about 266 million hectares should be under good forest cover. Official statistics boast that about 70 million hectares are "forest lands". But this is a grand illusion. The stark reality is that only 30 million hectares of these are under some kind of tree cover while the rest are denuded or degraded "forests". Altogether—including the non-forest agricultural land—about 175 million hectares of the country's total area, about 66 per cent, are degraded.

The destruction of natural vegetal cover causes the loss of topsoil. It is virtually irreplaceable and takes nature 1,000 years to build an inch. Annual loss of topsoil erosion is estimated at Rs 12,000 crore. In addition, because of the inability of the land to store water which is a natural function of green cover, the country has suffered, according to the National Commission on Floods, losses totalling more than Rs 5,000 crore during the last five years. Floods during the monsoons—because of erosion—and droughts during the dry

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spells—because of nature's inability to store groundwater—have now become India's man-made legacy to its environment. Over the last seven years one out of every 7 km of area under forest was denuded.

As a consequence, the entire Himalayan ecosystem is threatened and under severe imbalance as snow-lines have thinned and perennial springs have dried up. In Andhra Pradesh, temperate forest areas turn into hot-houses at night and are lashed by hurricane-like torrents of rain. Rajasthan's already poor land is getting further degraded, turning large portions of the state into a wasteland. Chronic droughts have begun to plague areas like Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh where they were unknown. And the water levels in the Ganga have begun to decrease at an alarming rate.

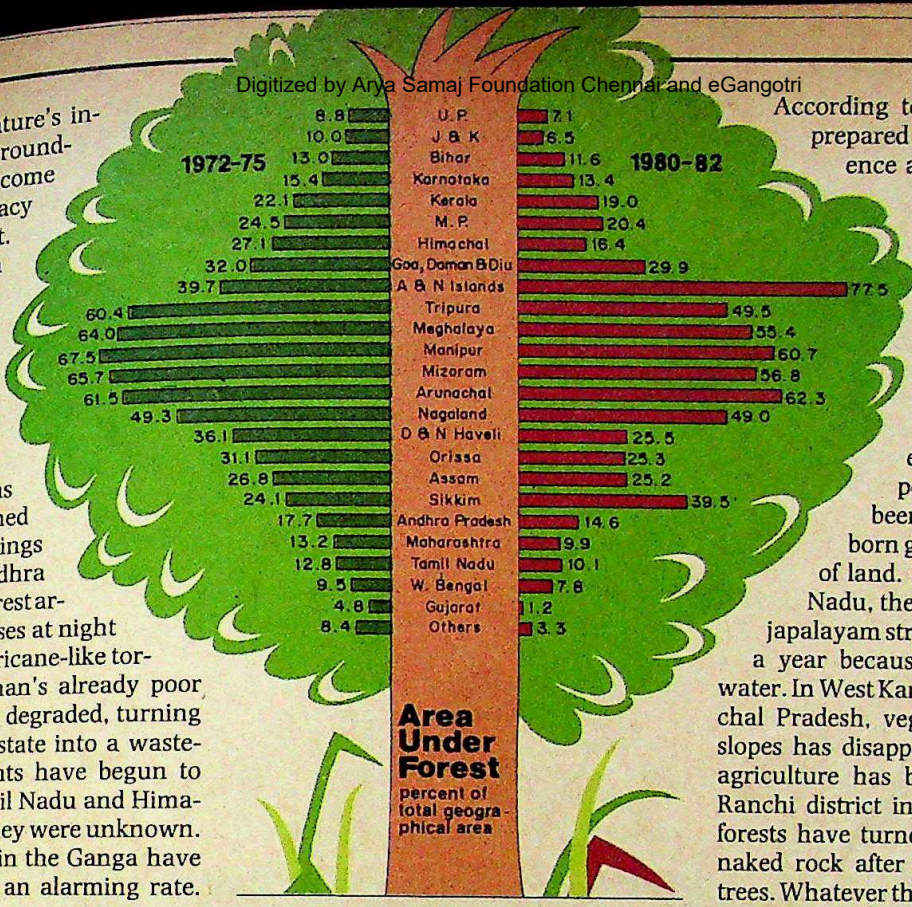
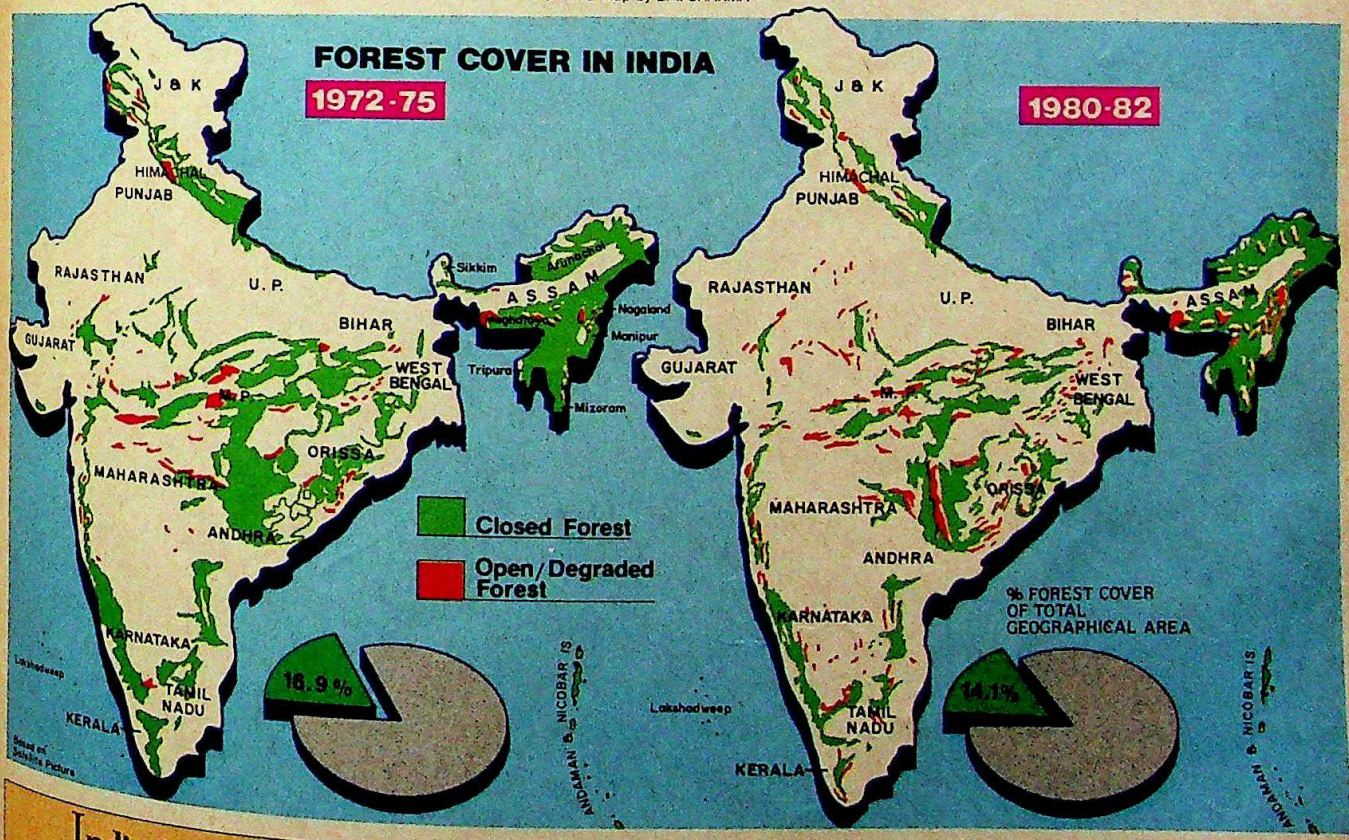


Chart & Map by B.K. SHARMA

According to a briefing document prepared by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), no part of India has escaped the wrath of this environmental holocaust: In Sonepat district, Haryana,—once the heart of the Green Revolution—the village of Akbarpur, surrounded 20 years ago by impenetrable forests, has been reduced to water-born gullies and bare patches of land. In North Arcot, Tamil Nadu, the villagers of Guruvarajapalayam struggle to grow one crop a year because there is no surface water. In West Kameng district in Arunachal Pradesh, vegetation on mountain slopes has disappeared and subsistence agriculture has become impossible. In Ranchi district in Bihar, the robust *sal* forests have turned into scrubland and naked rock after contractors felled the trees. Whatever the reasons for deforesta-



India loses 1.5 million hectares of good forest each year. Every five years, green cover the size of Haryana vanishes, leaving behind constantly eroding soil. Closed forests are only 10 per cent of total area.

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tion—commercial plundering, organised smuggling, treating forests as commercial timberlands rather than as an ecological resource, overgrazing, overcultivation, lopping and chopping of trees—the Government's attitude to the disaster that has overtaken the land so far has been one of tinkering, its reaction to suggestions lethargic. In response to an urgent SOS on the subject from Vohra in 1972, Mrs Gandhi sent an emergency directive to her Cabinet urging immediate action to begin a process by which the land could be saved. "Unfortunately, nothing came of the PM's initiative because people in power refused to appreciate the importance of the subject," Vohra says. A decade later, in June 1983, the Central Government issued a strong recommendation to the Uttar Pradesh Government suggesting a moratorium on cutting green trees in the Himalayas. But the Government carried out only a modified programme under which loopholes are still provided for cutting forests. "This was clearly the handiwork of forest officials who have always been in collusion with the contractors and forest mafias," says Jayal. "Unfortunately, the Government's handling of the problem has been one of confusion and ad-hocism," says T.N. Khushoo, former environment secretary.

The despondent note, significantly, is struck by these administrators at a time when the Indian Government—under a directive from Rajiv Gandhi—is embarked on what is widely considered to be the most ambitious reforestation programme in the world. The plan calls for the reforestation of five million hectares of waste lands each year. The project is being coordinated by Kamla Choudhury, a passionate believer in the need for a massive "people's movement".

"Rural poverty and ecological imbalance", says Choudhury, "have a common nexus. Poverty increases with environmental degradation. This cycle can only be broken through social forestry, which should be aimed at meeting the fuelwood and fodder needs of the population." The current need for fuelwood and fodder is about 133 million tonnes a year. Availability is no more than 36 million tonnes. "Some women spend an entire night on the hilly roads searching for these necessities. Men have begun to desert their villages. And women in the Garhwal area have even begun to commit suicide because they are no longer able to cope. Providing for their requirements, developing fast growing tree and bush species, while at the same time giving them employment, is the most important development programme in this country as far as I am concerned," she stresses.

But the stark reality is that the entire programme is sputtering for want of centralised command, lack of pertinent data bases, inadequate scientific knowledge and research, bureaucratic turf battles and confusion over the most basic necessity—acquisition of waste lands for reforestation. Some of the most successful reforestation programmes have, indeed, been those in which village communities, in voluntary cooperation, have fenced off forest areas, stopped the felling of trees

One method of illegal felling is to saw a healthy green tree half-way into its girth at the bottom. The saw-mark is barely discernible but the tree quickly dies. It is then marked for "legal" chopping by forest officials.

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and prohibited grazing. In many areas, the forests, without any new planting, have regenerated as if by magic. But to raise the environmental consciousness of villagers and give them a vested interest in the trees and the land they protect requires a tremendous effort.

BUT THE bulk of the degraded lands and waste lands, however, are in the control of forest departments which so far have been extremely reluctant to part with them or make them available for social forestry schemes. Other such lands —revenue lands, village commons, and panchayat lands—are often legally disputed territories or controlled by upper caste sarpanchs.

Even after Rajiv Gandhi's directive on the issue of reforestation the forest departments, this year, could plant no more than a half million hectares before the onset of the monsoon. And government officials readily admit that in all probability only less than 10 per cent of all the saplings planted will survive. They will either be eaten by cattle or die for want of adequate care. These officials candidly admit that some of the elementary questions—who will do the planting, where to plant, on which land—have still to be answered.

The Government, so far, lacks a committed and all-powerful organisation to take up the task of reforestation. And reforestation so far has not been administratively linked to the management of water resources which are an integral part of the ecological baggage of reforestation. While government policies stress the planting of trees, they do not recognise the importance of preventing floods through appropriate land management. The emphasis so far has been on controlling floods through engineering works. Major irrigation works, government studies show, have been a disaster. Surface irrigation has put as much land out of production due to water logging and salination each year as is brought under production through new projects.

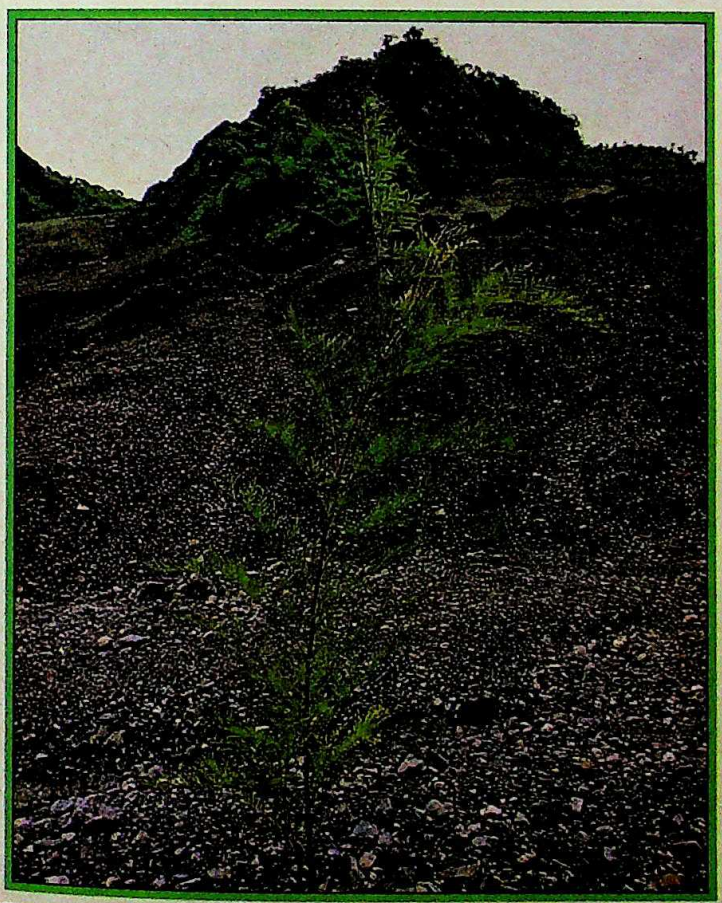
Says Maheshwar Dayal, secretary of energy: "The whole system needs to be revamped at the district level. Forestry is essentially a state subject and in order to take up social forestry in a big way there must be an integrated administrative apparatus at the district level." No such organisation is in sight. Hundreds of departments and sub-departments at the state and district levels receive funds from a plethora of government sources, each going its own way. The creation of forest development corporations in 1976 to take up reforestation schemes have made no headway. In fact, forest lands have steadily disappeared since their creation.

And, as the needs of the poor and the industrialists keep increasing, forests continue to disappear. The annual requirement for industrial wood is about 35 million cubic metres as against an availability of about 13 million cubic metres. One of the main causes of the disappearance of forests in recent times, says a CSE study, is indiscriminate exploitation by the organised sector in collusion with the state forest departments. The Madhya Pradesh Forest Department has leased huge bamboo tracts to a private paper mill at a low price of Rs 10 per tonne. In Kerala and Karnataka, bamboo has been sold to private companies at "the throwaway price of Re 1 a tonne".

While government policies have often worked hand-in-glove with vested interests in the cause of commercial deforestation, they have failed to create the scientific infrastructure which is now essential in guiding the reforestation programme. According to a Delhi University Botany professor, Dr H.Y. Mohan Ram, reforestation cannot be left entirely to a people's movement "because it requires a lot of knowledge, technical knowhow for surveys of water and soil conditions on degraded land. There is no universal species that can be grown on all land. Unfortunately, right now, even if you want to plant on a limited scale, planting material is not available. We need seed orchards, tree breeding institutes. What is sad is that even though we have an embarrassment of riches in indigenous trees there is little or no research on their growth patterns." And adds Dr V. Jagganathan of the Tata Research Institute: "Our approach should be to select suitable species, pick out the fastest growing, and then choose the elite. But there has been no integrated work in this. The technology of tissue culture for multiplying seedlings is still in its infancy. And there is no extension mechanism yet capable of taking research work out of the laboratories and into the field as was the case with the Green Revolution."

Until now, 80 per cent of all seedlings supplied under reforestation-related programmes are of two exotic species——*Leucaenia* and *Eucalyptus*. The latter has some limited commercial value but creates plantations and not a forest with its multiplicity of mixed flora which is so essential for maintaining nature's balance.

But if the target of planting 5 million hectares is to be achieved, even with the few exotic species that have shown results, the seedling requirement is about 1,000 crore against the availability of 250 crore. "The infrastructure required for production



The struggle of saplings, newly-planted on barren slopes, is a sign of life and hope amidst gloom.

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HIMACHAL PRADESH

Harvest of Shame

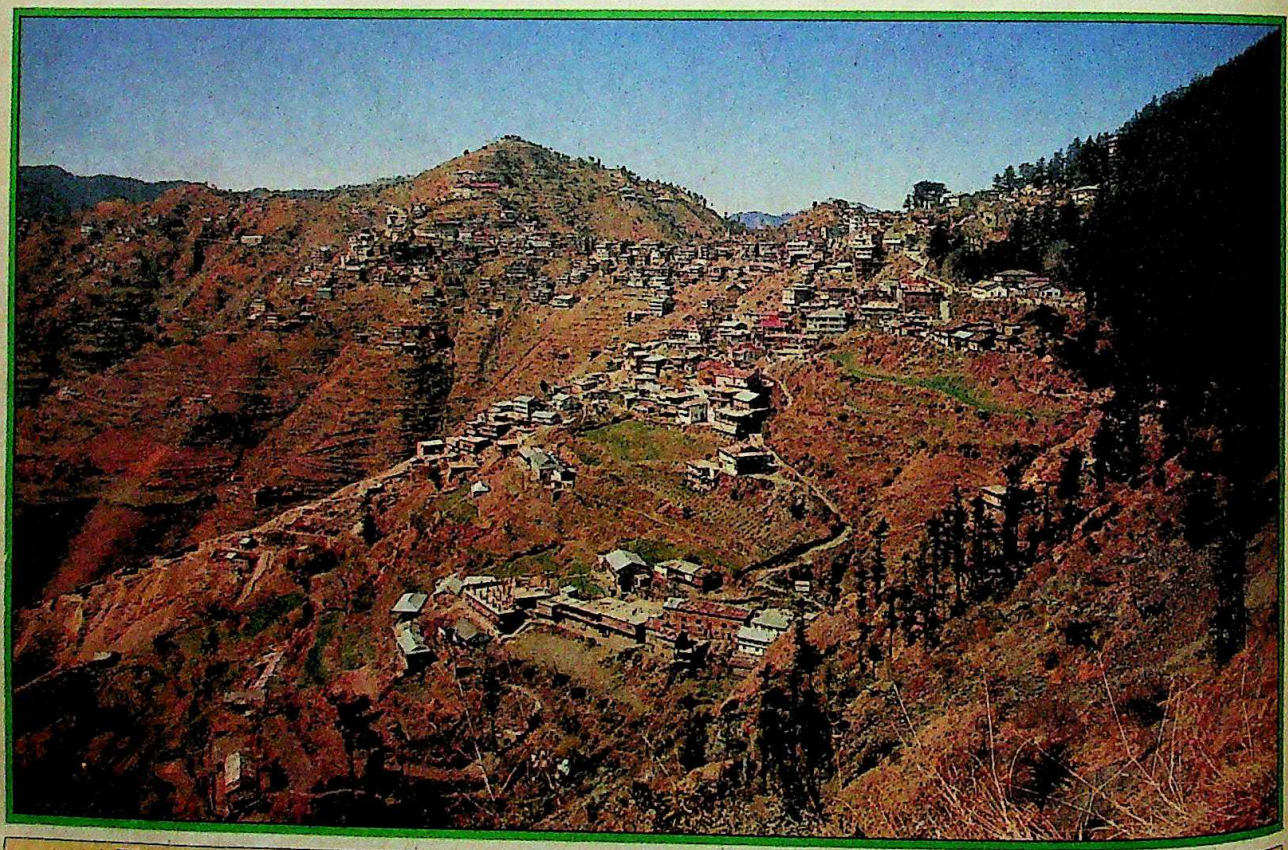
HIMACHAL Pradesh conjures up visions of mighty deodar trees, of babbling brooks and perennial mountain streams. But the reality in this ecologically-beleaguered state is harsh and uncompromising. It is one of miles upon miles of denuded mountain ranges, of forests brutally devastated by population pressures and the unrelenting avarice of forest contractors. In the high ranges, once described as India's emerald belt, trees and vegetation have disappeared as if by a perverse stroke of nature. Laments Major Vijay Singh, a Congress(I) MLA from Shahpur near Dharamsala, whose boyhood was spent in and around Shimla: "Only a few years ago we were told not to venture out too far because the sunlight could not penetrate the thick forests."

The devastation of forests has created an acute water scarcity. Himachal now lives year to year on the Rs 25 crore doled out by the Centre for drought relief. The higher regions of the state have already begun to experience seasonal changes. Winters are warm. The snow-line has become lean. Freak hailstorms appear in September and October and cut a swathe of devastation through standing crops.

According to official statistics, Himachal is supposed to be under more than 30 per cent green cover. But even Chief Minister Vir Bhadra Singh admits this is an exaggeration. Unofficial estimates put it between 15 and 20 per cent. Officially, the state still legally fells more than 5 lakh cubic metres of wood each year. Nearly

and distribution of seedlings is sadly missing," a recent government report candidly admits. In addition, only Rs 450 crore has been allocated for reforestation during the current year—far below the Rs 2,000 crore required.

"Our whole approach is wrong," admits a consultant who has been advising the prime minister's office on environmental matters. "We have to start small, select species, select elites, multiply them, parcel them out and then tackle the political question of what to do with the land. The work cannot be left to the traditional departments. We have to build from the bottom up with plantations and small forests to thousands of plantations. One successful hectare, one family saved, is of infinitely greater use than millions of hectares of failures." But if the present trend in deforestation continues, Indians may well find that, within the next five years or so, they will be running charity marathons, not for the starving in Africa but for those starving around Delhi, Bombay, and Madras.



For 90 per cent of Himachal's 46 lakh population living in small villages, deforestation has brought misery and suffering. Fuelwood and fodder are rapidly disappearing. Women bear the hardship.

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half is used to make crates for the state's booming apple industry, which has become a major ecological threat.

Though there are no accurate estimates, sources say that close to Rs 200 crore worth of wood is cut each year under the guise of catering to the industry which the state sells at a heavy subsidy—Rs 9 per wooden crate as against the actual cost of Rs 30 per crate, thereby providing an incentive of Rs 21 per box to the state's deforestation. According to Maj. Singh the state's apple industry was hit hard by the "scab disease" during the 1983-1984 season. The state, with assistance from the Centre, disbursed about Rs 2.5 crore as compensation to the growers and bought their crop to destroy the scab-infested crop. But during this same period, the Forest Department sanctioned the felling of timber for 73-lakh wooden boxes. He asks incredulously: "If most of the apples were 'bought' by the Government to be destroyed, then why did the department still sanction the timber when there should only have been a nominal requirement for wooden boxes?" The current year's requirement for packing cases has been projected at one crore, which means that the Government is committed to paying Rs 21 crore simply for the felling of trees.

The Government says that only 98 lakh crates are moved out of the state but this is based on 1976 estimates. Today, the industry has increased ten-fold. Says Singh: "I am convinced that government officials in connivance with the forest mafia and smugglers are fudging figures and misleading the Government."

Himachal's growing light industrial sectors and the forest wealth amassed by organised tree fellers has brought a new consumer culture to its towns. But for 90 per cent of Himachal's 46 lakh population living in villages, deforestation has brought misery and suffering. Fuelwood and fodder are rapidly disappearing. And village women have to bear the brunt of the hardship.

The state has taken several steps to begin reforestation designed to place Himachal under 50 per cent green cover within a decade. But results have been poor. Because of grazing and other pressures, the survival rate for trees planted in degraded areas has been less than 20 per cent. Says Sitaram, 80, former pradhan of Matli village: "The land is suffering and the forestry people do little or nothing. The programme is only on paper. Even when they distribute wire fencing to prevent grazing, it winds up not with farmers but for sale in the black market."

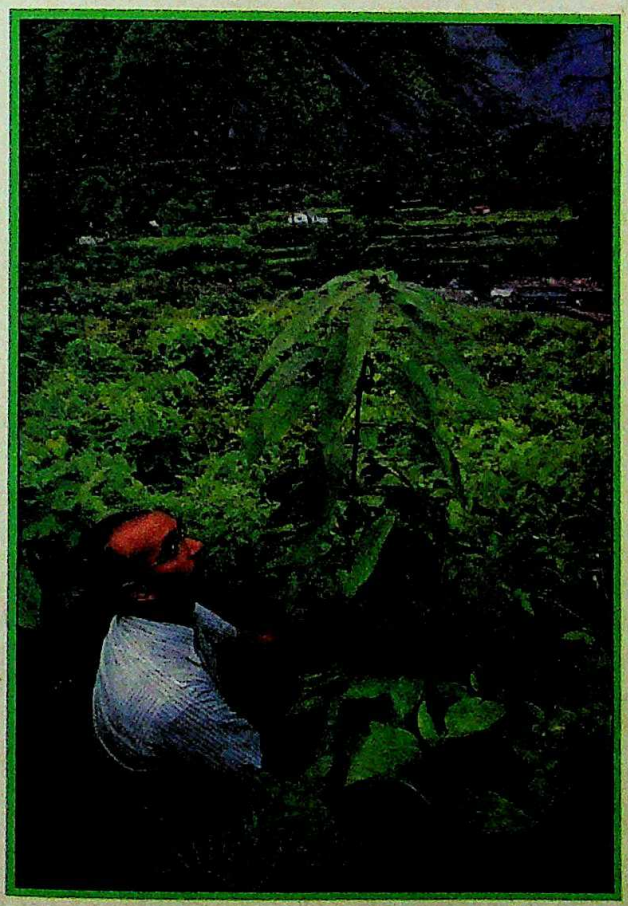
GARHWAL HIMALAYAS

Plunder in the Hills

THE DEHRA Dun and Garhwal Himalayas are dying with the sound of dynamite explosions, earth-moving machinery, axes and power-saws. These hills are cruelly pock-marked—scarred by the remains of what were once deodar and raunsli pines, chestnut and rhododendron and oak forests. The entire area, comprising five districts and covering an area of 29,968 km of land, is now under less than 10 per cent of dense forest cover. A decade ago, good forest cover was double this amount. The ecological blight has taken a toll not only of the quality of lives of individuals but also of the environment. Every tree that is felled now ultimately damages the life-support system—the soil water and the climate—of the Indo-Gangetic plain.

Essentially, these central Himalayan ranges are like a gigantic sponge. The forests, through roots, leaves and mosses catch rainwater and release it gently into the ground for storage in aquifers—nature's own cave-like storage tanks—which ration the water in trickles into rivulets supplying the Ganga and the Jamuna. But, because of the denudation of mountain slopes, most of these aquifers are now dry. During the rainy seasons the water simply cascades down the slopes into river valleys, carrying with it huge amounts of topsoil causing landslides and floods. In the dry weather, because the storage system is depleted, there are droughts. The Doon valley—particularly Dehra Dun—was legendary for its seemingly interminable supply of water. Streets and places—Karwapani, Guchhupani, East Canal Road—were named after sources of water supply. Today, Dehra Dun, still bountifully endowed with 2,000 mm of rainfall a year, shuts down periodically for lack of water. During the last five years, the water level in the Rajpur Canal has dropped by 80 per cent and in the Bijapur Canal by 40 per cent. And Mussoorie, the "Queen of the Hill-stations" an hour's drive uphill, receives no more than 50,000 gallons per hour each day though its need during the peak tourist season—when the population soars to one lakh—is 150 lakh gallons per hour per day. Because of the loss of forest cover, Mussoorie's average temperature has soared from 25.8 degrees centigrade in 1950 to nearly 33 degrees.

This massive shock to the environment is due to a combination of limestone quarrying and mining, shifting cultivation by migrant farmers, allocation of land for commercial cropping, and the ille-



Avdesh Kaushal has organised students to replant mined hillsides inch by inch.

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gal felling of trees by organised forest mafias in league with officials of the Forest Department. Both the state and Central governments bear a portion of the blame.

THE EFFECT of mining on the lives of the poor in the Doon valley has been devastating. Jhamri, a poor cultivator in his 70s, is a living victim of the ecological ruin that has engulfed the Doon valley during the last decade. Three years ago his village, Jhandukhala, once an ethereal settlement in the Doiwala Block in Sahasradhara, was completely wiped out by a landslide set off by a mine above the village which was being cleared for quarrying. "It came in the middle of the night," recalls Jhamri, "and we all ran out of our houses with only the shirts on our backs." The village is now a rubble of stone and Jhamri's nine-member family has moved out of the area. He now fends for himself inside a small shelter nearby surviving on an old-age pension of a miserable Rs 60 per month.

But Jhamri's plight helped galvanise many citizens groups into action. Political leaders, the Save Mussoorie Society, the Friends of Dehra Dun Society made common cause against the miners. Earlier, it had been impossible to dislodge the mines because the contractors were securing stay orders from the courts through lawyers.

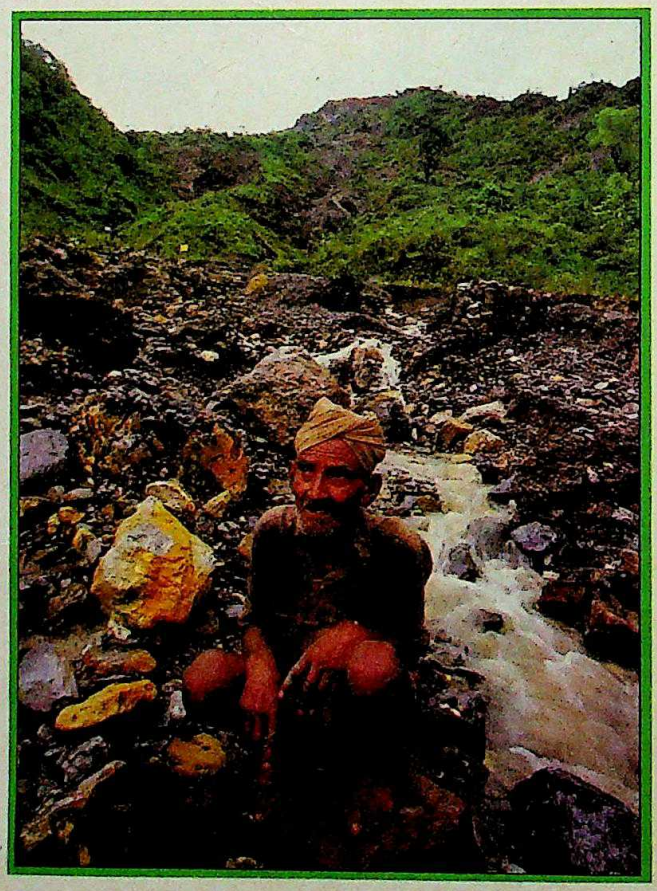
The power of the miners' lobby even attracted the attention of prime minister Indira Gandhi in 1983. She expressed her frustration in a letter to Sita Devi of the Save Mussoorie Society: "I am terribly worried by the continuing quarrying operations in the Doon area. I know of the extensive damage caused...I have asked the CM of UP to look into the matter and ensure urgent action to have the stay order vacated." Notwithstanding Mrs Gandhi's concerns, most of the mines closed down in 1985, thanks largely to a quixotic battle waged in the Supreme Court by Avdesh Kaushal, a social worker and coordinator of the Nehru Yuvak Kendra.

Says Prem Thadani a Mussoorie hotelier and member of the Save Mussoorie Society: "We were really sleeping until Kaushal jolted us out of our complacency. He is a tenacious fighter. His life was threatened, he suffered a heart attack, and he used money from his own provident fund when finances were low. But he fought the miners paper for paper in the Supreme Court." Fify-five mines were closed down but they left a trail of destruction and devastation in the Mussoorie Hills. Occupying over 1,000 hectares of land—more than 800 of them in reserved forests—the mines had eroded the hillsides, destroyed leaf mould—a valuable organic fertiliser—polluted seasonal streams and caused agricultural production to plummet by 50 per cent. At one time, limestone dust particles from the quarries and factories was measured at 360 micrograms per cubic metre as against the safe level of 100. And loss of grazing land has destroyed traditional occupations like farming and dairying. In the Mussoorie Hills, miners have literally chopped of the peak of the famous Hathipaon mountain and reduced most of the Banog mountain to a series of patchwork rubble-beds.

Still, six mines and cement factories have been left to operate in the Doon valley and the Mussoorie Hills. The most destructive of them—the Lambidhar mine—is owned by the state Government and provides raw material for the Government's calcium carbide factory in the Doon valley west of Rajpur. The Lambidhar mine, which has totally destroyed more than 40 hectares of forest and mountainside, is a chilling spectacle. It resembles a gigantic skeleton. It is as if the earth has turned into a rotting, putrefying corpse contaminating everything within reach. And as the mining continues, the metallic sounds of grinding and crushing reverberates from valley to valley. Says General Prem Chand (retd), who lives in the area: "They're killing a whole mountain range. They've raped it and now they're killing it."

Several cost-benefit analysis made by the Government have noted that the Mussoorie and Dehra Dun Hills provide less than 2 per cent of the total limestone reserves in the country and that industry would not suffer if all the operations were shut down. Yet, the Government—notwithstanding statistics showing Dehra Dun to be the second-most economically developed district in the state—declared the valley a "backward area", ostensibly to attract non-polluting electronics industries, but brought in the quick-profit limestone quarries. What conservationists find inexcusable is that just one month after the Doon Valley Board—in which the state Government participates—recommended that the state issue an ordinance declaring the valley an ecologically fragile zone, the Industries Department began operating its calcium carbide plant.

While conservationists have made some headway in Dehra Dun and Mussoorie, they have yet to make a dent on the quarrying that is eating into the Garhwal hills further north. Even where there is no quarrying, government policies and human



Jhamri's village, now a rubble, was wiped out by a landslide set off by a mine located right above it.

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ARC CEMENT

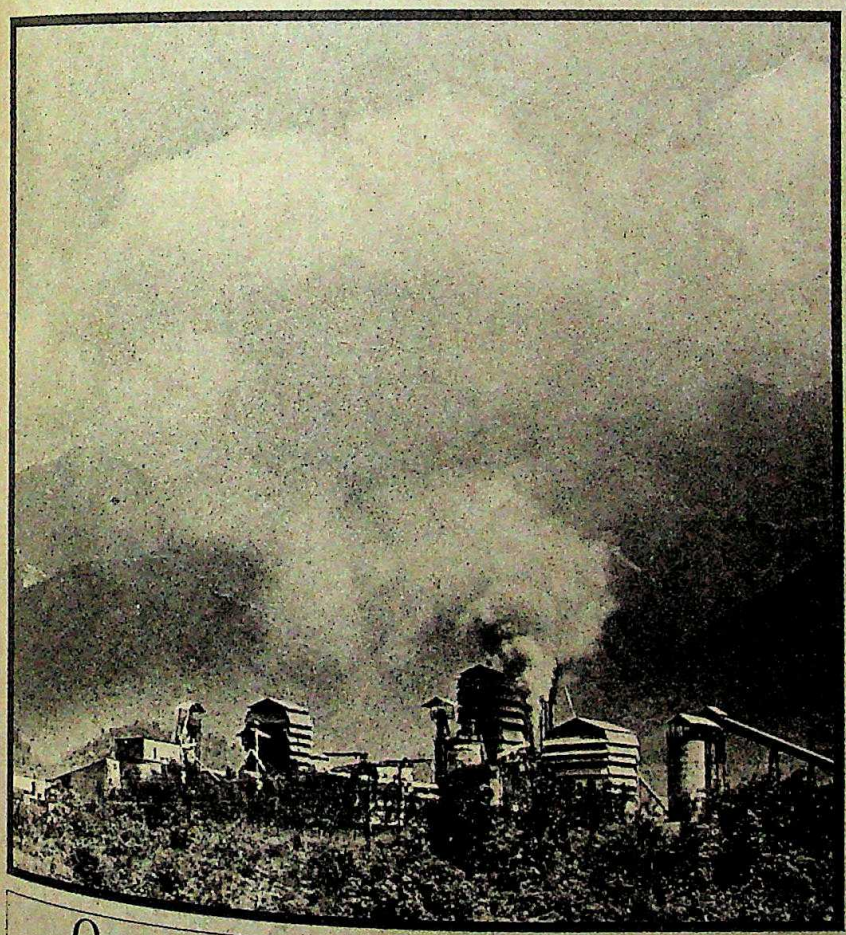
Volcano in the Valley

THE CONTINUING operation of the ARC cement factory near Rajpur in the Doon Valley is a potent illustration of the power of cement and limestone lobbies which are often aided by government regulations.

Operating since 1981, the plant is often likened to a smoking volcano whose noxious fumes pollute not only the valley and choke the surrounding green forest cover but also rise into Mussoorie, polluting the mountain air. Says Florence Pandi, member of the Friends of Dehra Dun: "This is a closed valley and we have an inverse airflow, making it hard for pollutants to escape. One plant like this can hold the valley to ransom." Adds Anand Jauhar, proprietor of Mussoorie's Savoy Hotel: "Sometimes the pollution is so bad your eyes water. And the dust clogs the pores of the leaves and causes forests to die."

Local opposition to the plant—one of the six mining-dependent factories still operating in the Mussoorie hills—reached such heights that the prime minister wrote a personal letter to former Uttar Pradesh chief minister N.D. Tiwari in April 1986 requesting "immediate appropriate action, including closure of the plant." "The plant," Rajiv wrote, "is causing considerable public nuisance and posing a health hazard."

But more than a year later, the plant continues to belch out chimneyfulls of odious smoke which hangs like an ominous shroud over the valley.



Opposition to the cement plant caused Rajiv to send a stiff note to UP's chief minister urging its closure. But the plant still operates.

Though the Government has a good case for closure, it apparently has no regulatory muscle to carry out its intention. Citizens groups are unable to file direct complaints in the courts since the Air Pollution Act does not give them the right to file third party judicial complaints. They can only petition the subdivisional magistrate to declare such a plant a public nuisance. And the SDM, acting on complaints, did issue ARC a show cause notice. But ARC's owners immediately appealed to a district judge who granted a stay order.

Undeterred, environmentalists then complained to the Uttar Pradesh State Pollution Control Board which had issued ARC a "no objection certificate" (NOC) in 1981 with certain conditions for setting up the factory. When the board discovered that ARC had not followed several pollution control standards, it withdrew the NOC. This should have been enough to close down the plant—a Central Government licence to establish an industry is given only on the basis of an NOC. But that did not prove to be the case.

The district administration, despite acknowledging the withdrawal of the NOC, insisted they were helpless in closing down the plant since the licence to operate it was given by the Government. The Government responded that the Air Pollution Act does not give it the power to close down a plant even after a NOC has been withdrawn.

The question then arose, who is to close the plant? The pollution board was left with only one remedy—to file a complaint with the chief judicial magistrate (CJM). But under the law, the CJM is only empowered to impose a maximum fine of Rs 10,000 and jail the equipment operator—not the owner or the management—for three months. This was yet another ineffectual remedy.

Finally, the valley's Rural Litigation Centre filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court. "What we have asked the court is, we as citizens have no power to litigate, no one seems to listen to the prime minister, you tell us what recourse we have?" said a centre activist.

The Supreme Court has issued show cause notices to several other plants in the area in conjunction with the petition. But the miners are taking their own time to respond. A final decision may perhaps be made in a year. And until then, ARC will continue to operate.

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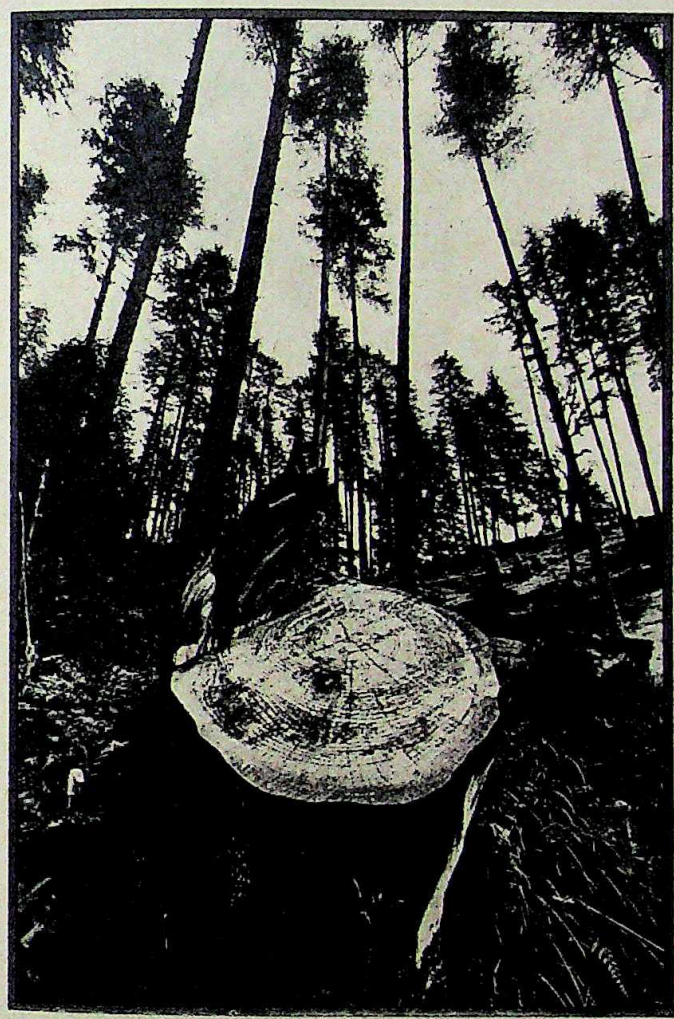
greed are destroying virgin forests. According to several high-level government sources, illegal felling of trees is the joint handiwork of forest officials and smugglers and there are several ways in which they collaborate. The felling of healthy green trees is forbidden by law. But illegal fellers use a plethora of devices to get "legal" permits to chop. One common method is to use a blow torch to burn the roots of a tree. The healthy tree dries up in no time and is marked for "legal" felling by forest officials. Another method is to saw the tree halfway into its girth at the bottom. The saw-mark is barely discernible but the tree quickly dies.

FOR EVERY tree that is legally marked for felling," says S.C. Singha, former commissioner of Garhwal and now resident in Kanatal, Tehri district, "there are 10 trees which are cut illegally during the operation. The Forest Department has been a failure in protecting forests and in reforesting degraded land." The Kanatal-Tehri area represents a microcosm of what has happened to the nation's forests and groundwater and the Government's inability to deal with the problem. Virgin deodar, rhododendron, chestnut and wall-nut forests are disappearing. In Dhanolti a storm recently uprooted some deodar trees which were marked by the Forest Department for removal. But in the process, more than half the forest has been "removed" and healthy trees felled and smuggled out for commercial purposes. In Kanatal, a recent forest fire—the first of its kind in living memory—partly burned some trees in a 1000-acre deodar and chestnut forest. Those trees could have regenerated themselves. But the fire provided a handy excuse for chopping down almost the entire forest. In the Chamba-Mussoorie Hills, thousands of acres of trees have been felled in the last decade because the Government decided to allocate 300 plots, roughly 3,000 acres of land for apple orchards. The scheme did not succeed because the area is prone to hail storms. Most of the farmers have shifted to potato cultivation and encroached on standing reserve forest land.

The north face of the Bhagirathi river's catchment area lies in virtual ruin because of shifting cultivation and the Government's inability to cope with the problems of migrant cultivators and their herds. And the Government's performance in reforestation has been miserable. The Doon Valley and Garhwal are replete with examples of Forest Department "plantations" which have withered within two years and thriving private and community plantations. Says Singha: "The survival rate for trees planted by the Forest Department is less than 5 per cent. Besides, they do not have the required saplings. We could not even get them to plant cedar in our area so we had to settle for surai trees."



Devastation of forests has created water famines. Many states live on Central drought relief funds.

"No reforestation scheme will succeed," Kaushal points out, "until individuals or communities are convinced that they have a vested interest in protecting their forests." This is ably demonstrated deep inside a Tehri valley called Saklana. There, four villages have agreed among themselves that there will be no grazing or felling in selected areas and that villagers will travel only to certain selected portions of the area for their fuel and fodder needs. No fancy Forest Department schemes or elite tree saplings have been transported there. Within the protected areas—through natural self-regeneration—thick oak forests have mushroomed as if by magic. Says Chhatar Singh, a shopkeeper of Jaar village: "We did this after we became conscious that our lives were being destroyed by deforestation. Our children are even more conscious than we are."

It is this rising ecological consciousness—among poor village folk as well as the elite—which is, ultimately, the ray of hope in the Garhwal Himalayas. Kaushal has now organised bands of students from all over the country to begin replanting the mine-devastated mountainsides belonging to both the Forest Department as well as to gram sabhas. His teams are working on the worst kind of degraded forest, literally trying to green the rubble slope by slope in a 100-hectare area in Sahsradhara where Jhamri's village disappeared under a landslide. On slopes which still have some topsoil left, Kaushal and his volunteers—funded by a host of agencies including the Ministry of Community Development—have now successfully planted tun, vimal, and silver oak. Among the most poignant sights in the Dehra Dun and Garhwal Himalayas are the plantations of kala banja shrubs—a hardy plant which is an excellent soil-binder—which have been planted on barren limestone hillsides. Their struggle to survive in an environment clouded mostly by gloom is a sign of both life and hope.

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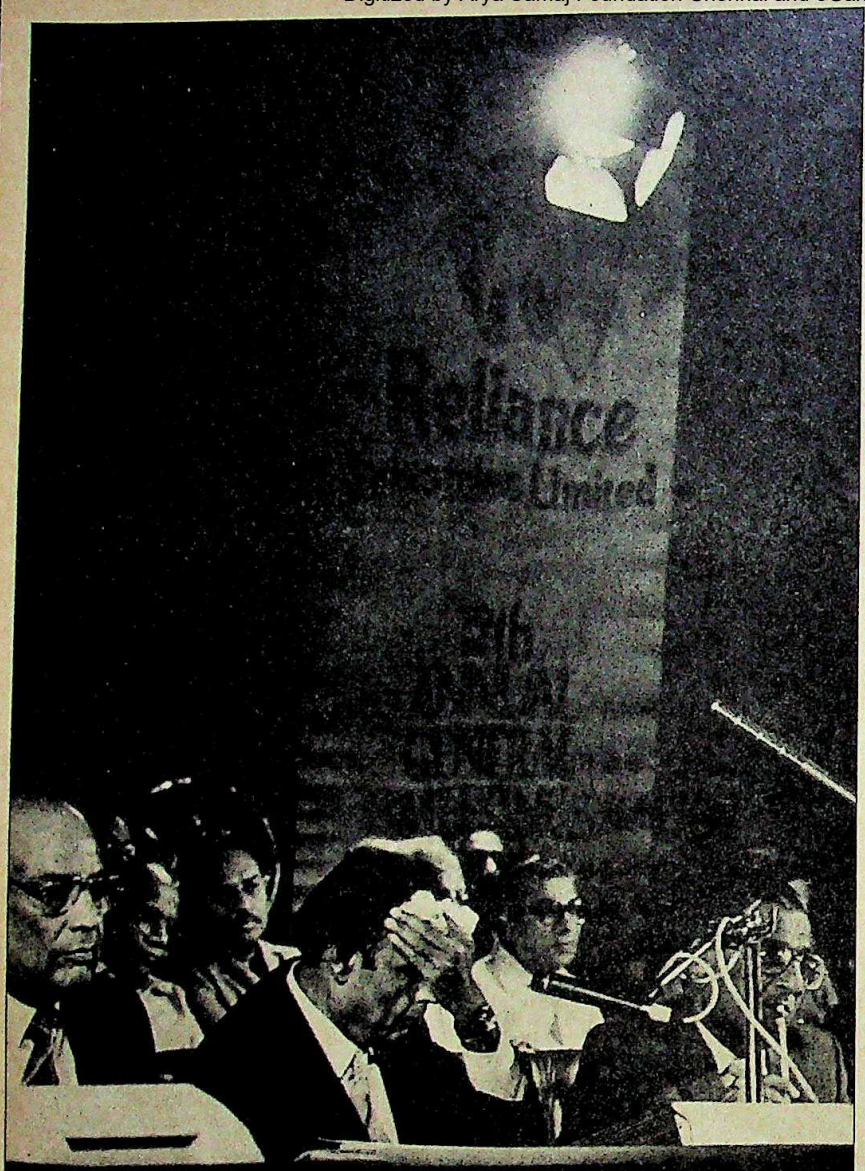

RELIANCE

Under Pressure

Dhirubhai Ambani wipes his forehead at Reliance's annual meeting: heated controversy

NAMAS BHOJANI

AS a soap opera plot, it would have had instant appeal: a rags-to-riches tycoon with a reputation for having built his booming business partly on the strength of political contacts is suddenly laid low by a disabling stroke; a media baron decides for a variety of reasons to start investigating the tycoon's various business deals; a change of government brings a new coterie into power, and the political nexus changes; an aristocratic businessman who believes that his own business has floundered because of torpedoing by the johnny-come-lately tycoon suddenly finds that he can start settling scores; the tycoon's young, inexperienced sons unexpectedly find themselves in the thick of battle to save their empire from the marauders. And almost overnight, a corporate juggernaut that seemed unstoppable has a large question mark hanging over its head.

As soap opera, it might have been enjoyable fare. As real life drama, it is edge-of-the-seat excitement. Reliance Industries—which has grown from next to nothing a decade ago to becoming the third largest company in the country, with sales last year of Rs 711 crore and profits of Rs 71 crore—has rarely been far removed from controversy. But the screaming headlines, angry questions in Parliament, unfriendly government decisions and stock-market crashes of the last few weeks have been something quite unprecedented even for Reliance.

Till the fireworks started, Reliance had seemed to be coasting along effortlessly to a 40 per cent growth in sales this year, and a further 200 per cent growth in the next three or four years, taking the company to the Rs 3,000 crore range, uncharted by any private sector company in India's history. New plants were getting commissioned, others were getting erected, yet others were getting cleared by the Government, fanciful financial goals were turning into reality and hard cash, and the rags-to-riches Ambanis seemed set to reach a scale of operations that would put them on the world stage and a place at last in the *Fortune 500*.

But now, there was a visible nervousness and tension in the company's plush headquarters in Bombay's Nariman Point. Anil Ambani, 27, younger son of Reliance's founder-chairman Dhirubhai Ambani, would normally have sat through a three-hour session with a journalist, undisturbed. Now, even an hour-long meeting was perennially disturbed by telexed messages, whispered consultations and the sense of action all around.

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Anil's elder brother Mukesh, 29, had winged his way to New Delhi for what he had thought would be a day trip. Instead, he stayed on for five days as each new dawn brought fresh developments in the capital. Dhirubhai himself was busy in Switzerland, burning up the telephone wires to India with advice to his sons and senior executives.

Businessmen in Bombay who used to say they were Dhirubhai's admirers now referred to him in disparaging terms; others said Ambani had annoyed virtually everybody in the textiles and petrochemicals industries (Reliance's areas of operation). And the Ambanis seemed shaken. For though they were far from friendless in the corridors of power, Mrs Gandhi had gone, and both R.K. Dhawan and Pranab Mukherjee were in the wilderness.

So, quite suddenly, the country's most ambitious corporate juggernaut seemed in trouble. In sharp contrast with earlier accusations that the Government was bent on dispensing all manner of favours to Reliance, New Delhi now seemed almost eager to delve into Reliance's cupboards in search of old and new skeletons. Reliance investors were visibly nervous, the profitability of at least some of the company's operations had been sharply reduced, a new polyester fibre plant had run into unexpected teething problems, and controversies raged over Reliance's proposals for new projects, with rivals lobbying in government offices to stall Reliance. A company that had been racing towards seemingly impossible goals was suddenly rocked back on its heels.

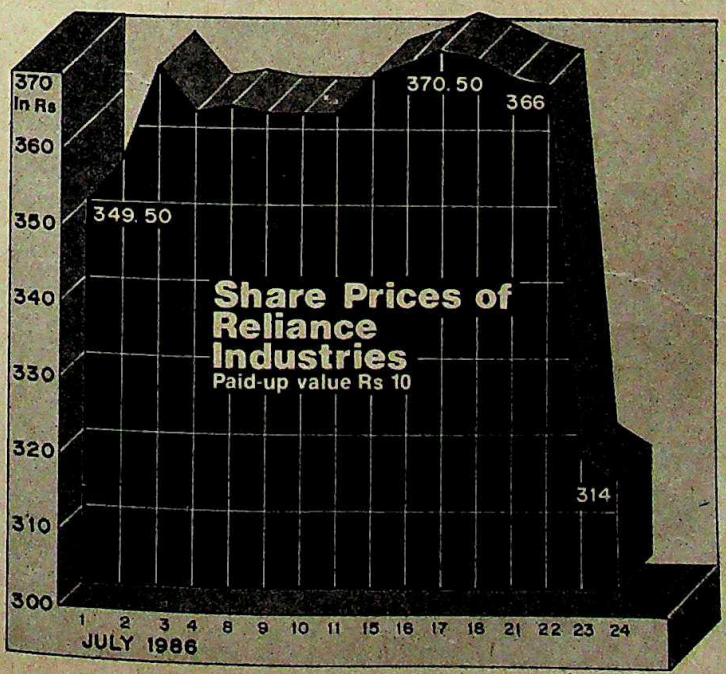
There was plenty for the Ambanis to be fretting about. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reported that Rs 60 crore of bank loans to a variety of companies allegedly linked to the Ambanis had violated RBI guidelines. Finance Minister V.P. Singh announced the setting up of a special committee to go into the possible misuse of the loans, warned that the bank money would be recalled if any wrongdoing was established, and promised action against the culprits, be they "prince or pauper".

THE RBI also suspended three Canara Bank officials for back-dating letters of credit meant to finance imports by Reliance; the back-dating was meant to help Reliance get past a change in import policy. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was conducting its own inquiries into the affair, while officials of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence scoured through Reliance books and their counterparts in the Enforcement Directorate tried to trace possible links between the Ambanis and some of their non-resident investors. Reliance was well and truly under the Government's microscope.

On the stock-market, nervous investors began unloading Reliance shares, and the management tried for a couple of weeks to shore up the share prices, but then the stock exchange authorities clamped financial restrictions on Reliance share buyers. The result: Reliance shares crashed from Rs 366 to Rs 317—their biggest fall ever in a single day's trading. A further fall was unlikely, though there was little doubt that the Rs 10 share was still over-valued on the market.

Back in New Delhi, the Finance Ministry abolished a customs levy that had provided polyester yarn manufacturers (Reliance being the biggest among them) with a certain level of protection against imports. Yarn prices crashed to levels that were 20 per cent lower than they were a year ago, and Reliance's yarn operations suddenly became much less profitable.

CHARGES AGAINST RELIANCE	WHERE DO THEY STAND?
■ Back-dated letters of credit to escape import policy restrictions, which were allegedly leaked to Reliance	▶ Three bank officers suspended after RBI inquiry CBI investigations continuing into alleged leakage of information
■ Loans taken by companies belonging to Ambanis were used to buy debentures; the loans violated RBI guidelines	▶ Interim RBI report says its guidelines were violated; committee set up to go into details of how loans were used
■ Ambanis bought debentures with intent to convert them into shares at substantial profit	▶ Charge not proved; conversion of debentures into shares stopped by the Government
■ Reliance evaded excise to the extent of Rs 27 crore	▶ Issue gone for arbitration
■ Pranab Mukherjee gave Reliance unwarranted duty protection on polyester yarn from 1982	▶ Duty protection removed by V.P. Singh in June after yarn manufacturers delayed study of yarn production costs
■ Industry Ministry allowed product flexibility to yarn and fibre manufacturers in a manner as to benefit only Reliance	▶ This decision does not help Reliance
■ Ambanis' non-resident companies bought Reliance shares in 1982, and recently shifted to new tax haven to escape Government scrutiny	▶ Enforcement Directorate officials still conducting investigations into this
■ Ambanis shoring up Reliance share prices on stock market	▶ Stock market authorities impose special trading margin, Reliance share drops



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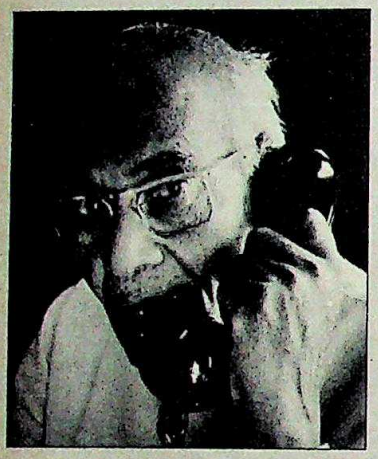
Earlier, hours before the Reliance board was to meet in Bombay to consider applying to the Government for permission to convert debentures worth Rs 323 crore into shares, the ministry announced that no such conversions would be allowed. The prices of the debentures too had crashed (INDIA TODAY, June 30).

The man who had so effectively set the cat among the pigeons was an 83-year-old media patriarch, Ram Nath Goenka, who used the front page of his 11-edition *Indian Express* (circulation: over 6.5 lakh) plus a variety of regional language newspapers to focus the country's attention on what were billed as a series of scandals, forcing the Government to take notice and finally swing into action.



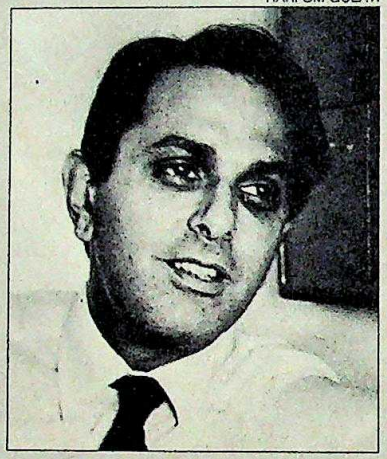
Ram Nath Goenka of the *Indian Express* fixed a meeting between Ambani and Nusli Wadia to sort out their differences.

Magazines and week-end tabloids took off from where the *Express* left off, coming out with yet further allegations against Reliance and its chairman Dhirubhai Ambani: that Ambani had lied while writing to the prime minister about his company's affairs, even that an unnamed Bombay industrialist (obviously Ambani) had teamed up with a businessman in London to try and unseat Rajiv Gandhi. The reported budget for this grand exercise: Rs 100 crore.

If Goenka had seized the initiative by setting the stage, picking the battleground and choosing the issues to be debated, Reliance found itself strangely handicapped in mounting a defence, let alone a counter-attack. For years the word had been whispered around that the company's management got its way in Government, Parliament, the media and elsewhere by the effective deployment of hard cash, judicious placement of Reliance shares and debentures in people's pockets (which promised instant rewards because of the unusually high Reliance share price) and by the handing out of its own suit lengths.

So now, when matters had come to the crunch, there was hardly anyone who felt he could afford to stand up and defend Reliance—for fear of being branded as being in Reliance's pay. In a sense this was now the biggest problem that the company faced. Despite its amazing growth, despite achieving what no other Indian company had been able to do, the company now had a serious image problem that proved a major handicap.

HARI OM GULATI



Nusli Wadia, the chairman of Bombay Dyeing, said that he saw little point in the meeting, which proved fruitless.

Meanwhile, the questions tumbled over one another: Why were Ram Nath Goenka and the *Indian Express* so intent on their Reliance campaign? How serious were the charges against the company? Was Reliance really in trouble with the Government? What did this mean for the future of the business world's brightest and yet most controversial star?

It quickly became clear that apart from the rags-to-riches Ambani, the com-

MUKESH AMBANI

"We have not broken any rule"

FEW YOUNG men in their 20s have been put in as hot a seat as the Ambani sons—Mukesh, 29, and Anil, 27. Forced to battle it out up front while their father Dhirubhai, victim of a stroke in February, recuperated in Switzerland and advised them over long-distance telephone, the younger Ambanis were visibly nervous last fortnight. Mukesh spent five days in New Delhi, ceaselessly doing his rounds, and sat down to an interview with Executive Editor T.N. NINAN *shortly before returning to Bombay. Excerpts:*

Q. ***How do you see the various charges against you and Reliance?***

A. What are the charges?

Q. ***One, that you took Rs 100 crore from the banks to buy your own debentures, with a view to converting them into shares later at a profit.***

A. I totally deny this. Our family companies have only taken Rs 16.5 crore, and we haven't bought a single debenture of 1985. So where is the question of profit? This allegation is calculated to mislead decision-makers. The loans are perfectly legal, and in order. There is no rule whatsoever...I don't see the charge. What is the charge?

Q. ***Did you take bank loans to acquire Reliance debentures in violation of Reserve Bank guidelines?***

A. The loans our family companies have taken are for working capital and other business purposes. We have not violated any rule. The Government has taken the right decision in appointing the RBI committee. Let us wait for its report.

Q. ***What if the Finance Ministry asks you to repay the money?***

A. As far as our family companies are concerned, the loans are backed by more than 300 per cent collateral and we have not violated any rule or law. But we will abide by the Government's decision.

Q. ***The second charge is that the recent Industry Ministry decision to broadband industrial licences in polyester yarn and polyester fibre was designed to help only Reliance.***

A. This is totally false, absurd.

Q. ***How is it absurd?***

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A. How does it help us? Broadbanding helps only those units which have either a yarn or a fibre licence; they can switch from one to the other under broadbanding. But we already have both the licences. So how does it help us?

Q. None of your competitors has the stipulated minimum capacities, so they can't take advantage of it. Only you have that capacity.

A. No. Indian Organics, India Polyfibres, Orissa Synthetics and several others can take advantage of this. The minimum capacity has been deliberately misrepresented in a section of the press. As I understand it, the Government wants industry to operate with economies of scale. This has nothing to do with the approved capacities of Reliance.

Q. The CBI is looking into charges that information regarding a policy change on imports was leaked to you, and you back-dated letters of credit to take advantage of this.

A. I know they are looking into the policy leakage question and surrounding areas. We will assist the investigation.

Q. Non-resident companies from the Isle of Man invested in your shares in 1982, and they have now shifted to the British Virgin Islands to escape scrutiny. The indication is that these are your companies. What do you have to say about this?

A. We have no connection whatsoever with these companies.

Q. You haven't looked into them?

A. We have no control over them, and have no reason to look into them.

Q. Has the Government asked you any questions about this?

A. No, no one has asked us any questions.

Q. How do you see the recent drop in the prices of Reliance shares? Are your shareholders getting nervous?

A. This is a reaction to reports in a section of powerful media suggesting that the Government is against Reliance, and misrepresenting government decisions to give credence to this propaganda.

Q. Nevertheless, some government decisions will affect your profitability: the removal of anti-dumping duty on yarn, refusal to convert your debentures into shares...

A. There is a lot of propaganda to this effect. The debentures were raised for specific projects which will yield additional production. The interest liability will be automatically absorbed by the additional production, which in turn will generate additional profit.

Q. Do you think the Government is acting against you in any way?

A. No. Some newspapers have levelled certain charges and made non-issues into issues. The Government has a right to investigate any allegation, whether it is against us or anyone. And we are accountable both to our shareholders and to the public at large.

Q. Questions have been raised in a number of ways about the way in which Reliance does its business. How will this affect your operations?

HEMANT PITHWA

"The idea is to prove Reliance guilty somehow. The issue remains the same, the charges keep changing."

A. We've faced this in the past. We've faced attacks. Parliament is supreme, it can discuss anything in the public interest. But we'll be on target on sales and profits. This whole thing has been going on for one-and-a-half years, but we built our fibre plant in record time. And we don't believe business rivals should take their fight into Parliament.

Q. How do you see the press reports on Reliance?

A. By and large, the press has always been fair to us. But a certain section of the press has started looking at us rather differently and the idea is to prove Reliance guilty somehow. Take the PTA (purified terephthalic acid) import case. The first charge was that customs duties had been evaded. When that did not stick, they said it was a policy leakage. When that did not stick, it moved on to the back-dating of letters of credit. That didn't stick, so it moved on to finding fault with the banks' procedures. So the whole approach is that Reliance is guilty: the issue remains the same, the charges keep on changing.

Q. The RBI report does say that the loans violated RBI guidelines.

A. The RBI report is preliminary. Please wait for the final committee report. I can talk only of our family companies. Reliance has got nothing to do with the other companies. The whole idea is to somehow malign Reliance.

Q. The RBI may not indict Reliance, but it indicts the banks.

A. It's too early to say that. The committee is still going into it.

Q. You mentioned business rivalries. Is all this a result of business rivalries?

A. It's very difficult to say. This kind of attack is unprecedented anywhere in the world, the press going after a corporation in this fashion.

Q. Why are these wars perennially going on in the synthetic textile industry?

A. We really don't believe in a battle. We're implementing our projects and doing our business. I don't know how you call it a battle. It's just one-sided.

Q. Do you think Ram Nath Goenka has anything against you?

A. I don't think Babuji has anything against me.

Q. Or against Reliance?

A. Only Babuji can answer this.

Q. A number of meetings took place between you and Goenka to arrive at a settlement.

A. There is no question of a settlement. What settlement? We have great respect for Babuji. I've been meeting him always. This is not new.

Q. Nothing emerged from these meetings?

A. (Pause) What do you mean by that?

Q. Well, in terms of a truce.

A. (Pause) What do you mean by truce?

Q. Well, if the Indian Express *is carrying a campaign on some issues, will this continue, or stop?*

A. Why don't you ask Babuji?

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Murli Deora, local Congress(I) boss and a friend of the Ambanis, tried to mediate between Ambani and Wadia, but failed.

Jamnadas Moorjani of the Crimpers' Association campaigned tirelessly to remove duty protection for Reliance yarn, and succeeded.

Pranab Mukherjee had given Reliance yarn extra duty protection despite senior officials noting that this was unwarranted.

bative Goenka and the unimpeachable V.P. Singh, the fourth important player in this saga was the aristocratic Nusli Wadia, chairman of Bombay Dyeing and long-time Goenka friend. Wadia had complained over the years that his projects had been torpedoed by Ambani, and his business operations hamstrung by Reliance's machinations. And in recent months he himself had been the focus of considerable media attention, with charges that he had been siphoning money out of Bombay Dyeing to his privately-held companies, cooking up Bombay Dyeing's account books, and controversy over his land deals.

But quite unlike the Swraj Paul-H.P. Nanda slanging match—when the tycoons themselves slugged it out for the media to report—this time the war was being fought second-hand. Neither Wadia nor the Ambanis said anything on the record about each other; instead, both leaked information to the press, which gleefully took up the battle.

Indeed, the war as a whole began late last year when a flurry of press reports on both Ambani and Wadia persuaded Ambani to sue for peace. The telephone rang one December morning as Goenka sat in his Express Towers penthouse lair, in Bombay's Nariman Point. Ambani was on the line, he wanted Goenka to fix a tripartite meeting with Wadia so that they could sort out their differences and end both their business rivalry as well as the growing flood of press reports on each other's activities.

Goenka—who had a reasonably amicable relationship with Ambani till then—telephoned Wadia in his office at Ballard Estate, close to the docks where Wadia's forefathers had two centuries ago built the oldest ship still afloat in the world. But Wadia demurred, pleading that he saw little point in a meeting that would only result in mutual recriminations. Undeterred, Goenka called him back later in the day to inform him that a meeting had been fixed with Ambani for that evening, in Goenka's penthouse suite. Unable to back out, Wadia finally went at the appointed hour.

Accounts of what happened at the meeting vary. One version is that Ambani proposed ending his rivalry with Wadia in the market-place (both had been trying for similar licences in the past, and both were about to start producing alternative raw materials for making polyester yarn), and suggested that they carve up the raw material market between themselves so that both could make hay at everybody else's expense. A second version is that Ambani merely suggested ways to help Wadia find a market for his troubled dimethyl terephthalate (DMT) plant.

Whatever the case, little came of the meeting, which ended with Ambani

Media reports on Ambani and Wadia: second-hand war

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clamping Wadia in a bear hug and extending a very belated invitation to his daughter's wedding the next day. At the wedding itself, the Ambanis were effusive in their welcome to Wadia, who was duly photographed with Dhirubhai.

SEVERAL accounts now do the rounds on the provocations that led to the *Indian Express* finally launching its unprecedented campaign against Reliance. Ambani allegedly told Goenka that he went around "with a silver shoe on one foot, and a golden shoe on the other: everyone got one or the other depending on his price". By another account, Ambani told Goenka that everyone had a price, that *Express* reporters were on his pay-roll, and that even Goenka had a price. This was later explained away by an Ambani friend as having been said in jest, but the 83-year-old patriarch took great offence. By a third account, Goenka is supposed to have been incensed by the Ambanis putting out a story through the Press Trust of India (PTI), contradicting an *Express* report to the effect that the CBI had been asked to investigate Reliance's affairs. Goenka, apart from owning the *Indian Express*, is also chairman of PTI, and decided that Ambani had to be taken head-on.

Nevertheless, no friction was in evidence on the day Dhirubhai suffered his stroke in February, for Murli Deora—president of the Bombay Regional Congress(I) Committee and one of Ambani's most trusted friends—recalls that Goenka was among the first to send Dhirubhai flowers. Deora later tried to act as mediator between Ambani and Wadia, but nothing came of this either.

Finally, it was young Mukesh Ambani who decided to take the bull by the horns and sought a meeting with Goenka. But his calls to him were not returned. Dhirubhai then asked Mukesh to barge into Goenka's flat in New Delhi's secluded Sunder Nagar, even without an appointment if necessary. Mukesh did just that, and was kept waiting at the door before being told Goenka could not see him. When he was on his way down the stairs, however, he was called back up, and thus began the first of a series of meetings between the aging press baron and the young inheritor.

Goenka hurled charges and recriminations at Mukesh, who is said to have apologised for mistakes the Ambanis may have made. He also pleaded with Goenka that in the interest of his father's health, the *Indian Express* should stop publishing reports about Reliance till Dhirubhai

V.P. SINGH

"We can ask back the money"

WHENEVER there is a business controversy, Finance Minister V.P. Singh is in the eye of the storm. Singh spoke last fortnight to Executive Editor T.N. NINAN *and Assistant Editor* PRABHU CHAWLA *on recent government decisions about Reliance. Excerpts from the interview:*

Q. ***How does the Government see the issues raised by what has been called the Reliance 'loan mela'?***

A. The Reserve Bank has submitted its preliminary report. A committee has now been formed to go into the issues in detail, with straightforward people on it. They'll go into whether the Reserve Bank guidelines were violated, whether bankers exceeded their lending powers, and whether the money was used for the purpose it had been asked for.

"There is no breach of faith with Reliance. Their debentures were not convertible to start with."

Q. ***If there is a violation of the guidelines, what can you do about it?***

A. One thing we can do is ask back the money.

Q. ***Why did you decide not to allow the conversion of Reliance's non-convertible debentures into shares?***

A. Such conversion was not desirable in itself. The Reliance debentures were not convertible in the first place. Only two companies have got such conversion in the past, so this is not a general issue for the corporate sector.

Q. ***Why did you take the decision at that point in time? This suggested that it was aimed at Reliance.***

A. There is no breach of faith with Reliance because their debentures were not convertible to start with. And it was better to stop talk of a conversion as early as possible because people were being taken on a path to believe these debentures would be converted. Hopes were being fanned and investors were getting drawn into more transactions. The market was getting inflated by the promoters.

Q. ***So this did relate to Reliance.***

A. The Government felt it was unfair to do this to only one company. So we made a statement across the board. It was not aimed at one company. That would be if I allowed other companies to convert but not Reliance.

Q. ***You recently removed the anti-dumping duty on polyester yarn, produced by Reliance and others.***

A. This has generally been welcomed by consumers and the press. This had been going on, and we said we would go by the report of the Bureau of Industrial Costs and Prices (BICP). But the BICP report was delayed, companies were not providing information. So I had to take a decision, and I told them if you drag things out you will have to swallow the bitter pill. If you try to stall a government decision, you can't get away with it.

Q. ***Will this lead to increased imports because these have become cheaper with lower duty?***

A. Prices have dropped, but there are no reports of indigenous stocks piling up. Stocks are moving. They might be biting into the margin of profit, but that is different (laughs). I think it has done a lot of good.

Q. ***Why was the duty imposed in 1982 in the first place?***

A. Even originally, it was strongly opposed by officials. But the duty was imposed.

Q. ***What action have you taken on the charge that some banks back-dated Reliance letters of credit?***

A. The CBI report has not come. But the Reserve Bank came across evidence of back-dating by Canara Bank at the request of the party. Three officers of Canara Bank have been suspended because the Reserve Bank inquiry proved it was back-dated.

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went abroad after chairing Reliance's annual shareholders' meeting in June.

BUT THE most important meeting was to follow. Apparently realising that Mukesh was not making much headway, Dhirubhai himself now asked for a meeting with Goenka and offered to go across to Express Towers. But Goenka said the mountain would come to Mohammed and went across to Ambani's office in the nearby Maker Chambers. The meeting lasted 45 minutes, turned out to be predictably stormy, and although Goenka said he would not publish anything till July (when a new editor was taking charge of *Indian Express*), no no-war pact resulted.

Nevertheless, the fragile three-week truce might well have been extended were it not for a fresh media blitz, with magazines and week-end tabloids launching blistering attacks on either the Ambanis or Wadia. Most of the publications trained their guns on the Ambanis, and it was left to the fortnightly *Onlooker* to fire back at Wadia in June. However, the Ambanis seem to have been anxious to try and stop the *Onlooker* report at the last minute because Deora made a desperate attempt to prevent the story from getting printed. Unfortunately, the magazine's proprietor was away in Tirupati and the editor in Cork, and the presses kept rolling. So war was declared again, and the *Express* screamed on the front page that Dhirubhai had lied when he told his shareholders that the Ambani family had not used bank funds to buy the Reliance debentures issued in 1985.

By then, Ambani was away in Switzerland for further rest and recuperation, and his sons took time to find their feet in the new battle. After weeks of vacillation, parleys and back-room lobbying, Reliance finally came out with a series of 15 advertisements in 10 major newspapers across the country, including the *Indian Express*, seeking to address Reliance's basic image problem. It was not the best strategy to adopt—given the inherent credibility problem that an advertising campaign has in the face of negative reports in the news columns—but the advertisements nevertheless talked of Reliance's 'concern for truth', 'allegiance to ethics', 'commitment to growth' and much else. Goenka hit right back with a fresh hail of newsprint.

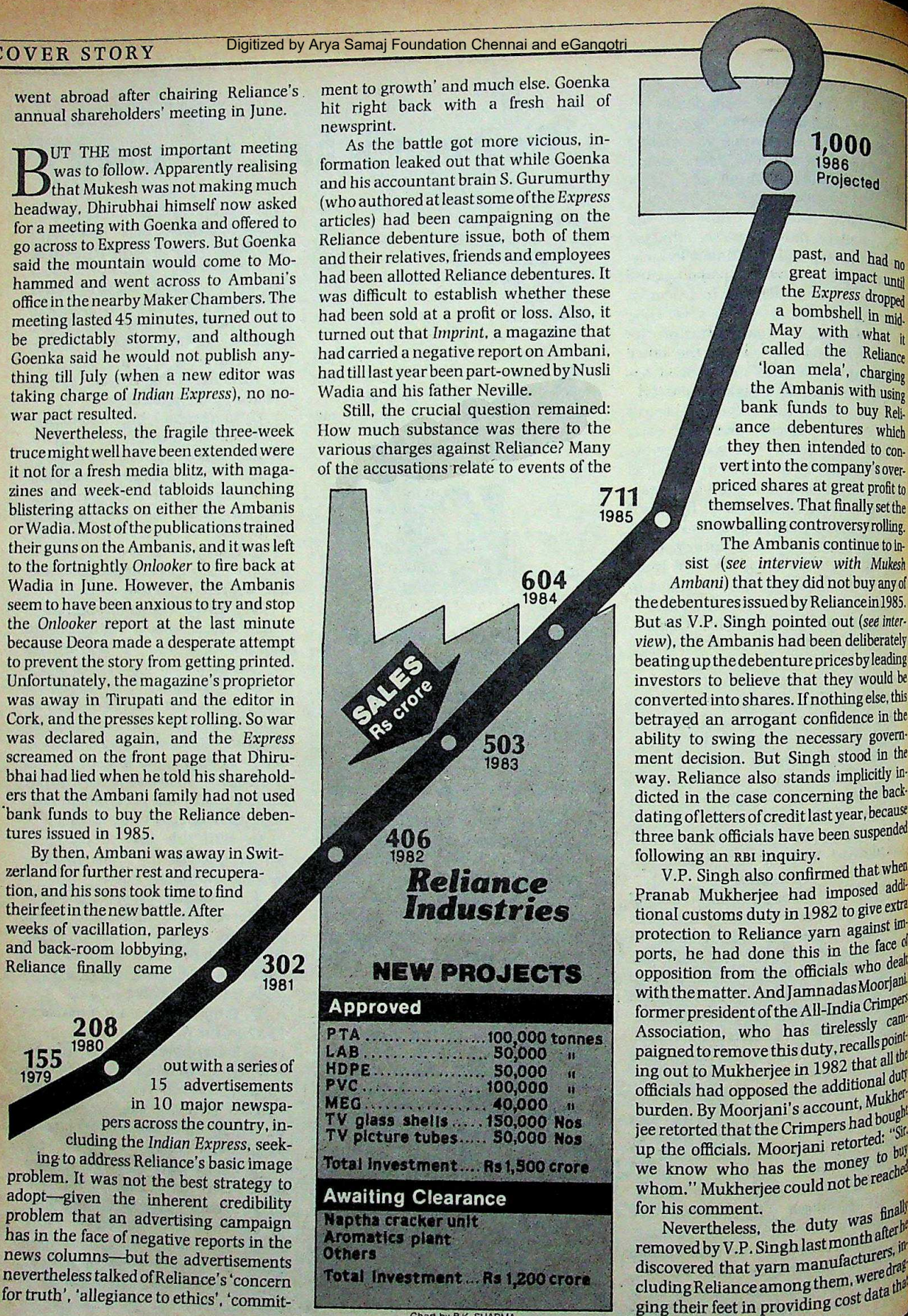
As the battle got more vicious, information leaked out that while Goenka and his accountant brain S. Gurumurthy (who authored at least some of the *Express* articles) had been campaigning on the Reliance debenture issue, both of them and their relatives, friends and employees had been allotted Reliance debentures. It was difficult to establish whether these had been sold at a profit or loss. Also, it turned out that *Imprint*, a magazine that had carried a negative report on Ambani, had till last year been part-owned by Nusli Wadia and his father Neville.

Still, the crucial question remained: How much substance was there to the various charges against Reliance? Many of the accusations relate to events of the past, and had no great impact until the *Express* dropped a bombshell in mid-May with what it called the Reliance 'loan mela', charging the Ambanis with using bank funds to buy Reliance debentures which they then intended to convert into the company's overpriced shares at great profit to themselves. That finally set the snowballing controversy rolling.

The Ambanis continue to insist (*see interview with Mukesh Ambani*) that they did not buy any of the debentures issued by Reliance in 1985. But as V.P. Singh pointed out (*see interview*), the Ambanis had been deliberately beating up the debenture prices by leading investors to believe that they would be converted into shares. If nothing else, this betrayed an arrogant confidence in the ability to swing the necessary government decision. But Singh stood in the way. Reliance also stands implicitly indicted in the case concerning the back-dating of letters of credit last year, because three bank officials have been suspended following an RBI inquiry.

V.P. Singh also confirmed that when Pranab Mukherjee had imposed additional customs duty in 1982 to give extra protection to Reliance yarn against imports, he had done this in the face of opposition from the officials who dealt with the matter. And Jamnadas Moorjani, former president of the All-India Crimpers Association, who has tirelessly campaigned to remove this duty, recalls pointing out to Mukherjee in 1982 that all the officials had opposed the additional duty burden. By Moorjani's account, Mukherjee retorted that the Crimpers had bought up the officials. Moorjani retorted: "Sir, we know who has the money to buy whom." Mukherjee could not be reached for his comment.

Nevertheless, the duty was finally removed by V.P. Singh last month after he discovered that yarn manufacturers, including Reliance among them, were dragging their feet in providing cost data that



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could be used for a proper study of yarn-manufacturing costs.

SO FAR, at least, not enough has emerged to provoke the Government to appoint a commission of inquiry to look into Reliance affairs (as was done in 1969, when the then Congress Young Turk Chandra Shekhar carried on a campaign in Parliament against the Birlas, or when the Vivien Bose Commission was set up to look into the affairs of the Sahu Jain group).

Meanwhile, what did all this mean for Reliance's operations? The Government decision to not allow the conversion of Reliance debentures into shares limits the company's financial reach, but the Ambanis have already announced that they will get around this with a fresh Rs 400-crore convertible debenture issue that they propose to apply for. Similarly, the reduced protection against polyester yarn imports has resulted in domestic yarn prices dropping, and this will affect Reliance's profitability. Finally, the teething troubles faced by the company's new polyester staple fibre plant have meant that there has been very little production of the fibre in the first four months of the plant's operations. But the Ambanis claim that the overall profitability of their expanded operations will not suffer noticeably, and that despite being embroiled in a variety of controversies, the company has been able to implement its fibre project in record time.

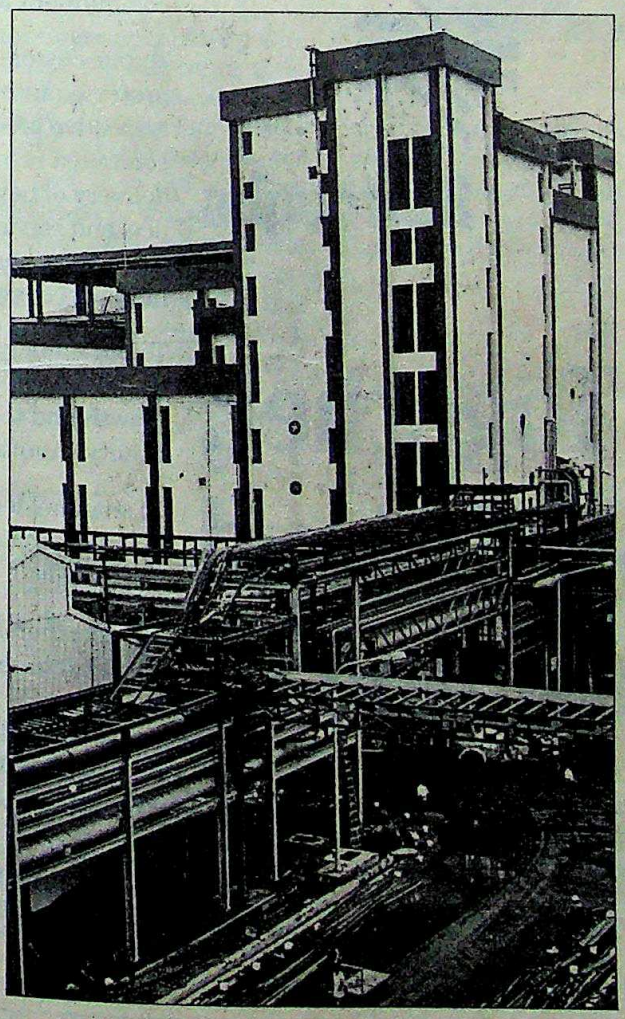
What of the future? To the extent that the company has depended in the past on government favours, the Government's attitude to Reliance could be crucial. There seems little sympathy for Reliance in the Prime Minister's Secretariat and V.P. Singh can be expected to be his usual, uncompromising self. But the Ambanis have their allies in the Government, and two ministers are understood to have said last fortnight that the attack on Reliance was in reality an attack on the Congress(I)—because both Wadia and Goenka were Janata sympathisers and the Ambanis had been steadfast Congress(I) supporters. This was precisely the message that the Ambanis themselves carried to party MP's. And (in an oblique criticism of recent government measures against Reliance), one of the ministers remarked to a friend that "Dhirubhai Ambani is more than a match for Goenka, provided the Government is neutral". Meanwhile, in the thick of battle, the Industry Ministry cleared Reliance's application for expanding its purified terephthalate acid (PTA) project's capacity from 75,000 tonnes to 1 lakh tonnes, while a similar application from Bombay Dyeing for expanding its DMT capacity from 60,000 tonnes to 1 lakh tonnes of either DMT or PTA had been pending for a year.

Wadia has his friends too, of course, among them Minister of State for Railways Madhav Rao Scindia, who indirectly has a shareholding stake in Bombay Dyeing. INDIA TODAY confirmed last fortnight that Scindia had spoken to the Finance Ministry on Bombay Dyeing's problems.

So the key question was whether Reliance would continue to get government clearances for its various projects and financing arrangements. The company already has approvals from the Government for projects with a total investment budget of Rs 1,500 crore: for manufacturing TV glass shells and picture tubes, for a series of petro-chemical products, and for expanding some of its existing projects to reach new minimum economic capacity levels stipulated by the Government. The company also has applications pending with the Government for a naphtha cracker unit, is in the running for the aromatics joint sector project in Uttar Pradesh, and is pushing for a variety of other projects as well. The total investment proposed in all these: Rs 1,200 crore.

These are staggering sums for any company, and Reliance can't get there without money to invest. Two crucial applications with the Finance Ministry will indicate how secure the financing pattern is. One is already pending—for a Rs 125-crore share issue by the proposed Reliance Capital Finance Trust, a leasing company that will give the Ambanis enormous financial leverage (leasing companies can borrow up to 10 times their share capital, compared to a 2:1 ratio stipulated for manufacturing companies). The second application will be for the new Rs 400 crore debenture issue.

Reliance's Patalganga complex: teething troubles



Reliance's future will, quite clearly, be determined by the fate of these applications to the Finance Ministry, by its getting approvals for some of the industrial licence applications, and equally crucially, by the fate of the various inquiries being conducted right now by a number of government investigating agencies. Reliance should be able to ride out the present storm if no criminal offence is established, and if no fresh scandals hit the headlines, for then any government crackdown on Reliance will look like a witch-hunt on a company that has been too successful for its rivals' liking.

Nevertheless, the Ambanis are bound to have got a jolt, and will almost certainly have to ask themselves questions about their style of operations, the reasons for their being constantly embroiled in controversy, the weaknesses and strengths that have come to light in a battle that was fought with Dhirubhai far removed from the scene, and the need to adapt to a situation where they are getting bigger and more high-profile, and therefore under constantly closer scrutiny than they have ever been in the past.

—T.N. NINAN

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This partnership is committed above all to the needs of its customers. We are eager to launch our combined business into a new era—of growth, innovation and international competitive strength.

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YEN TO INVEST

LARGE Japanese companies are showing a new interest in India because of the problems posed to Japan by the rising yen. The immediate objective of companies like Mitsui and Mitsubishi, which are among those that have been pouring into the country to talk to trade and industry circles, is to try and find avenues for investing yen in Indian projects, and to identify Indian projects in which Japanese companies can invest their funds. A number of Japanese companies have already had discussions with organisations like the State Trading Corporation. But unlike in the past, when the Japanese were able to make a quick entry into sectors like automobiles and electronics, the Government is being more cautious in vetting the Japanese proposals. What results the new Japanese initiative will produce, therefore, remains to be seen.

RAISING EXPORTS

CONCERNED by the poor export performance last year and the fact that many companies do not fulfil the export obligations stipulated while granting industrial licences, the Government is now formulating a new scheme to ensure that companies do not escape from their export commitments. The new scheme is also designed to ensure that the large companies—most of which have a negative foreign exchange balance due to poor export performance—pay more attention to earning foreign exchange. Its details are still being finalised, but Commerce Ministry officials say that it will leave no loopholes for errant companies.

FUTURES TRADING

AFTER many years in which the Government frowned on futures trading in commodities, the sun seems to be shining again on futures trading. This was allowed in as many as 19 items in the 1950s, and was whittled down to 15 in 1963 and a mere three in 1983. Now, however, the Government is gradually veering around to the view that dealing in futures is not the reprehensible instrument for speculators it has long been considered. Castorseed got the go-ahead in May last year, and potatoes some months later. Now the Forward Markets Commission has recommended that similar permission be granted to raw jute, hessian, sacking, cotton, coconut oil and silver. The assumption is that after the inevitable time-lag involved in official consideration, the proposal will eventually get the green signal.

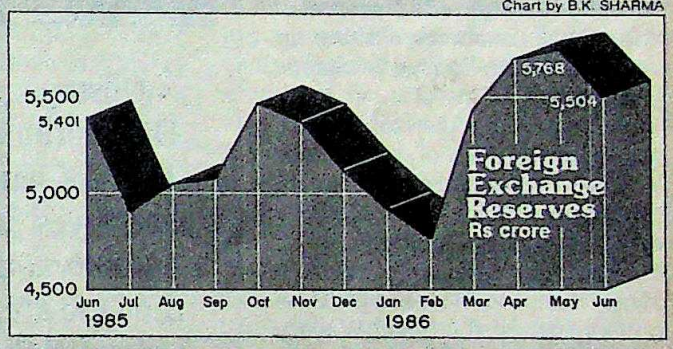
CUTTING COSTS

WHILE the Government wrestles with the details of its new automobile policy, it is simultaneously considering a proposal to review the tax burden on two-wheelers so as to bring down the prices of motor-cycles, scooters and mopeds. Many of the new 100 cc two-wheeler models introduced on the market cost substantially more than older models that have a much greater engine displacement: the Rajdoot-Yamaha 100 cc machine, for instance, costs more than the older Rajdoot 175 cc. The new models' high costs are attributed to high customs duties on imported parts and on the rising value of the Japanese yen (most of the new machines are being manufactured with Japanese collaboration). The Government is therefore considering a move to reduce the tax burden so as to bring down the prices of the new models.

DIPPING RESERVES

INDIA'S foreign exchange reserves have held up remarkably well despite a growing foreign trade deficit. At the end of June, the reserves at Rs 5,504 crore were Rs 103 crore higher than last year. They had been dipping after October last year, but saw a sudden upsurge after February this year,

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



probably due to increased non-resident investment inflows. But with the Government deciding to lower the interest rates on non-resident deposits in line with global trends, such inflows may soon shrink. This is precisely what happened in June, which saw the reversal of the uptrend since March.

SMOKING WAR

CIGARETTE wars keep erupting in the unlikeliest of places, and the latest round has been fought before the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Commission over ITC's *Now* brand of cigarettes, introduced in late 1985. The charge by 27 smokers (many of whom ITC said were connected with the rival cigarette company GTC Industries) was that ITC had introduced the *Now* brand name which belonged to R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company of the US, and which had already registered this as its trade mark in India, and that ITC was deceiving smokers by selling a relatively high-tar high-nicotine cigarette with the brand name of a low-tar low-nicotine American cigarette.

ITC replied that its *Now* packaging and design were different from those used abroad by Reynolds, that ITC had not known Reynolds had registered its trade mark in India and had never linked its cigarettes with Reynolds in any way. It had also applied for a rectification of the trade marks register. In the first round, the MRTP Commission has allowed ITC to continue selling and advertising its cigarettes, but skirmishes will continue before the trade marks authority and in the courts, where Reynolds has sued ITC.

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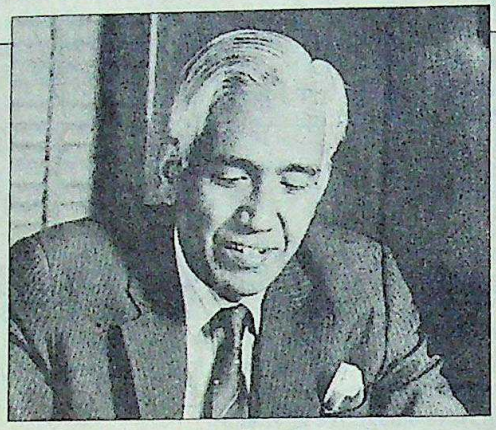
SHAW WALLACE

Fresh Charges

SUDDENLY, the Government has mounted an offensive on the Shaw Wallace front. The celebrated face-off between Dubai-based entrepreneur Manu Chhabria and Shaw Wallace Chairman S.P. Acharya, took a fresh turn last month when the Finance Ministry's Enforcement Directorate followed up on months of investigations by finally filing a criminal complaint charging Chhabria, his brother Kishore and Bangalore-based liquor baron Vijay Mallya with having conspired to acquire 38.7 per cent of Shaw Wallace shares offshore, in violation of the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act (FERA).

Offstage, the directorate was baying at the heels of senior Shaw Wallace executives, including Chairman Acharya: ironically enough, they too are accused of having violated the same FERA law. Meanwhile, the West Bengal Government arrested a Shaw Wallace official in an excise evasion case (INDIA TODAY, June 15, 1985) before letting him out on bail. And to top it all, the Company Law Board (CLB) in Calcutta was busy compiling a report on Shaw Wallace's account books last fortnight after subjecting them to careful scrutiny.

That was not all. The Calcutta High Court ordered that Acharya should not chair the next annual meeting of Shaw Wallace shareholders, and appointed a neutral chairman in his place, but the date of the delayed meeting—critical for Chhabria to exercise his overwhelming voting power—is yet to be fixed. Yet Chhabria seemed dissatisfied with the pace of events in the high court, and was readying late last fortnight to go directly to the Supreme Court.



Offstage, the Enforcement Directorate was baying at the heels of senior Shaw Wallace executives, including Chairman Acharya: ironically enough, they too are accused of having violated the same FERA law.

Meanwhile, Kishore Chhabria was pleading with the financial institutions to replace Acharya with their own nominee as an independent chairman till the whole dispute was sorted out. He attended an 'open house' session organised by Finance Minister V.P.Singh and complained that non-residents would not invest in India if investments like his ran into trouble. And finally, he asked S.Gurumurthy (who has been writing in the *Indian Express* on Reliance affairs) to investigate the accounts of Shaw Wallace and detect wrongdoing.

Clearly, the Shaw Wallace affair was bubbling over yet again. Some of the more recent events were probably unconnected with the Chhabria takeover bid (for example, the FERA and excise cases against the Shaw Wallace management), and those accused were anxious to underplay the significance of the latest developments. A Chhabria spokesman claimed that the Enforcement Directorate's criminal complaint was merely meant to comply with the stipulation that such a complaint must be filed within a year of a raid: Chhabria's and Mallya's offices and homes had been raided in July 1985. And a Shaw Wallace spokesman was equally quick to suggest that the CLB investigation was "routine". It is true that the local CLB office conducts periodic investigations of company books, but this time the investigation had been ordered by New Delhi.

The Shaw Wallace spokesman also claimed that he was unaware of any FERA case. But Enforcement officials confirmed that there was an unpublicised case for which hearings were held last April. The issues involve commissions Shaw Wallace had availed of in the 1970s for importing chemicals or fertilisers. And a ruling is awaited.

Clearly, the heat is on. The Government seems convinced that a link exists between Mallya and the Chhabrias in the offshore acquisition of Shaw Wallace shares. The criminal complaint that the Enforcement Directorate filed last month at the special court for economic offences in Bangalore cites a litany of sins. Some of the charges and evidence have already been aired in the press, but some cover fresh ground.

Among the fresh evidence was the fact that three months ago, J.M. Rajan Pillai, a

Clearly, the heat is on—the Government seems to be convinced that a link exists between Mallya and the Chhabrias in the acquisition of Shaw Wallace shares.

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UK resident who used to live in Singapore, had told the Enforcement Directorate that he had sold Wotan and Tentura, both Singapore-based companies, over two years ago to a client of a law firm in Singapore for 29,000 Singapore dollars. One of those present at the discussions was Vittal Mallya, Vijay's late father. (Questions were later raised as to whether Tentura had helped finance the acquisition of the Shaw Wallace shares by borrowing cash from the State Bank of India (SBI). Responding to an Enforcement Directorate notice, Mallya denied all the allegations and asked the directorate to furnish the documents on which it had based its conclusions.

While follow-up action on the criminal complaint is now awaited, Chhabria's latest missive accuses the Shaw Wallace directors of planning to promote new brand names for its liquor products at the expense of established brand names. The new names, the argument goes, will not be owned by Shaw Wallace but by other companies controlled by the Shaw Wallace management. So if Chhabria does eventually get control of Shaw Wallace, he will be left with brands whose value has diminished in the market-place. This follows an earlier accusation that the company's popular Hayward brand had been sold.

A THIRD charge is that the Shaw Wallace directors are filing one petition after another in court in order to stall the main proceedings, which relate to the Shaw Wallace management's appeal against the dismissal of their case before the CLB last year. Last fortnight, Acharya filed an affidavit questioning Kishore Chhabria's appointment as a director of R.G. Shaw and hence R.G. Shaw's petition in the court. Acharya declined comment on these and other allegations, pleading that they are sub judice.

Meanwhile, what substance there was to the various Chhabria charges against the Shaw Wallace management remained difficult to establish. A company official dismissed the allegation that Shaw Wallace was promoting new brand names at the expense of existing ones as being simply untrue. And though a senior company source claimed that the goodwill of the Hayward brand name had been sold to the wife of senior Shaw Wallace executive K. Srinivasan, the latter flatly denied any such transaction.

Acharya gave the impression last fortnight of not being worried by the continuing skirmishes and said blandly that the management was doing its duty. And he argued that the court has first to take up Shaw Wallace's petition against the CLB order before fixing a date for the shareholders' meeting. In other words, he still had time. Meanwhile, the Chhabria move to take the matter to the Supreme Court seemed to suggest that he himself was unhappy at the speed with which things were moving. In the interim, the appointment of an independent chairman for the shareholders' meeting represents a moral, but not a strategic, victory.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI in Calcutta

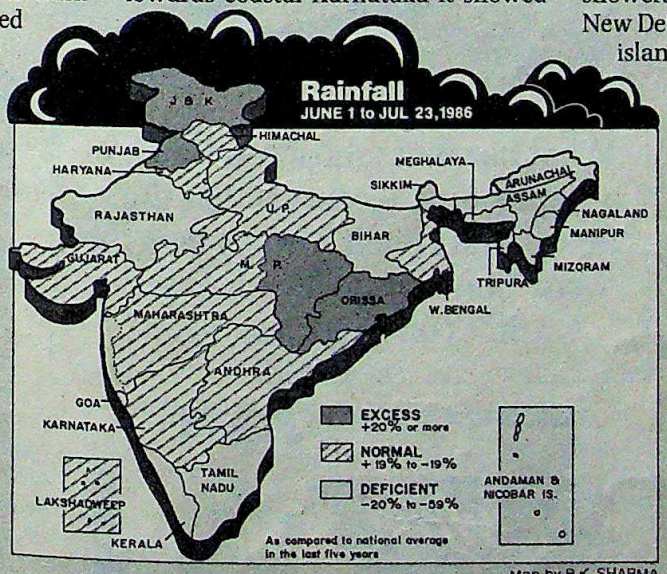
THE MONSOON

Mixed Fare

FOR OFFICIALS of the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) poring through the scores of telex messages and telegrams received from its 550 weather observatories and 1,200 rain-gauges dotted throughout the country the monsoon was heartening. By mid-monsoon, two-thirds of India had received normal rain (*see map*) while wheat, maize and paddy crops in Orissa, east Madhya Pradesh and Punjab had exceeded expectations.

But the worrying news was that rainfall in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Rajasthan and the north-eastern states was deficient. Officials hope that when the monsoon ends in September, the position would improve. Dr R.P. Sarkar, IMD director-general, said: "So far in most parts of the country the rainfall has been good."

With 74 per cent of the cultivated land in the country dependent on rains, the south-west monsoon is crucial. Farmers in Kerala scanning the sky through the relentless summer for the dark monsoon clouds to gather had a heartstopping moment when it showed no signs of arriving on June 1—the day the south-west winds bring the first showers. To their relief, it came three days later, but while it moved swiftly towards coastal Karnataka it showed no signs of proceeding further north.



Map by B.K. SHARMA

A fortnight later it moved up the coast and apart from putting many Bombay streets under knee-deep water, brought rain to the parched table lands of central Maharashtra. Then it lashed down on Madhya Pradesh sending river levels to dangerous heights before hitting Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and J&K.

Only Rajasthan and Gujarat, suffering from severe water shortages, found themselves fairly dry till 10 days later when the rain gods decided to end their agony and blessed them with a few showers. It has, however, detoured New Delhi so far, leaving the capital an island of dryness while adjoining states have had plenty of rain.

In most of the north-eastern states, the rains are taking their time coming. The meagre rainfall in Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura are already 46 per cent below normal. But for many of these states it is a mixed blessing because excess rainfall could lead to highly damaging floods.

But if the rains came on time for coastal south India, it flattered only to deceive. Paddy farmers in Kerala and Tamil Nadu who were anticipating a good crop suddenly found the rains petering out. Like the rest of the farmers in the country, they are now keeping their fingers crossed till September when the rains start abating. And for once the weather bureau refuses to predict the outcome.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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JOHNSON & JOHNSON

Free For All

THE SANITARY napkin industry in the country, which has witnessed a lot of petty skirmishing in recent times, seems set for another round of bloodletting. The main adversaries are Johnson & Johnson Ltd, subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson of USA, and the J.K.Malhotra group's Christine Hoden India (CHI), along with its sister concern, Primella Sanitary Products. The bone of contention: a new beltless sanitary napkin which Christine Hoden has introduced under the brand name, Comfit Always.

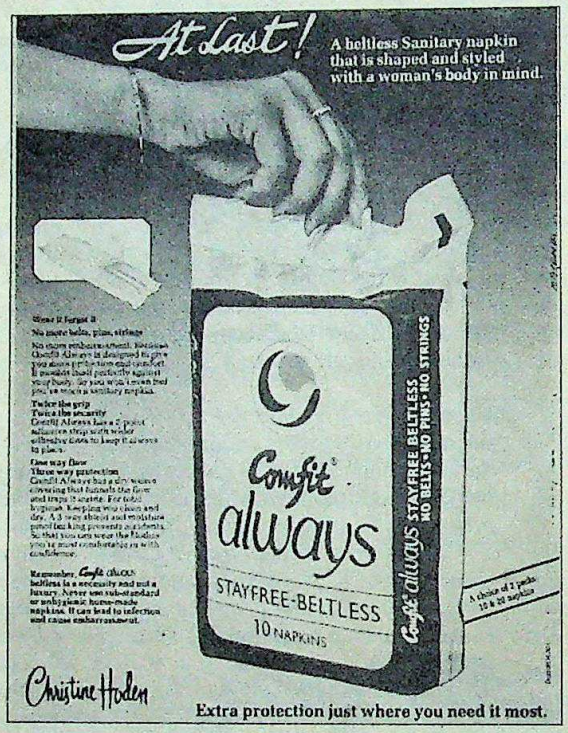
What has sent J&J hotfooting to counsel and court is the fact that the new brand uses the word 'Stayfree' nearly seven times on its packaging. Stayfree is a label under which J&J has been marketing its products for some time.

What has sent CHI and Primella on an even faster trot down the same road, albeit to a different court, is their contention that J&J is making "unlawful and illegal threats" and forcing dealers to stop offering Comfit Always to customers. They have also produced before the court J&J's 1960 permission from the then ministry of commerce and industry allowing it to manufacture sanitary products. As the letter makes clear, J&J was not supposed to make additions to plant and machinery, market the product only under the trademark already in use or without any trademark and not import any raw material for the purpose. But the Modess brand in existence at that time has given way to Carefree and Stayfree, fresh equipment has been installed and there has been no stinting on raw material imports.

Oddly enough all this is above board and with Government permission. "But how"?, asks CHI chairman Jayant Malhotra. Sanitary napkins are reserved for the small scale-sector and Malhotra contends that J&J is being allowed too much rope. "Instead of giving us protection it is the multinationals who are being protected."

He points out that the Government has also turned down a J&J application to become registered users of Carefree and Stayfree. The registrar of trade marks vetoed this "in the interests of the general public and the development of indigenous industry in India".

While J&J executives were unavailable for comment because of "our worldwide policy of not talking to the press", their grouses are well known. CHI and Primella have been accused of trying to ride piggyback on J&J, which commands some 60 per cent of the Rs 10-crore market (Comfit has another 25 per cent). When J&J introduced Carefree, their rivals introduced Comfree. Though the Bombay High Court allowed the latter brand in an early 1970s ruling, the final judgement is yet to be delivered. Besides, the latest Comfit Always package is a carbon copy of a similarly-named brand owned by US giant Proctor and Gamble, which has put out feelers to enter the Indian market.



What has sent Johnson & Johnson hotfooting to court is that the new brand Comfit Always uses the word 'Stayfree' no less than seven times on its packaging.

In the increasingly acrimonious battle it is Malhotra who seems to have drawn first blood. Comfit Always was launched by Primella in late 1985 and was followed by a flurry of legal notices. In April this year Primella approached the Bombay city civil court and obtained an ad interim *ex parte* injunction restraining J&J from causing any obstruction to Primella's business activities.

J&J then made a bee-line for the Delhi High Court. In an interlocutory order on July 8, Justice D.P. Wadhwa, after consulting half a dozen dictionaries, came to the conclusion that Stayfree was a coined word and Primella's use of it could not be innocent. The packaging, however, was distinctive and the judge was unconvinced that Primella was trying to pass off its products as J&J's. The application was dismissed.

On the other war front, the shops and stores spread over the country, Comfit Always is making inroads. The market share of J&J's competing Stayfree has declined from 14 to 10.6 per cent. Comfit Always is priced Rs 2 lower and offers dealers a higher margin. And J&J's argue that because most women are embarrassed to be seen buying sanitary napkins no one inspects the product on the spot. Thus Comfit Always can be passed off as Stayfree because it says so seven times.

The legal battles have been on for some time, and no one is about to throw in the towel right now. A new generation of less troublesome Stayfree sanitary napkins may have come to the country but the industry itself has not matured enough to stay free of trouble.

—PARTHASARATHI SWAMI

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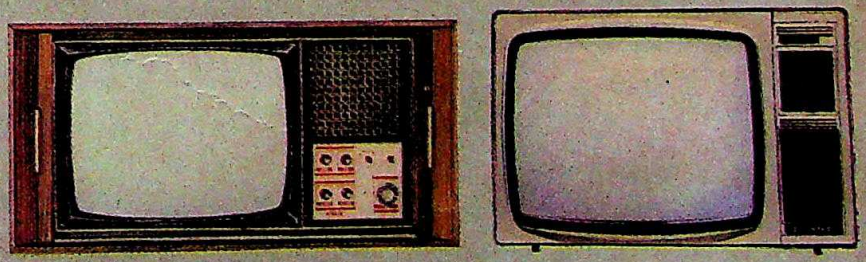
यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥

A matter of perfection

"Whenever, O descendant of Bharata, righteousness declines and unrighteousness prevails, I manifest Myself" said Lord Krishna to Arjuna at Kurukshetra. The ten Avatars of Vishnu are proof of God's infinite mercy towards man and his desire for perfection.

Today, in our TV industry, sets are being assembled through an uncaring screwdriver technology, where profit motives overrule quality considerations.

But, we at Konark TV work towards perfection because we strongly believe that quality will always prevail. Our excellence in craftsmanship, dedicated research and sophisticated technology, help produce Konark TV sets that match the best in the world.



KONARK TV

The image of quality

Konark Television Limited (A Govt. of Orissa Enterprise) B1 B2 & B3, Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar 751 010

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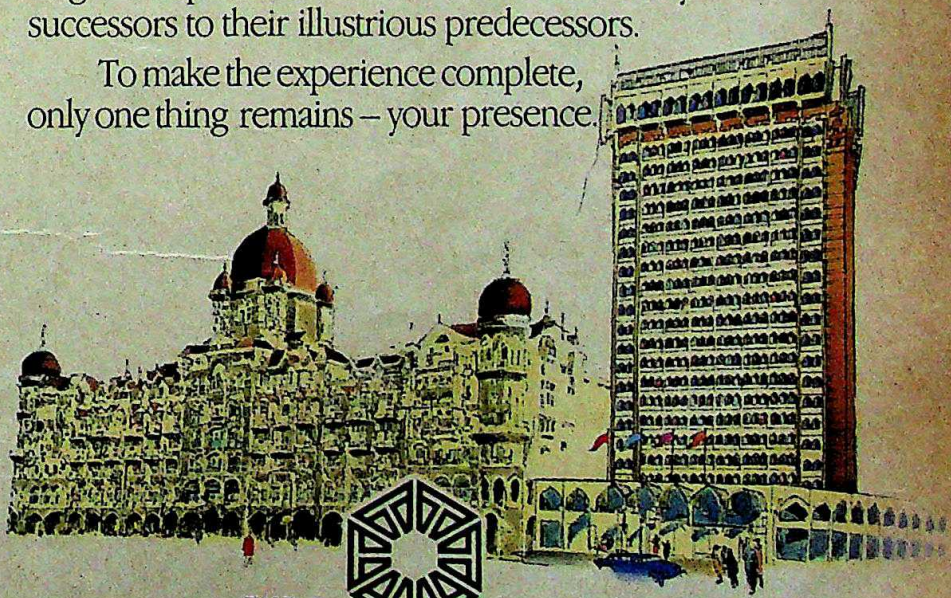
The splendid new rc at The Taj Mahal Hotel Bombay await a single distinction. Your presence.

The original Taj – the graceful "Caravanserai of the East" – is undergoing a splendid transformation. It includes 90 brand new rooms, each a newly minted original. From fabric, colours, carpets and furniture to lampshades, bathroom fittings, down to details as slight as drawer handles, no two rooms are alike. Ceilings are higher. Rooms are larger. And there are exclusive touches designed, quite frankly, to pamper. Phones are moveable. TVs are operated by remote control. Every wardrobe has a discreetly camouflaged refrigerator and – cheers! – a small bar. Even the bathrooms have channel music.

And while our designers drew from the very finest traditions of England, France, China and our own many-splendoured heritage, they have not forgotten the original inspiration: the new rooms are worthy successors to their illustrious predecessors.

To make the experience complete, only one thing remains – your presence.



THE TAJ MAHAL INTER·CONTINENTAL BOMBAY

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THE TAJ GROUP OF HOTELS

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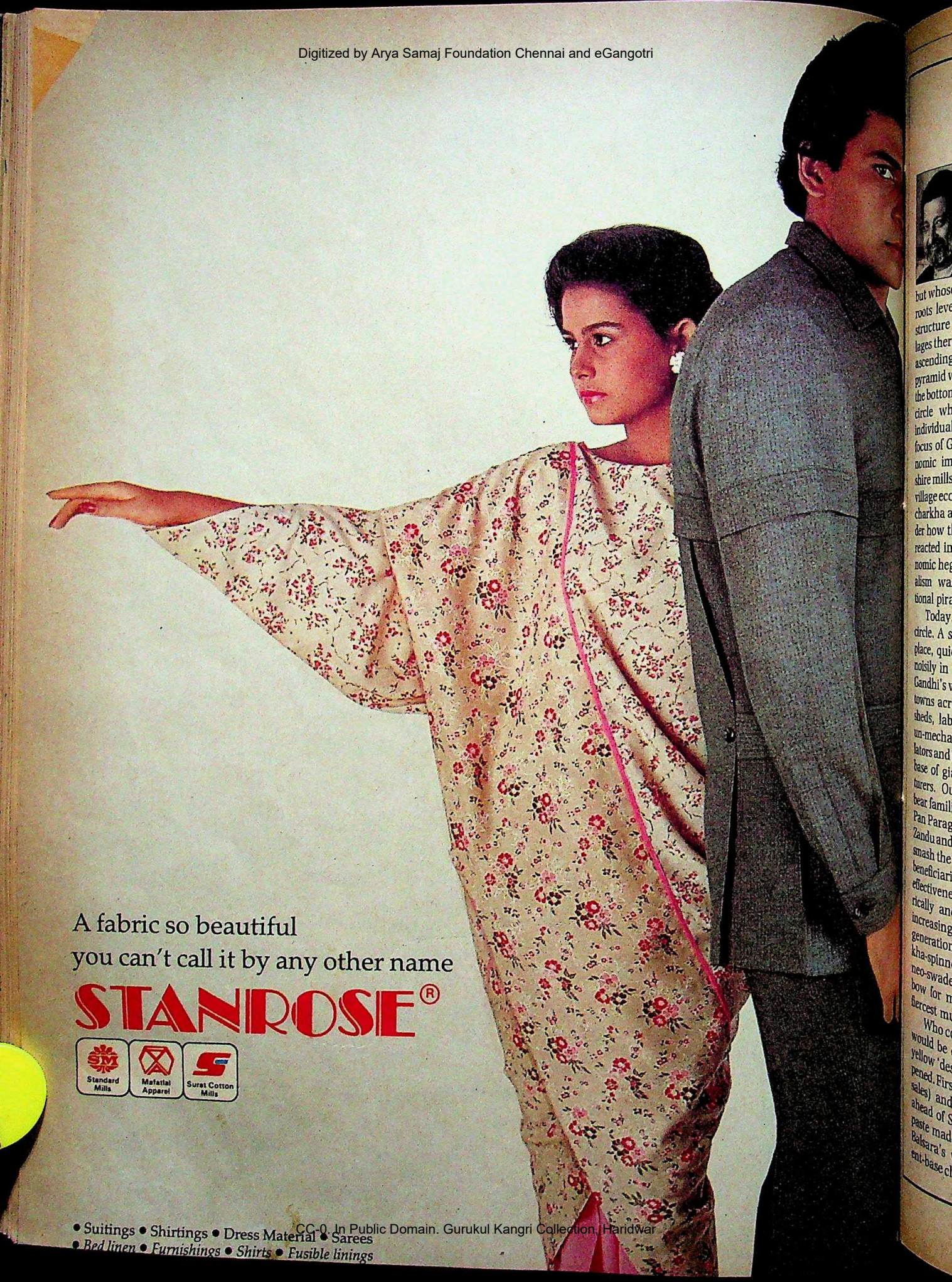

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The Neo-swadeshis

WHEN Gandhi first formulated his theory and practice of swadeshi, it was based on a coherent world-view whose sight was aligned with the Upanishadic seers but whose feet were firmly at the grass-roots level of India's villages. "In this structure composed of innumerable villages there will be ever-widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual..." In the '30s, when the focus of Gandhi's fire was the economic imperialism of the Lancashire mills, it made sense to talk of a village economy and to promote the charkha and the handloom. I wonder how the Mahatma would have reacted in the '60s when the economic hegemony of British imperialism was replaced by multinational piracy.

Today, the wheel has come full circle. A swadeshi revolution is taking place, quietly in the market-place and noisily in the media. It is not based in Gandhi's villages, but in cities and small towns across the land. Operating from sheds, labour-intensive and relatively un-mechanised, a new breed of formulators and packers is steadily eroding the base of giant, multinational manufacturers. Our new economic overlords bear familiar names: Nirma and Vimal, Pan Parag and Lijjat, Dabur and Vicco, Zandu and Hamdard. They are not out to smash the market economy: they are its beneficiaries as the reach and cost-effectiveness of television grows geometrically and the new markets become increasingly price-sensitive. This is no generation of benign, meditative charkha-spinners in a pastoral Eden. The neo-swadeshis will brawl, knee and elbow for market share as hard as the fiercest multinationals.

Who could have envisaged that Surf would be overtaken in volume by two yellow 'desi' detergents? But it has happened. First Nirma (Rs 100 crore annual sales) and then Vimal have galloped ahead of Surf. Promise, a white toothpaste made by the relatively unknown Balsara's with an indigenous-ingredient-base claim (clove oil), is ahead of the established Binacas and Close-ups, Signals and Forhans and sits in second place, behind Colgate. Vicco, a yellow turmeric-based vanishing cream challenges Ponds. Gopal Zarda, Pan Parag and other branded 'pan masalas' have taken a massive chunk out of the oral satisfaction market once dominated entirely by cigarettes. Fryums and Gits compete on equal terms with Maggi and Rex.

The swadeshi phenomenon cannot simply be measured in gross tonnage. The battle is not only for market share but for share of mind, not merely for changing brand percentages but for a changing life-style. Ethnic chic is not a new occurrence. It began in the late '50s, spearheaded by Handloom House and the Sarabhai women and the Calico Mills colour campaigns designed by Shilpi. In the '60s, the torch of ethnic revival would pass to the ITDC under Romesh Thapar and Sunil Roy. But the spread of the phenomenon was limited to a five-star world of *pichwais* and *tankhas*.

> "A swadeshi revolution is taking place, quietly in the market-place and noisily in the media. It is not based in Gandhi's villages, but in cities and towns across the land."

With the advent of television (12 million adults covered by a single 30-second spot at the rate of Rs 10 per viewer), the picture has changed radically. Everyone is now aware of the Festival of India, Jaya Bachchan's khadi fashions and Pupul Jayakar's Shyam Ahuja dhurries. A new powerful class of consumers is emerging whose life-style is a hybrid mix of safari suits and silk churidar-kurta, based on a bizarre amalgam of *Khandaan* and *Air Hostess*. Witness the new swagger with which a tin of 'pan masala' is flaunted as a life-style symbol in much the same way that people flashed a packet of State Express 10 years ago.

There are pieces of tell-tale evidence everywhere (the Vicks herbal range, herbal soaps and toothpaste from Ponds, ayurvedic shampoos) that the multinational giants are, as always, bending to a wind which promises to take on hurricane proportions. So today's boutiques are not called 'Guys and Dolls' but 'Khazaana' and 'Memsahib' and 'Malabar'. 'Cezari' suitings are yielding to 'Vichitra' and 'Taarika' sarees, and to 'Bichhona' linen.

"I found the crown of France lying in the streets," Napolean said. Advertising and marketing do not deal in royal crowns but in the ducal coronets of commerce, and there is a gigantic set of commercial opportunities lying about in the new swadeshi field. Nirma is already exploiting this with its Rs 2.5 crore annual advertising budget, of which a sizeable chunk is in television. The Nirma jingle is arguably the worst ever made, yet it begins to transform at the numbing frequency of four exposures a week. A dreadful jingle gets burnt into the brain's mnemonic circuits and you end up humming what you hated.

That the swadeshi segment will grow at a faster rate than the overall market is now certain as new manufacturers enter, as smaller manufacturers expand their distribution, as new categories financed by exports (incense sticks, herbal products, papads, masalas) enter the branded market at home, backed by heavy promotion, and as the price differential on goods made in low-overhead shed operations increases with their quality level held steady.

There is a vacant slot, an opportunity for the right advertising agency as well. A grassroots 'network' type agency with 20 branches instead of four, with conceptualising in swadeshi terms, campaigns worked out in Indian languages and client presentation made in Hindi. The swadeshi opportunity for an agency is open but it requires pioneering work, a fundamental change of working ethos and large investment ratios. As things stand, I see no takers.

KERSEY KATRAK, 49, is a professional advertising man besides being a playwright, poet, columnist and critic. He will be writing a periodic column for INDIA TODAY on advertising and marketing trends.

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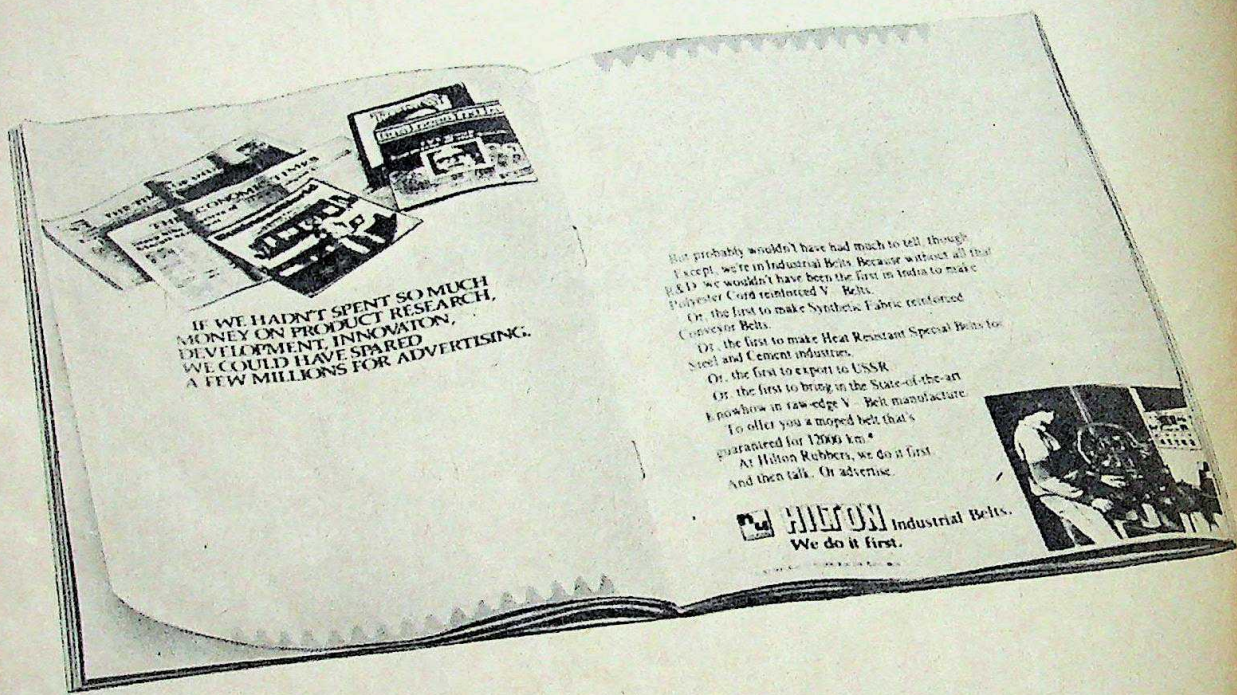

DID YOU NOTICE OUR LAST AD WHERE WE LISTED ALL OUR FIRSTS BUT DIDN'T SAY A WORD ABOUT OUR GERMAN COLLABORATORS: ARNTZ-OPTIBELT?

Mudra-D-HRL-2593

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Arntz-Optibelt. From West Germany. Our technical collaborators. They make the world's finest power transmission Belts. Because they're a little fanatic about quality.

Like us.

And Arntz-Optibelt have spent years and millions of Marks on R&D to perfect yet newer technologies for the manufacture of power transmission Belts. Because Arntz-Optibelt believe in constant product innovation. At whatever cost.

Like us.

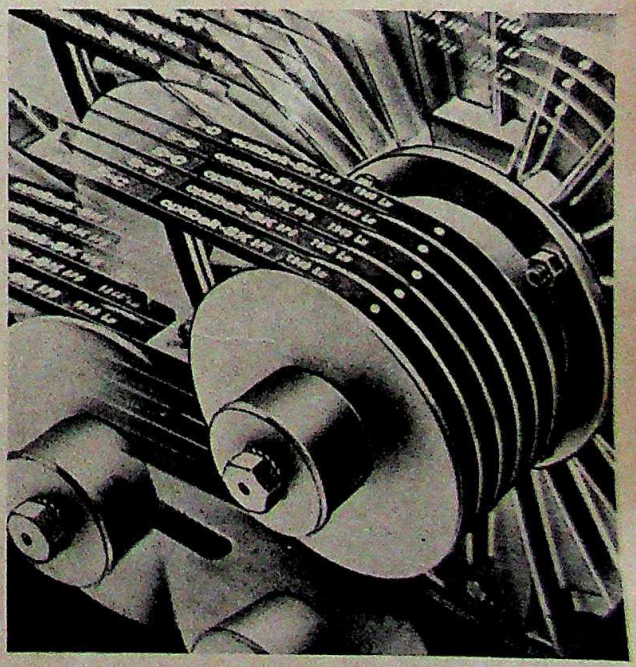
Fanatic as they're about quality, Arntz-Optibelt weren't in a rush to part with their technology. There were offers for their raw-edge plant from industrial Belt Units in USA. And South Africa.

And us.

And Arntz-Optibelt chose us to collaborate with. Because they found our zeal for product innovation a little similar to theirs. And they found our list of firsts (India's first Polyester Cord reinforced V-Belts, first Synthetic Fabric reinforced Conveyor Belts, first Heat Resistant Special Belts) complementing the zeal.

So today, at Hilton Rubbers, we have the state-of-the-art plant & equipment and we have the world's best Industrial Belt makers helping us. To give India the only world class raw-edge cogged and classical Belts.

To go into your 2 or 4-wheelers.



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100 YEARS OF ALUMINIUM

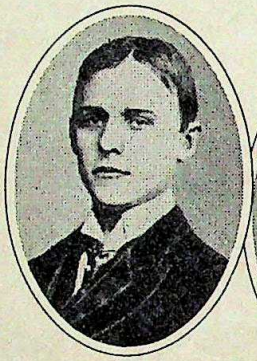
FOR THE WORLD IT'S A CENTENARY.

FOR INDAL IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR.

In 1886, a 23 year old American, Charles Martin Hall discovered the electrolytic process of producing aluminium. At almost the same time, Paul Heroult in France discovered the identical process. Both were of the same age, discovered the same process, in the same year, unknown to each other. The Hall-Heroult process remains fundamental to the industry even today.

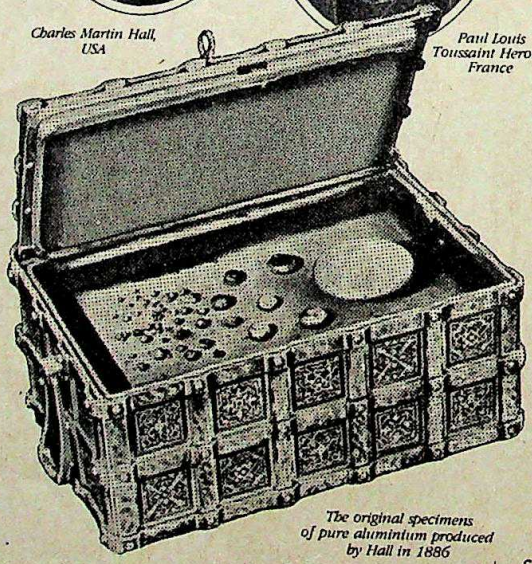
In 1888, the world's first commercial production of aluminium began in the Pittsburgh Reduction Company, USA under Hall's direction. Assisting Hall was a 21 year old youth, Arthur Vining Davis—one of the true champions of the metal, long before it grew to become the giant global industry of today.

Through the decades, the Davis connection has been integral to the aluminium industry. In 1928, the world's first international aluminium company was formed: Aluminium Limited, headquartered in Canada, under the leadership of Edward K Davis, brother of Arthur Vining Davis. In 1966, the company acquired its present name of Alcan Aluminium Limited (ALCAN).



Charles Martin Hall, USA

Paul Louis Toussaint Heroult, France



The original specimens of pure aluminium produced by Hall in 1886

In the hundred years since the Hall-Heroult process, the global output of aluminium has grown from 13 tonnes to 13 million tonnes. The use of the metal has grown from toys and trinkets to spacecraft, power transmission, high-rise constructions... the list grows daily. And ALCAN, today, is the world's largest international aluminium company.

Within the first decade of its formation, ALCAN came to India: The Aluminium Production Company of India was formed in 1938, marking the beginning of the Indian aluminium industry. In 1944, the name changed to the Indian Aluminium Company, Limited. INDAL. Riding the crest into aluminium's second centennial, proud of its lineage, ready for the future.

INDAL

Indian Aluminium Company, Limited

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CONTAD/INDAL-A

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NTPC

Tender Trouble

IF THE "foreign hand" is a much-abused scapegoat for governmental failures, there is yet another foreign hand whose operations the Government sometimes doesn't seem to mind: the hand of lobbyists for foreign suppliers of equipment sought to be imported into the country.

The prize to be won in the latest case is a contract for the supply of turbine equipment for three power stations in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh based on gas despatched through the Hazira-Bijapur-Jagdispur (HBJ) pipeline. The tussle, however, is not between the eight bidders for the contract but the Power Department and the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC).

At the centre of the storm is the British firm Hawker Siddeley, which had cobbled together a consortium of turbine and ancillary equipment manufacturers and backed its offer with an attractive financial package for the project. Siddeley had the support of the Department of Power, but the NTPC would have none of it since the firm does not make turbines. According to the NTPC's tender (total capacity: 1,500 mw), only manufacturers are to be given tender documents to make their bids.

Why the Department of Power stood by Siddeley when the technical requirements of the tender automatically ruled it out is unclear. But, as an official at the Ministry of Energy pointed out: "Firms which function as managing agents have more clout in the higher echelons of power, as their survival depends on the right contacts." Was Siddeley using its lobbying clout to stay in the bidding for the multi-crore contract? But a top-ranking official in the Power Department denied any succumbing to pressure: "There might have been some misunderstanding with NTPC, but Siddeley did not make any representation against their exclusion."

But NTPC Chairman M.L. Shishoo has a different version: "In spite of representations, we asserted our position and rejected Siddeley as it was not competent to provide the equipment." After technical evaluation, tender documents were issued to eight firms. Siddeley was left out, and John Brown, a member of the Siddeley consortium to which the NTPC raised no objection as it was a gas turbine manufacturer, taken in.

And officials in BHEL added to the controversy when they pointed out that the company has signed an agreement in which General Electric (US) will provide the technical know-how for the indigenous manufacture of gas turbines. But the NTPC says that under the terms of the loan agreement with the World Bank, only companies with "experience" in the field will be allowed to bid for the tender. This rules out BHEL, which is just entering the turbine market. However, is this interference another example of the government succumbing to World Bank pressures? For there is no other reason why foreign companies should supply the turbines when they can be manufactured by BHEL.

If the NTPC's firm handling saw off the early hurdles put up by the Power Department, the latter's delay in the appointment of a foreign consultant may yet stymie the project, since unless this condition is met soon, the World Bank may withhold the Rs 600 crore loan committed for the project. No pre-bid meeting of the prospective tenders for the contract can be held without a consultant. The Power Department has been sitting on the NTPC's recommendations for a consultant since March 1985.

Despite the road-blocks, Shishoo seems keen to play down the delay. "In the present system, delays are inherent. The ethos of working in the ministry is different from that in the NTPC," he said.

That may be so. But a delay of over a year virtually defeats the purpose of opting for a gas-based power plant in place of a conventional coal-fired one. The former was preferred because of its higher energy saving potential and shorter gestation period, that is, half of a thermal plant's 48 months start-up time.

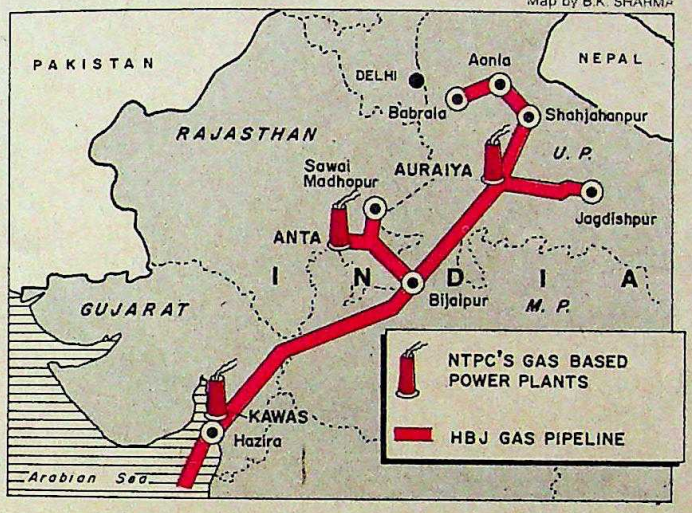
Otherwise, the cost per unit generation of power at 90 paise is nearly double that from a thermal power plant. The higher power tariff is mainly a result of the sudden hike in the administered price of gas which at Rs 2,250 per 1,000 cubic metres is much higher than NTPC's earlier estimate of Rs 1,800.

An NTPC official alleging discrimination by the Petroleum Ministry said: "Why are the fertiliser plants given special treatment and supplied gas at a much lower rate of Rs 2,150?" Surprisingly, the beneficiary states have not raised even a whimper of protest. Their choice is limited to either buying expensive power or not having any power at all. But with the states and their electricity boards in the red, NTPC officials are apprehensive about their ability to pay the high tariffs.

However, even the high tariff would have been justified if the generation of power would have begun within the stipulated time. But, by sitting on its hands, the Power Department has put paid to all such hopes. There is now little possibility of the original cost estimate of Rs 1,350 crore being adhered to. The benefits of a shorter gestation period too have been lost: six months after an engineering task force was set up in January this year to set the ball rolling, the project doesn't even have a consultant to guide its destiny.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

Map by B.K. SHARMA



"In spite of representations, we asserted our position and rejected Hawker Siddeley as it was not competent to provide the equipment."

M.L. SHISHOO
NTPC chairman

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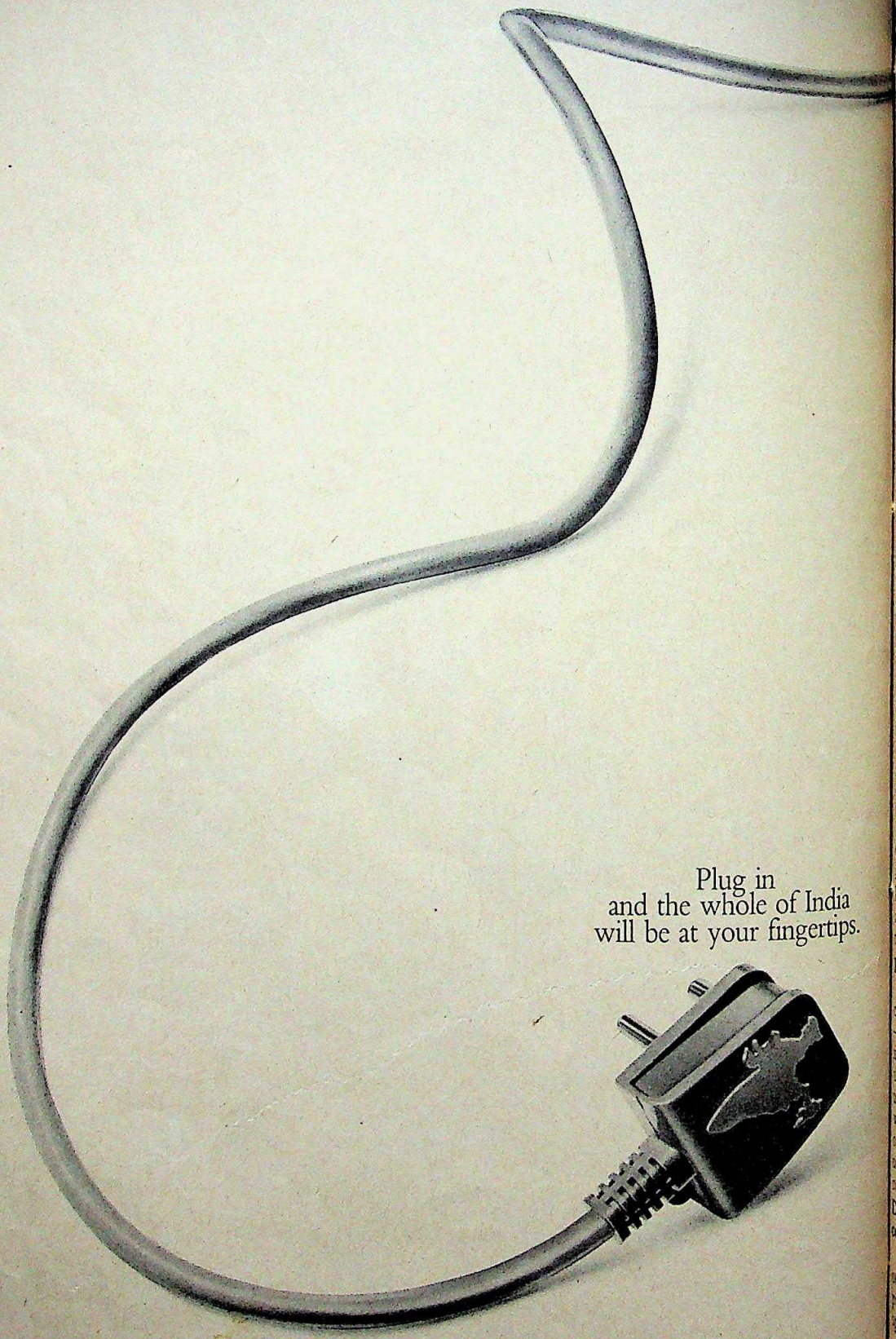

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INDONET, India's first commercial multi-city information network has gone on line with IBM 4361 computers at Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. ONGC, Geological Survey of India, Hi-Tech Consultants, SAIL and Bangalore Development Authority, to mention just a few, are already its subscribers and reaping its benefits.

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BANKS

Wooing the Non-resident

SWRAJ PAUL is back in London licking his wounds. Manu Chhabria is slogging it out in Calcutta. But the average non-resident Indian (NRI) who will contribute his nest egg and make no waves is more welcome in this country than ever before.

NRI's in the Gulf, the United Kingdom and Canada are suddenly finding themselves on half-a-dozen mailing lists. Advertisements enticing them from newspapers and television. Seminars where experts tell them how best to deploy their funds have become a regular affair. Banks by the score, particularly the foreign ones, have realised how lucrative a business cornering NRI funds is.

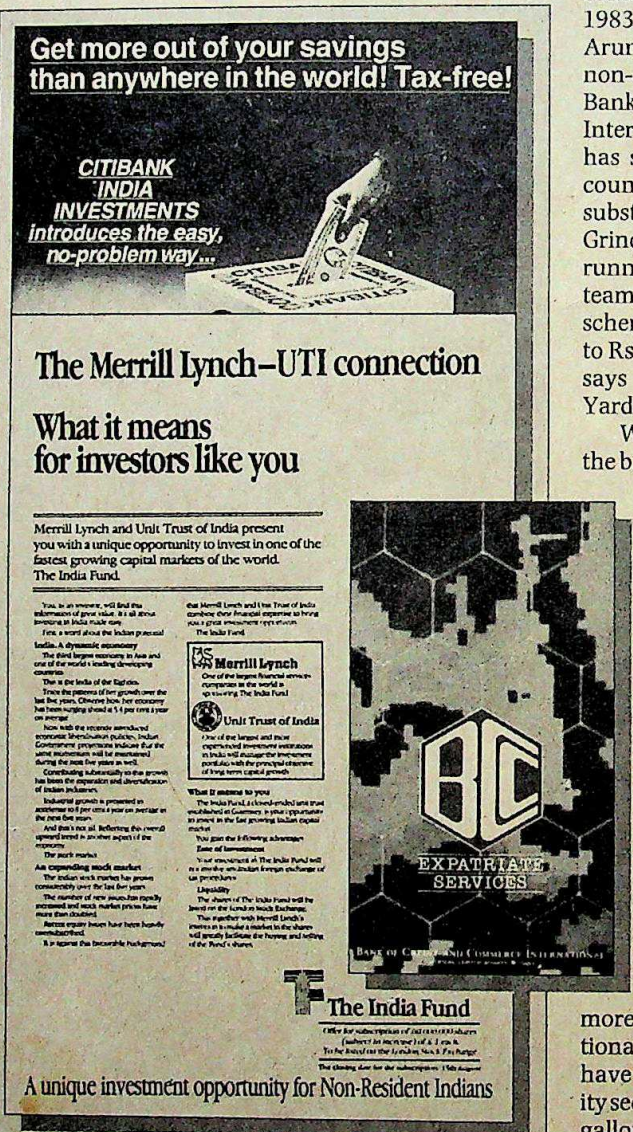
And everyone is thinking big. "One billion dollars," say executives of Citibank. That is their target for the next five years. "One billion dollars," echoes Anil Bhandari, vice-president of one of the leading US investment companies, Bear and Stearns. He estimates that the five million NRI families in the US alone can annually contribute this amount to an Indian fund which Bear and Sterns is soon planning to start, and the State Bank of India, which already has practically a billion dollars in its NRI kitty, is upgrading its services to retain its share of the investment market.

But it is the foreign banks who are really into the hard sell. Citibank has already flagged off two centres for non-resident Indians in Calcutta and Bombay and a third one is on the anvil at Delhi. "We set ourselves a target of Rs 100 crore for 1986," says Jerry Rao, vice-president of the Consumer Services Group and originator of the NRI scheme, "but we are going to comfortably overshoot it." Adds Steven Pinto, marketing director: "We get about 12 customers a day and many of them open an account on the spot. It may be for a nominal amount, but then our follow-up teams abroad take care of the bigger investment later." Apart from India, the bank has active NRI cells in nine countries and is gearing up operations in seven others. "It's not just banking," says Rao. "We focussed on it as a consumer marketing problem, identified needs and augmented the product. Thus we have the Citincome Certificate, Citinews (a magazine meant exclusively for NRI's) and even a group insurance scheme called Citilife. The fact that we are the biggest among the foreign banks in this proves that we deliver."

This is a claim that others are quick to refute. "With the $15 million we have collected since we started off in 1983, we are way ahead," claims Arun Prasad, who heads the non-resident division of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI). The bank has set up India desks in nine countries and expects to rake in a substantial Rs 200 crore in 1986. Grindlays, another of the front-runners, has formed young teams to aggressively market its schemes. "We have Rs 300 crore to Rs 400 crore in NRI deposits," says general manager Jayant Yardi confidently.

With everyone jumping on the bandwagon it is obvious that collective figures should reflect the spurt. NRI bank deposits in the country have increased from Rs 3,503 crore last year to Rs 6,100 crore this year. The foreign banks, with various restrictions on operations in this country, have found in the NRI's a fertile avenue to raise funds. With the cash reserve ratio and the statutory liquidity ratio (which dictate the percentage of its deposits that a bank must keep liquid) considerably lower for NRI deposits, the banks have so much the more to lend. And unlike the nationalised banks they do not have to give cheap loans to priority sectors, thus profits have been galloping.

For the non-resident investor, on the other hand, it is an equally attractive proposition. The interest rates offered are practically the highest in the world. At 8.5 per cent for a one-year deposit, it is considerably more than the 6.5 per cent prevalent elsewhere. "Besides," adds Prasad, "with the uncertainties prevailing everywhere, particu-



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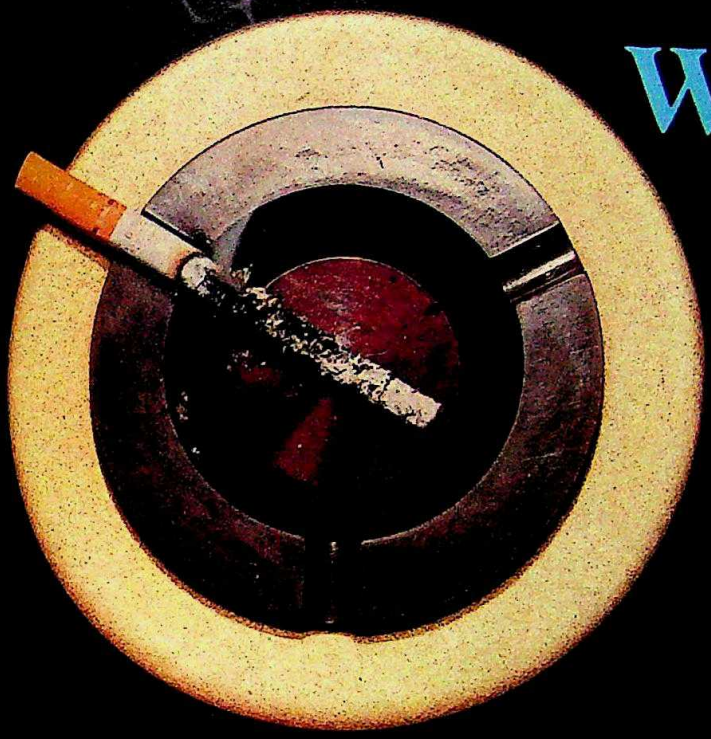

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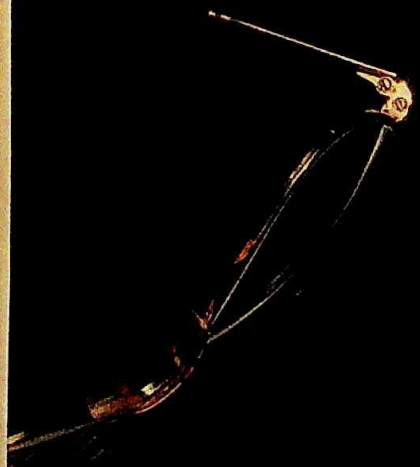

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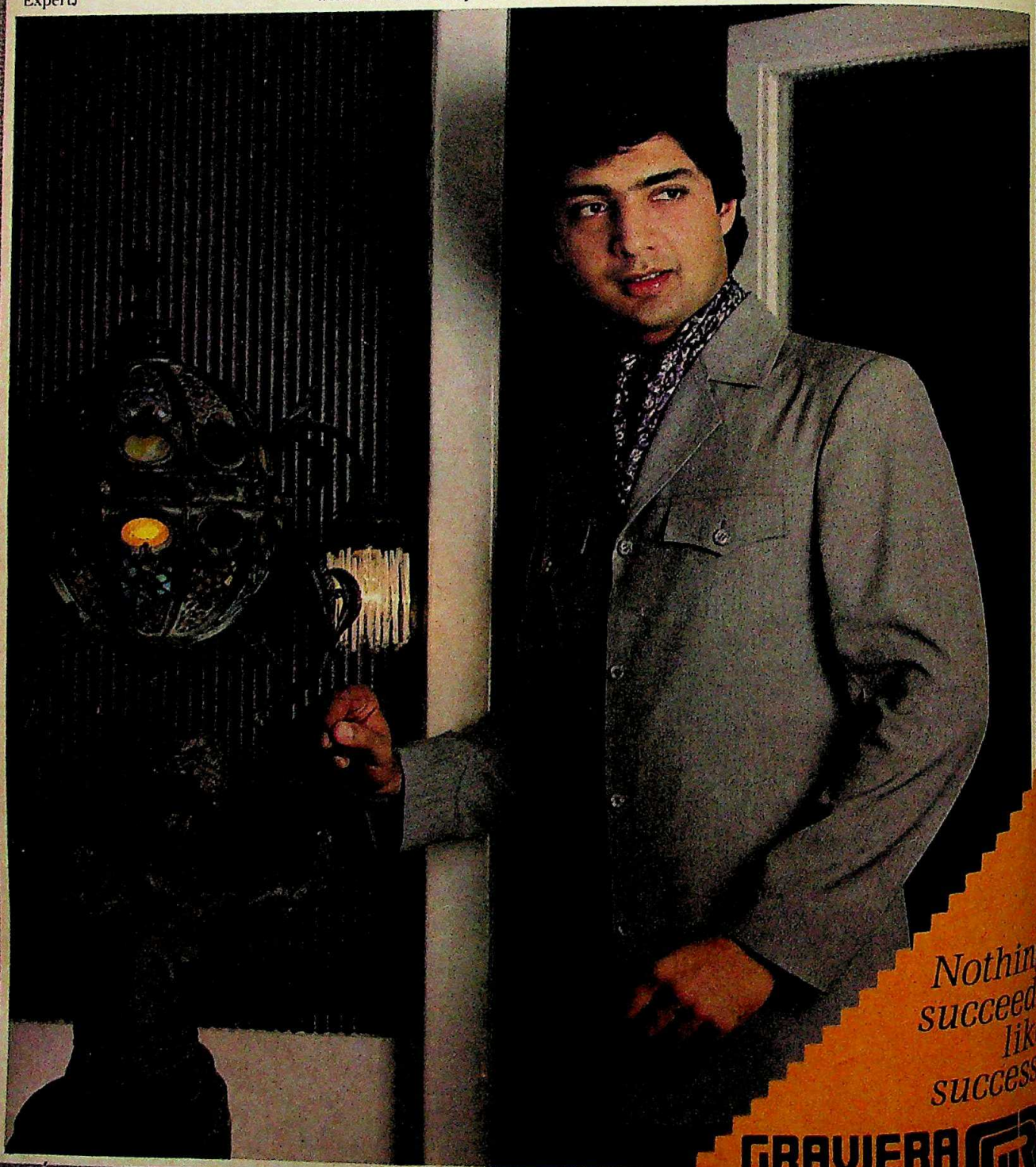

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larly in the Gulf, most non-residents would like to have one foot in this country."

While the foreign banks have been grabbing a bigger slice of the cake, the big boys in the game have not been losing out. State Bank of India has maintained its growth and has facilities on par with any of the others. "Only, we are not making so much noise about it," says an official. Bank of Baroda, which has a Rs 500 crore share, has launched various schemes including a special NRI saving certificate, netting Rs 200 crore.

Meanwhile, the Unit Trust of India (UTI) and the US-based securities firm Merrill Lynch have launched a £60 million India fund. (The money will be invested in UTI units and hence in shares, debentures, etc.) Waiting in the wings is the Birla Mercury India growth fund which expects to raise $30 million in the first year. Bear and Stearns is planning a $74 million to $100 million India fund. Only 20 per cent of this, however, will be invested in India.

"Everybody wants to come into India," explains Yardi, "it's the most attractive market in the world." Estimates vary on the potential, from Rs 10,000 crore to much higher figures, and India has tapped only the tip of the iceberg. The funds so far have come mainly from West Asia—the wealthy communities in the United Kingdom, Canada and the Far East are yet to contribute their mite. If they can be persuaded to pitch in, the sky is the limit.

All the euphoria, however, is not without its critics. So many people are going gaga over mutual funds, but asks Yardi: "Is the Indian equity market big enough? Where are all these funds going to be invested?" The foreign banks have also come in for their share of flak. "Such fast growth," says an Indian banker, "is not possible without some shady methods. With their margins they can afford to pay the NRI's even more than the stipulated interest and cook the books."

The non-resident scheme itself has its detractors. The Government had to reduce the interest rates on foreign currency non-resident deposits in May because hot money was flowing in. NRI's were being used as front-men to make deposits and cash in on higher returns than available elsewhere. The country's need for foreign currency is undeniable, the fact that it is getting it in increasing quantities is evident. But the question remains: Is the price too high?

—PARTHASARTHI SWAMI with INDRANIL BANERJIE and PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI

PEPSICO

Fresh Fizz

THE SOFT drinks industry is fizzing over again. A year after the Government rejected Pepsico's last bid to re-enter the Indian market—the company had operated in India in the 1950s and then pulled out—Pepsi is now making another bid to get back into the country. Last time around, the project had been shepherded by R.P.Goenka's Agro Products Export India. This time the formal application for a joint venture with Pepsico has been put in by Punjab Agro Industries Corporation, with Voltas the third partner in the venture.

The Punjab Agro-Pepsi-Voltas bid is different from its still-born predecessor, and also far more ambitious. Last time, the proposed investment was no more than Rs 2 crore. This time it is Rs 22 crore. Then, Pepsico had wanted to use its own brand names in India, including Pepsi Cola. Now the brand name will be Indian, or more likely a hybrid brand name like Ind-Pepsi. Earlier, the company had wanted to import the crucial soft drink concentrate for handing out to soft drink bottlers. This time the concentrate will be manufactured in India, with imported raw materials.

The investment in the cola and soft drink operation will, however, be only about Rs 5 crore. The remaining Rs 17 crore investment will be in facilities to process fruit juices and vegetable products for export, and for turning out potato products (like wafers and finger chips) for the domestic market. Punjab Agro says it will export Rs 55 crore in the first five years, for which the imports required will be Rs 18 crore.

Though the cola and soft drink business is designed as a relatively small part of the total operation, the proposed concentrate manufacturing capacity equals half the total national capacity now in soft drinks. And those pushing for the proposal argue that Pepsi's entry into the Indian market will result in improved quality, better rural marketing, the development of new product categories, introduction of 'state of the art' soft drink technology, expansion of ancillary industries, and a great deal else. Besides, the project will be located in Punjab, whose agriculture needs to diversify from foodgrains to horticulture and other related fields. The Punjab Agro proposal for processing fruit, vegetables and potatoes ties in with this.

AJIT NINAN

The proposal is bound to be controversial, and existing Indian soft drink manufacturers have major criticisms levelled against Pepsi:

- Despite claiming to manufacture the soft drink concentrate in India, Pepsi will not disclose its secret formula, which will continue to be imported;
- The Pepsi proposal involves spending 32 per cent of export earnings on imports, whereas Coca Cola had limited this to 20 per cent before it left the country in 1978;
- The import requirements that Pepsi is asking for are far in excess of what is allowed under the export-import policy;
- There is no reason why a proposal for manufacturing and exporting fruit juices and vegetable products should be linked to one for producing soft drinks;
- There already exists a healthy, local cola industry which makes do with locally produced flavours, and there is no need to spend foreign exchange on a non-priority item.

While some of these contentions may be valid, others can be countered, for the foreign exchange to be spent will be covered three times by foreign exchange earnings. It now remains to be seen what the Government will decide.

—T.N. NINAN

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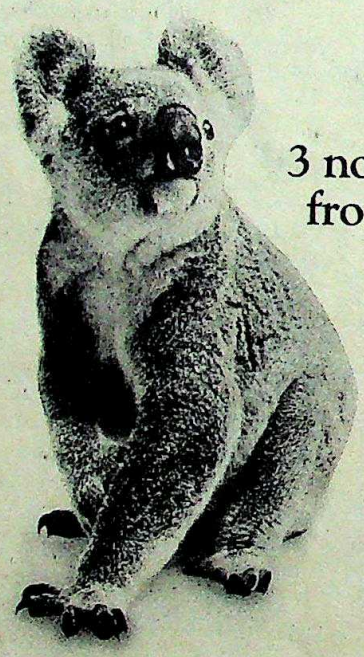

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KERALA

Power Panic

THERE was a time when Kerala was about the only state surplus in power. That situation changed dramatically last fortnight when the state electricity board imposed a 100 per cent power cut on high-tension and extra high-tension consumers. Meanwhile delays in the implementation of new power projects have compounded the problem. With industrial and domestic consumers up in arms and a consumer watch-dog body threatening court action if there was no reduction in the steep power tariffs, the state Government began fiercely lobbying for a nuclear power station as a solution to an unexpected crisis.

The unprecedented power cuts are the result of Government short-sightedness. Even when the water levels in the state's reservoirs were already touching rock bottom, Electricity Minister Balakrishna Pillai and officials of the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) continued to maintain that there would be no power cut. Their assurances were based on the weatherman's prediction that the monsoon would set in by May-end. When the rains did set in—10 days after the predictions—they were a disappointment. With barely enough water to generate 150 million units—the state's requirement for a week—in Idukki and other reservoirs, Pillai panicked, slapped a 100 per cent cut on industries and ordered heavy load shedding.

Within weeks the state suffered a production loss of over Rs 100 crore and more than one lakh workers lost Rs 10 crore in wages. The foreign exchange-earning seafood industry lost heavily, starving for lack of ice. Said leading seafood exporter C. Cherian: "Though we have broken all records in seafood exports this year, the continuing power crisis will cripple our export earnings."

Fortunately, the Central Government intervened, releasing 3.5 million units from the Kalpakkam nuclear station and the Neyveli and Ramagundam thermal stations. Maharashtra was asked to provide one million units via Karnataka. But there are problems in getting this power to Kerala. The National Thermal Power Corporation has yet to lay transmission lines to bring power to the state and the existing lines cannot carry such heavy loads. And both Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are experiencing acute power shortage. Still, Pillai claims a solution will be found at a conference of the chairmen of the southern power boards in the presence of the Central Electricity Authority.

But these temporary arrangements do not help towards a permanent solution. And the snail's pace at which new projects have been implemented has ensured no significant increase in installed capacity in recent years.

Pillai: false hopes

The unprecedented power cuts are the direct result of Government short-sightedness. Within weeks the state suffered a production loss of over Rs 100 crore.

The KSEB has nine completed projects with a total installed capacity of 1,011 mw, which generated 4,739 million units in 1984-85. While eight projects, which can produce 710 mw are in various stages of implementation, delays have led to a massive escalation in costs. And estimates put the current demand at 6,000 million units, which by 1990 will be nearly 9,000 million units. Said Pillai: "The only way out is for the speedy implementation of ongoing projects and implementation of new ones."

That Kerala could find itself in such a pathetic situation seemed unimaginable as, not long ago, it used to earn Rs 12 crore by selling power to neighbouring states. Charged K. Krishnakutty, Janata MLA: "The present government has failed to press for fulfilment of the Central Government assurance following the shelving of the Silent Valley project."

Kerala, totally dependent on hydel power, was promised a thermal plant by the Centre after the Silent Valley project was shelved a few years ago following environmentalists' protests. But the plant may never take off since bringing in coal from eastern India will be expensive. With nothing tangible in sight, Chief Minister Karunakaran and Pillai announced that the Centre was considering locating an atomic power station in the state.

There was nothing new in this announcement since a proposal last year to locate a nuclear power station in Kothamangalam, 50 km from Cochin, had drawn fire from environmentalists fearing radiation leakage. Anticipating a similar effect, Pillai sought to scotch fears by pointing out that such plants in neighbouring states would pose the same threat. But he admitted: "After the Chernobyl disaster people are wary of nuclear plants but it is a necessity."

Debate on the pros and cons of nuclear power acquired a wider dimension when the Cochin Chamber of Commerce organised a discussion on the subject at a workshop on "Power Supplies and Tariffs". A report of the study conducted by the chamber was done by M.K.R. Menon, retired chief engineer, Madhya Pradesh Electricity Board, who concluded that nuclear power would have to be Kerala's mainstay.

Meanwhile, harassed consumers got cold comfort when the Kerala Consumer Protection Council threatened to sue the board if it did not reduce electricity charges on domestic consumers who, surprisingly, must pay a minimum charge whether power is supplied or not. The council has also alleged that the KSEB is losing nearly 25 per cent of its energy during transmission through theft.

Menon minced no words in blaming the state Government: "No excuses can exonerate the state Government for its inactivity in forward planning and utter disregard of the state's economy and welfare." The state Government is now making energetic efforts to bring nuclear power to the power-starved state, even though the estimated 3,000 mw of hydel potential is lying untapped. Meanwhile, Keralites will have to sweat it out for a few more years.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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PEERLESS

Corporate Coup

IT CAME as a bombshell. Last fortnight, in a coup that caught both the West Bengal Government and corporate circles in the state by surprise, the high flying National Insulated Cables Company (Nicco) group of firms bought 18 per cent stock in the controversial Peerless General Finance and Investment Company. The Peerless board was reshuffled to accommodate Nicco nominees, and the managing director's slot was filled.

That dramatic series of events seemed to offer instant hope to Peerless. The company has been put in the dock by the state Government, which had asked the Centre to nationalise it. The Rs 78-crore Nicco group has diversified interests in cables, electronics and leasing, an enviable track record and a good relationship with the Government.

In a bid to mend fences with the Government and put the Rs 167-crore turnover Peerless on the fast track, the Nicco group commissioned the State Bank of India to study whether the deposit collecting company could function in line with government norms. And in a move that was kept under wraps, the new team sued for peace.

This flurry of activity was preceded by weeks of closed-door parleys among the three sides involved in this drama: Nicco head Rajive Kaul and Abhijit Sen; principal Peerless shareholder S.K. Roy whose family held 80 per cent of the company's stock; and P.C. Sen, chairman and managing director of Burn Standard, whose late father-in-law was Peerless chairman. According to Abhijit Sen, the new Peerless chairman, the two Nicco firms involved in the deal paid "a little less than the book value" for the shares. All agree that P.C. Sen, who joins Peerless as managing director, was the common factor that brought the two sides together. Says Sen: "I wanted some professional backing and the Roys were willing to talk to a West Bengal-based group." Adds Roy: "We wanted to professionalise the company which we could not do before because my brother died. We wanted a West Bengal-based group." Roy still retains control with his 62 per cent stockholding but has opted out of its day-to-day running, probably because he did not wish to tackle its militant unions or its myriad problems.

If inducting new men made sense to Roy, it made equal sense to the Nicco group to buy into Peerless. With around Rs 600 crore in deposits, Peerless is flush with funds. The company is required by the RBI to invest some 80 per cent of its deposits in government securities and bank deposits, but can legally invest the remaining 20 per cent (around Rs 120 crore) in any manner it wishes to. That makes Peerless a worthy prize for any corporation to snare—and the Nicco group has heady growth plans without the big money needed for them.

However, Kaul is quick to dismiss suggestions that the Peerless coffers were the prime attraction: "We've been around for four decades. We're not a fly-by-night company which will rip off Rs 600 crore. If Peerless does well, Nicco's credibility will be high, helping us in our future growth."

That may well be true, but the road to growth for Peerless is paved with problems. The death of Peerless strongman B.K. Roy and numerous legal battles plunged the company into uncertainty. Then, both the state Government and RBI have been gunning for the company. The state Government ordered the firm to wind up, arguing that its business fell within the purview of the Prize, Chit and Money Circulation Scheme (Banning) Act, while the RBI concluded in a study that over 70 per cent (an astonishing Rs 93 crore two years ago) of the firm's first year premia collected from depositors was paid to its agents and that an inordinately large number of "certificates" or policies lapsed every year. But a recent high court ruling has vindicated the company's stand that its functioning is legal. Still, newspaper reports have interpreted a coda to the verdict as suggesting that it has to work within RBI rules as a loan company. If that is correct, its operations would be severely curtailed. The rules among other things specify that loan firms cannot retain deposits for over three years: Peerless's run from 10 to 30 years.

Clearly, the Government and RBI would have to give the nod for the firm to get moving in top gear again. Indeed, many believe that Nicco talked to the Government before taking the plunge. Kaul however denies this, arguing that the Government would permit Peerless to function "if we come up with something that falls within RBI norms." That remains to be seen, but Peerless is hedging its bets. Says Nicco's Sen: "We'll approach financial institutions like the Life Insurance Corporation to invest in the company's share capital."

But the new management could face hassles on another front: the Peerless unions view Nicco's entry with dark suspicion. The 4 lakh-odd field agents have struck work in the past. If they do so again, Nicco's big gamble may take years to pay off.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI in Calcutta

"We wanted to professionalise but we couldn't because my brother died. We wanted a West Bengal-based group."

S.K. ROY
principal Peerless shareholder

"We've been around for four decades. We're not a fly-by-night company. If Peerless does well, Nicco's credibility will be high,."

RAJIVE KAUL
managing director, NICCO

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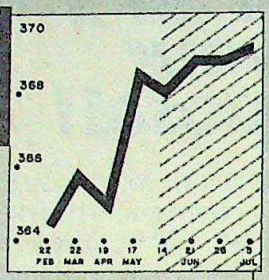
INFLATION, as measured by the wholesale price index, is currently running at around 4 per cent, but consumer prices have been rising much faster. Meanwhile, the foreign trade sector presents a mixed picture with falling exports partially offsetting the advantages to be gained by falling imports. Bank credit continues to expand, and gold prices are steadily rising.

All data are seasonally adjusted. The current trend is computed on the basis of the last one year's data on which regressions are fitted.

Wholesale Price Index

1970-71 = 100

Current Trend
4.0% p.a.

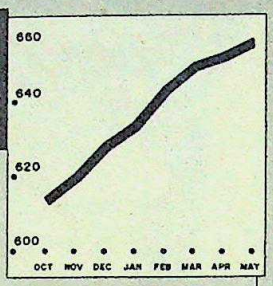


Wholesale prices rose marginally by 0.3 per cent between June 14 and July 5. The inflation rate at 4 per cent is reasonable.

Consumer Price Index

1960 = 100

Current Trend
9.8% p.a.

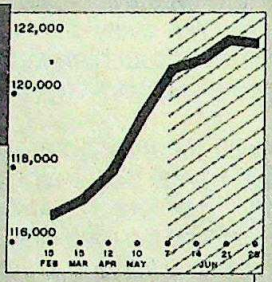


Consumer prices rose by 2 per cent between February and May. A 10 per cent trend rate of growth should be cause for worry.

Money Supply

Rs crore

Current Trend
11.0% p.a.

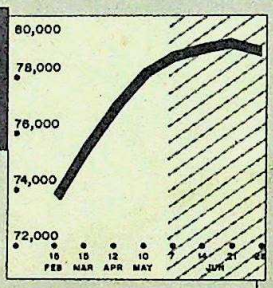


Despite a 1.6 per cent rise in money supply from May to June, the long term trend declined further from 11.7 per cent to 11 per cent.

Commercial Bank Credit

Rs Crore

Current Trend
19.2% p.a.

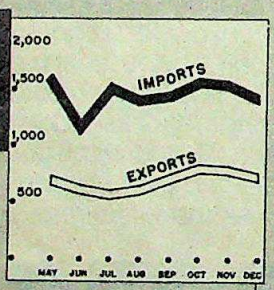


The expansionary phase in bank credit continues with the long term trend rate steadying at 19 per cent through June.

Foreign Trade

Rs Crore

Current Trend
18.6% p.a.
IMPORTS
-17.8% p.a.
IMPORTS

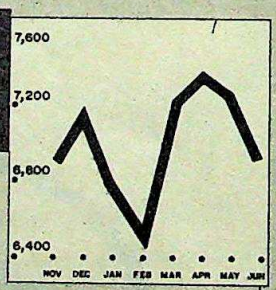


A 7 per cent decline in imports and exports offset each other from November to December. Foreign exchange reserves too fell at the start of 1986.

Foreign Exchange Reserves

Rs Crore

Current Trend
11.8% p.a.

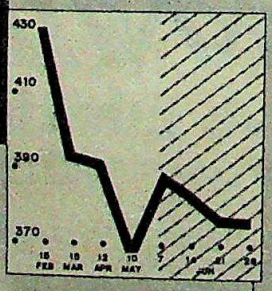


Despite a decline of 4.7 per cent between May and June, foreign exchange reserves are growing at a long term trend of 11.8 per cent.

Share Price Index

1970-71 = 100

Current Trend
-23.1% p.a.

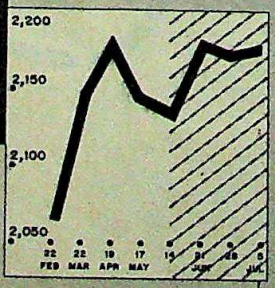


Share prices fell by 3 per cent in June. A negative trend rate of 23 per cent reflects the substantial drop in prices since February 1986.

Closing Gold Price

Rs per 10 gm

Current Trend
14.2% p.a.



Despite a marginal dip of 0.15 per cent between late June and early July the trend rate gold prices increased further by 2 percentage points.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of Items in June, 1986

	% Growth
Timber	17.82
Betel-nuts	12.80
Eggs	10.86
Coir Yarn	10.44
Mustard Oilcake	9.80
Tea	9.48
Arhar	8.80
Jute Textiles	5.80
Gingelly Oil	5.58
Mustard Oil	5.37
Raw Silk	5.28
Grounded Oil	4.82
Khandsari	4.94
Rape Mustard Seed	4.20
Cotton Seed	3.92
Maida	3.85
Gur	3.48
Ghee	3.42
Vanaspati	3.00
Groundnut Seeds	2.94
Masoor	2.80
Tobacco Raw	2.52
Tapioca	2.52
Electricity	2.17
Wheat	2.06
Linseed Oil	1.98
Handloom & Powerloom Products	1.74
Cars	1.47
Cement	1.46
Coir Fibre	1.24
Electrical Motors	1.21
Aviation Spirit	1.14
Cashew-nuts	1.07
Mining Machinery	1.06
Tubes	1.04
Bolts & Nuts	1.02
Rails	1.02
Machine Tools	0.88
Transformers	0.86
Limestone	0.85
Pig Iron	0.82
Kerosene	0.81
Silk & Artificial Silk Fabrics	0.80
Industrial Instruments	0.79
Zinc	0.79
Cycles	0.78
Soda Ash	0.66

Of the 139 series considered, 87 of them with a total weight of 53.792 had a positive growth and 51 of them with a total weight of 32.446 had a negative growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1986	1985
Coal Thousand Tonnes, June	11740	10810
Saleable Steel Thousand Tonnes, June	457	533
Cement Thousand Tonnes, June	2720	2633
Crude Petroleum Thousand Tonnes, June	2482	2280
Petroleum Refinery Products Thousand Tonnes, June	2483	[illegible]

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THE MARKETS

Bearish Phase

AFTER a period of lull and uneventful trading—marked by the usual quota of ups and downs—the stock-market came to life late last fortnight when Reliance shares crashed from around Rs 367 to Rs 317 in a single day's trading, and then sought still lower levels on the following days. Other counters also saw losses, and a market that had been inching upward was into a bearish phase.

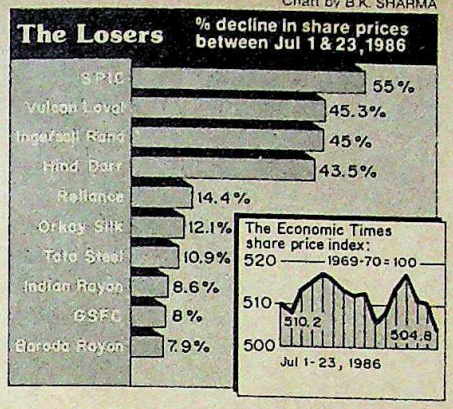
The Reliance crash was the direct result of the various controversies about the company's activities, the finance minister's announcement that loans taken from banks by companies owned by Reliance's promoters might be recalled, and by the stock exchange imposing heavy margins on Reliance buyers. This inevitably affected the general sentiment on the market, which also came under heavy bear pressure following reports that the Finance Ministry had blacklisted several leading companies because of their excise dues, and that the ministry had held up several proposals for share and debenture issues from the defaulting companies. Among the shares that lost ground in the process were TISCO and Premier Automobiles.

Before the bad news hit the market, it had been inching its way upwards, and the *Economic Times* share index climbed from 510.2 to 517.6 in the space of a fortnight. The buoyancy was partly the result of expectations that the Government was about to liberalise the guidelines for issuing bonus shares, and Bajaj Auto—which has a lot of spare cash lying around—was one of the shares that gained substantial ground, moving up by Rs 425 to Rs 3,950 in the space of a week before falling back. The company's latest share price of Rs 3,700 is almost twice as high as the year's low of Rs 1,950. Several cash-rich FERA companies also saw bullish trading.

Then came the crash, and the stock-market index fell sharply to 504.8. Several companies, in fact, lost even more heavily than Reliance over the fortnight, among them SPIC, Vulcan Laval, Ingersoll Rand, and Hindustan Dorr-Oliver.

Nevertheless, there could well be a recovery in the near future. After an uncertain phase, the monsoons seem to have improved in many parts of the country. The stock-market authorities are unlikely to want any further drop in prices and could well tailor their decisions to help a recovery. And the flow of corporate news is good, with Pfizer, East India Hotels and others either maintaining or improving their dividend payments. But as in the past, the stock-market is influenced more than anything else by decisions in New Delhi, especially by Finance Minister V.P.Singh. And many marketmen will wonder what new rabbit he will produce next out of his hat.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



ACTIVE STOCKS

	1986 HIGH	1986 LOW	CLOSE 23.7.86	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	45.00	25.75	27.00	1.00 –
Asian Paints	280.00	130.00	225.00	6.25 –
Associated Cement	389.00	228.00	245.00	15.00 –
Atlas Copco	97.00	64.00	96.00	17.00 +
Avery India	146.00	100.00	127.00	8.25 +
Bajaj Auto	3975.00	1950.00	3700.00	190.00 +
Baroda Rayon	490.00	285.00	290.00	15.00 –
Bata India	82.50	54.00	70.00	4.00 +
Bayer	680.00	445.00	620.00	80.00 +
Bharat Forge	86.00	48.00	78.00	10.00 +
Blow Plast	160.00	90.00	99.00	3.00 –
Blue Star	110.00	75.00	90.00	nil +
Bombay Dyeing	123.00	77.00	101.00	5.00 +
Britania Ind.	149.00	85.00	146.00	6.00 +
Brooke Bond	96.75	56.00	60.00	1.50
Ceat Tyres	520.00	240.00	490.00	70.00 +
Century Spinning	1690.00	745.00	770.00	25.00 –
Chloride India	132.00	86.00	122.00	4.00 –
Chorgia	65.00	42.00	53.00	8.00 +
Colgate	350.00	200.00	315.00	20.00 +
DCM	58.50	32.62	41.50	4.50 –
Dunlop	74.50	49.75	67.50	1.25 +
Elecon	127.00	80.00	110.00	7.00 –
Escorts	117.00	69.00	104.00	1.00 –
Finolex Cables	97.00	36.00	83.00	9.00 –
Food Specialities	375.00	215.00	361.00	41.00 +
Garware Nylon	61.50	36.00	42.50	1.50 –
Glaxo	87.00	61.00	65.00	2.00 –
G.E. Shipping	36.00	21.00	22.00	2.00 –
Gujarat St. Fertilisers	182.00	92.50	150.00	13.00 –
Gwalior Rayon	88.00	59.00	72.50	4.50 –
Hindustan Lever	183.00	124.00	173.00	10.00 +
Hindustan Motors	128.50	38.60	38.60	3.30 –
Hind. Dorr	660.00	330.00	375.00	245.00 –
IEL	84.50	61.50	65.00	2.00 –
Indian Hotels	157.00	115.00	130.00	5.00 –
Indian Organic	97.00	63.00	76.00	2.00 +
Indian Rayon	151.00	100.00	127.00	12.00 –
Indrol	455.00	200.00	422.50	2.50 +
Ingersoll-Rand	505.00	250.00	297.50	47.50 +
ITC	76.50	53.00	68.00	1.25 +
J.K. Synthetics	132.00	90.00	118.50	3.50 +
Kinetic Engineering	385.00	220.00	370.00	15.00 +
Lakme	195.00	120.00	150.00	7.50 +
Larson & Toubro	204.00	124.00	127.00	2.00 –
Lipton	69.00	46.50	54.00	3.00 –
Lohia Machines	70.00	35.00	36.00	2.00 –
Madura Coats	92.00	51.00	54.00	0.50 +
Mahindra & Mahindra	86.00	51.00	53.50	2.50 –
Motor Industries	1000.00	605.00	875.00	15.00 –
National Organic	840.00	530.00	765.00	22.50 –
Nirlon	77.00	35.00	37.00	3.50 –
Orkay Silk Mills	192.00	111.00	160.00	18.00 –
Peico Electronics	104.50	48.00	54.00	1.25 –
Pfizer	125.00	78.00	87.00	1.00 –
Ponds	390.00	200.00	360.00	32.50 +
Premier Auto	960.00	555.00	877.50	35.00 +
Ranbaxy	160.00	105.00	148.00	14.00 +
Raymond	97.00	72.00	82.00	3.00 –
Reliance Industries	392.00	226.00	317.00	46.00 –
Shriram Fibres	88.00	49.00	50.00	3.50 –
Sandoz	135.00	62.00	132.00	21.00 +
SPIC	184.00	57.00	62.50	80.50 –
Tata Steel	1610.00	1090.00	1280.00	160.00 –
Telco	910.00	575.00	640.00	40.00 +
Vulcan Laval	162.50	58.75	58.75	46.25 –

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	8.0345	7.9575
Austria	Schilling	100	84.0891	83.2343
Bahrain	Dinar	1	32.4930	32.4237
Bangladesh	Taka	100	41.2830	41.1718
Canada	Dollar	1	9.1154	9.0441
Denmark	Kroner	1	1.5737	1.5611
Egypt	Pound	1	14.8517	14.7232
France	Franc	1	1.8365	1.8181
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	1.6086	1.5959
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	1.0930	1.0081
Iran	Rial	100	15.7830	15.7110
Italy	Lira	100	00.8439	00.8110
Japan	Yen	100	8.0431	7.9796
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7570	0.7430
Kuwait	Dinar	1	42.3237	41.8190
Malaysia	Dollar	1	4.7258	4.6827
Mauritius	Rupee	1	0.9230	0.9180
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.5901	0.5870
Netherlands	Guilder	1	5.2368	5.1963
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7360	0.7219
Singapore	Dollar	1	5.7387	5.5202
Spain	Peseta	1	0.0890	0.0793
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4308	0.4291
Sweden	Kroner	1	1.7856	1.7711
Switzerland	Franc	1	7.3086	7.2478
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.7080	0.6810
Thailand	Baht	100	47.3700	47.0018
UK	Pound	1	18.7687	18.6445
USA	Dollar	1	12.5775	12.4750
UAE	Dirham	1	3.3409	3.3301
USSR	Rouble	1	17.6775	17.6010
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	5.9136	5.8582

These rates were indicated by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi on 23.7.86.

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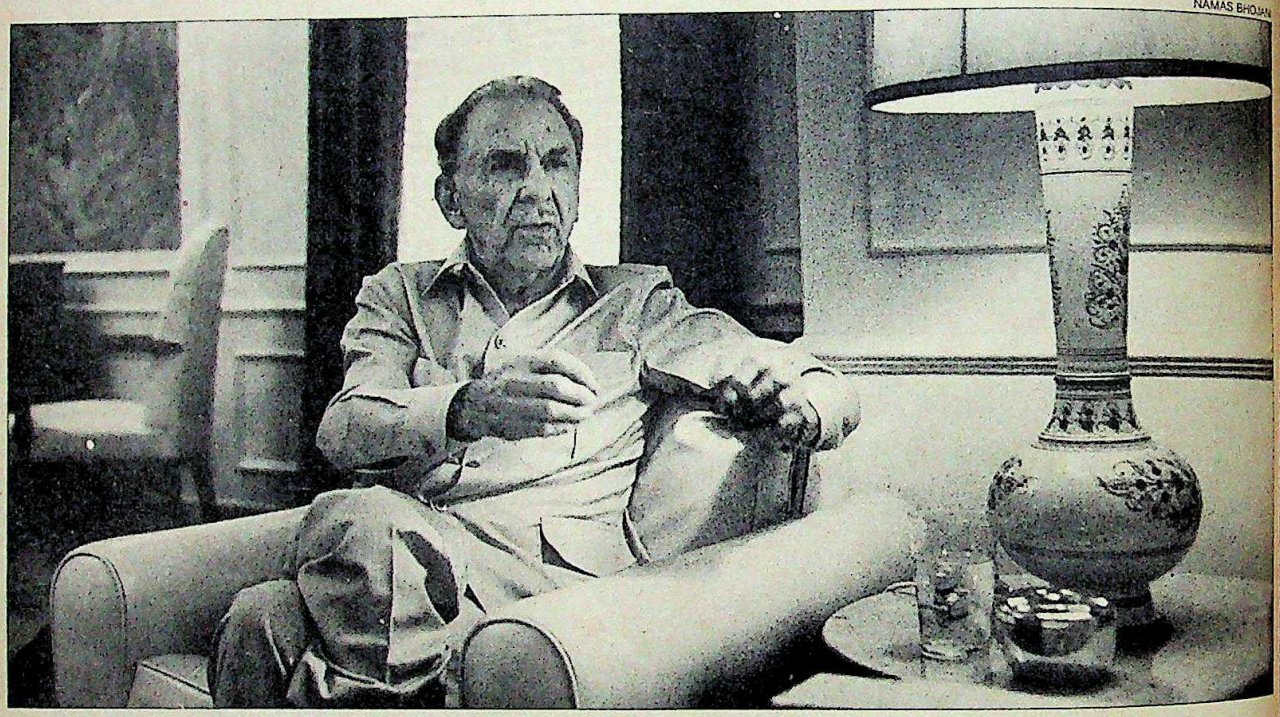
J.R.D. TATA

"I've been very frustrated"

Jehangir Ratanji Dadabhoy Tata—who turned 82 last month—is the grand old man of Indian industry. Still alert and very involved in his giant group's diverse businesses, he conveys a certain old-world charm that is rare, especially in the bustling world of go-getting businessmen. His uncompromising views on what is good and bad in economic policy may seem equally old-world, and very cut-and-dried, but there is a pride in his group's achievements and traditions that sits better on J.R.D. Tata than on almost any other businessman in India. Excerpts from an hour-long interview with Executive Editor T.N. NINAN.

NAMAS BHOJANI



Q. *To start by looking back, what do you think are the major changes in Indian business in the 50 years that...*

A. When I started in business—nearly 60 years ago—the conditions were very different to what they became. There was no licensing system, so there was nobody to bribe. Business was reasonably honest. The taxes were reasonable. So there was no great inducement to evade taxes.

But then came a controlled society, under the impulse of Jawaharlal. The Government needed money to run elections, and the whole culture changed. Along with this came punitive taxes of 98 per cent. When you have a licence-permit raj and very heavy taxes, you get tax evasion, black-marketing, and corruption.

Q. *Are things now moving back?*

A. Yes, undoubtedly, but only since Mr Rajiv Gandhi came. During the whole of the last 30 or 35 years, the business world was suspect. To a large extent yes, deservedly so. Knowing all the black money that has been made. But the private sector was not trusted and everything was thrust on the public sector.

Q. *You don't see any benefits of having created this public sector?*

A. Assets were created. But the time they took to blossom, the lack of return...

Q. *You think controls and political corruption went together?*

A. We know that enormous fortunes were made, enormous sums were sent abroad. During those 30 years, I haven't heard of a single businessman who was sent to jail.

Q. *So you don't criticise V.P. Singh's cracking down on corrupt elements?*

A. No, this must be done in a dignified and fair way. What happened to Kirloskar was an outrage on human dignity.

Q. *How about the Voltas case? This was one of your companies.*

A. These are big companies. It's possible at various levels. Sales people are told to sell more. There's always a reason for this, I think. Voltas is a clean company, it's a part of the Tatas. If they've done something wrong, why? Voltas makes air-conditioners. The Government charged heavy excise duty on air-conditioners made in the organised sector and on the smaller sector no duty at all, or not much duty. And in a very competitive market. So what do we do? Close down or sell? So they try and find some way in without breaking the law...their lawyers advised them, that's how it is done.

Q. *In the Voltas case, the lawyers had said that this would be contravening the law, but the company went ahead.*

A. Well, I don't know. (Tata Sons Director S.A. Sabavala: The chairman of Voltas contradicted the finance minister's statement in the Rajya Sabha; that was totally incorrect.) But why do these things happen? Because laws put people in the

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position of saying: all right, we're going into liquidation or compete. This does not involve moral turpitude...

Q. To what extent have you achieved what you set out to achieve in industry?

A. I must confess that I've been very frustrated. When I was young I was an angry young man: we were under foreign rule, people were oppressed. Now I'm an angry old man because of all the opportunities that have been missed.

Q. This has been your biggest frustration?

A. Yes of course. And even on things that were not business. I was the first in India 35 years ago to sound the alarm on the population. I made a speech. I was wrapped on the knuckles, whom do you think by? Nehru. His words will always ring in my ears: "Nonsense, J. A large population is the greatest source of strength of any nation." And after that, we've added 350 million people.

Q. Didn't you argue with him?

A. You don't argue with Jawaharlal. He didn't want to discuss it. But the interesting thing was I was a good friend of his. He trusted me. He knew I admired him. But he knew I disagreed with all his economic policies, and I even didn't agree with his foreign policy. I felt that Krishna Menon and others like that were pro-Soviet. So I never was able thereafter to discuss economic matters.

Q. Did you try?

A. Yes. He and Mrs Gandhi later developed this similar little polite way of telling me to shut up. Jawaharlal, when I started to bring up the subject of economic policy, would turn around and look out of the window. Mrs Gandhi did something else.

Q. She doodled?

A. Yes, she doodled. Doodling I didn't mind so much. She started picking up envelopes, cutting open the envelopes and pulling out letters. It was a polite indication that she was bored.

Q. That's not very polite.

A. Well, never mind. Once she got angry...I was talking, she was picking up envelopes, and Russi Mody whispered loudly to me: "I think she's bored." And she said, "No please go on, I'm listening very carefully." But I had a good relationship, very friendly. Rajiv would have been different. But now I am an old man of 82. Rajiv is a young man; naturally, he wants to talk to young people.

Q. Does Mr Ratan Tata see him quite frequently?

A. Yes, that's right. But I've never had that opportunity. All these years since freedom, no one in the Government of India, any of the prime ministers, ever came to me, or sent for me, and said, J, what do you think? Just this question. The only time I was not frustrated, funnily enough, was with T.T. Krishnamachari.

Q. Why?

A. He was in many ways a terrible man, very authoritarian. But he was the only one who ignored this socialism thing and did what he thought was right. He's the one who encouraged TELCO to manufacture trucks. He almost instructed Tata Steel to put in another million tonnes, double capacity, in 1954.

Q. You and G.D. Birla are the two great personalities in Indian business. What did you think of him?

A. We never got together in anything. Except that I recognised that this was a thinking man and a man of vision.

Q. He was so different from you. How did you see him in his role, his genius?

> **"Both Nehru and Mrs Gandhi developed polite ways of telling me to shut up. Jawaharlal would look out of the window. Mrs Gandhi doodled, or cut open envelopes and pulled out letters."**

A. I don't think that I'm anyone to criticise his system or his approach to business life. But we know the ethical standards of some people or some groups or some communities are different from others. His family prospered. Birla became almost as big as Tata.

The Congress party needed funds, and we'd do it openly. But those who paid more, who paid beyond the need, got the rewards. And we were not among those.

Q. Would you put Reliance Industries in the same category?

A. I don't know enough about it. He (Dhirubhai Ambani) has tremendous drive, tremendous capability, tremendous novelty of ideas. I respect that. But I don't know enough. It seems that too much has been done too quickly. And my view has been the same that the Government ultimately acted upon, on this question of converting non-convertible debentures. Things of that kind, I felt, were wrong. But I have no particular views.

Q. What would you like to do now?

A. I'm 82. I'm still group chairman. I'll help the group to stay united and to follow Jamshedji Tata's ideals.

Q. Do you see the group breaking up? There are only two or three Tatas...

A. There's no family really. But I don't see the group breaking up at all. However independent TISCO, TELCO or Tata Chemicals are, there is an advantage in belonging to a group with such a high reputation. It's something that's worth it, to make a Tata product.

Q. Your companies have strong, independent chairmen. If it's your personality that binds the group together...

A. Well, some people say that, but I don't think...Mr Moolgaokar is the creator of the modern TELCO. His way of management is strongly independent. Sometimes I wished he would consult me more, but it was working so well, and this was the way to get the best out of him.

Q. Talking of your group's traditions, there have been charges of insider trading in Tata Tea shares.

A. I had made H.N. Sethna of the Atomic Energy Commission, chairman of TOMCO, which had investments in tea. It needed money, I was abroad and Sethna sold some investments that were not specific to TOMCO. We sold a tiny percentage of the capital of Tata Tea. There was an uproar in Calcutta, that the Tatas were playing the market. When I came back I sent for Sethna and he said, frankly I didn't know...I said, you might have consulted me. That's all.

Q. Why did you pick Mr Ratan Tata as your heir apparent by making him chairman of Tata Industries?

A. Mr Ratan Tata is a young man with a young mind, and he said, "Let's make use of Tata Industries, let's sponsor new industries. It bears a good name, it's a good instrument." So I said, "Yes, you go ahead and be chairman of it."

Q. You were not signalling that he would be your successor as chairman of Tata Sons, the mother company?

A. It can be interpreted in any way. But my successor as what? When I die, or if I retire, the chairman of Tata Sons will be appointed by the board. I can't appoint.

Q. You haven't indicated your preference?

A. Well, we know that I think that this is a young man with modern ideas...

Q. Do you see him already slipping into that role?

A. Yes, I think he's doing what he can. He's introducing new ideas, new strategic planning. He's brought new business to us. And I think he'll do well.

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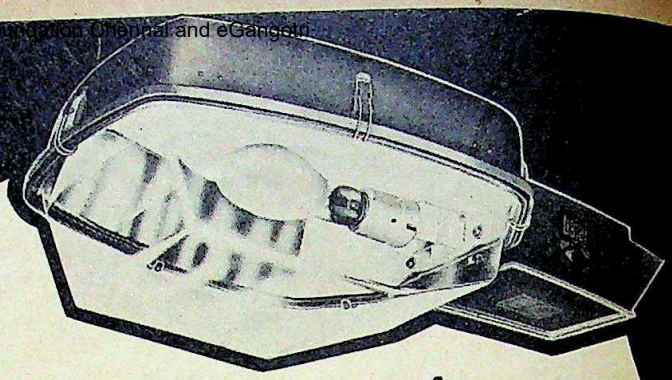

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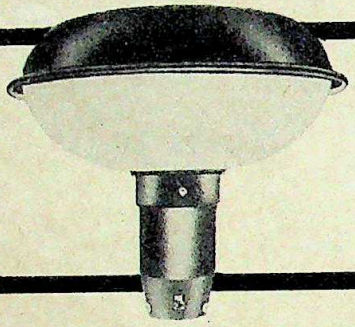

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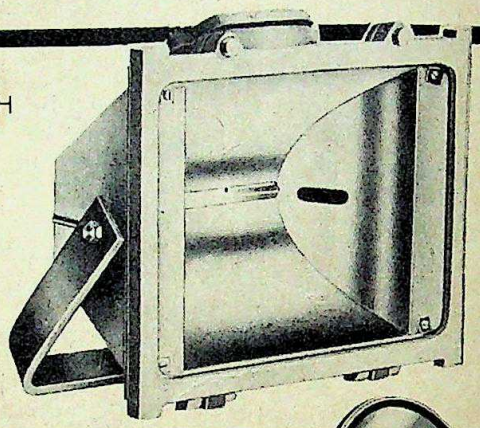

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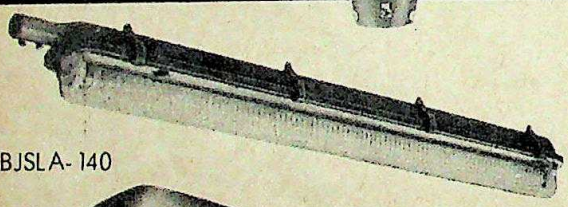

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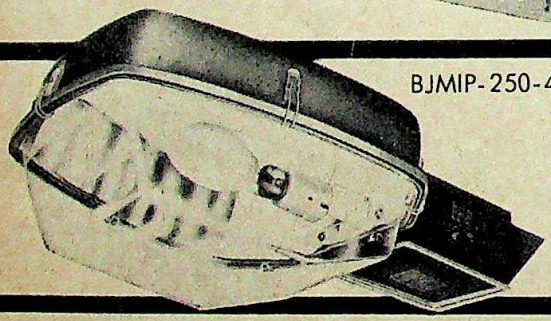

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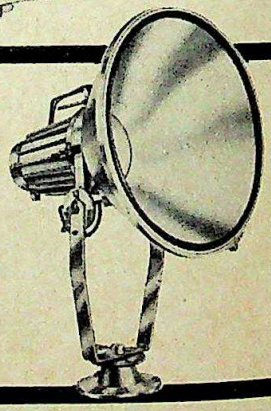

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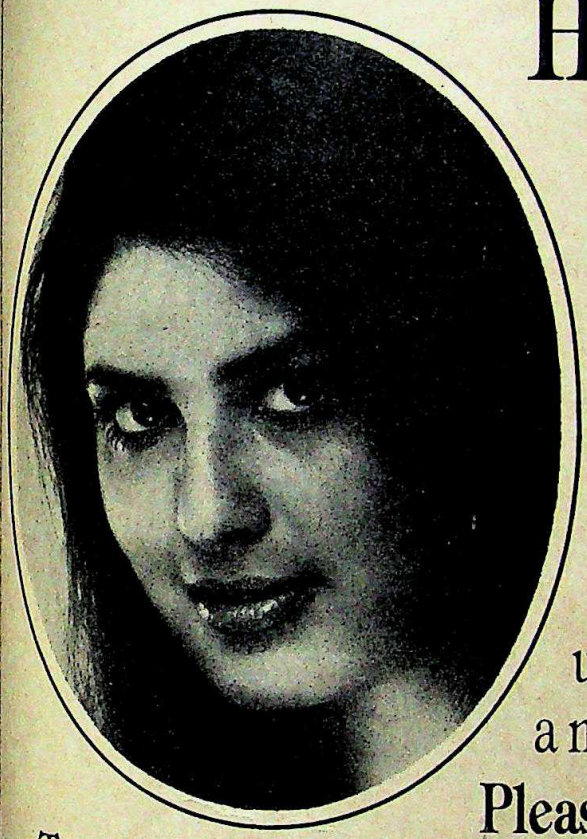

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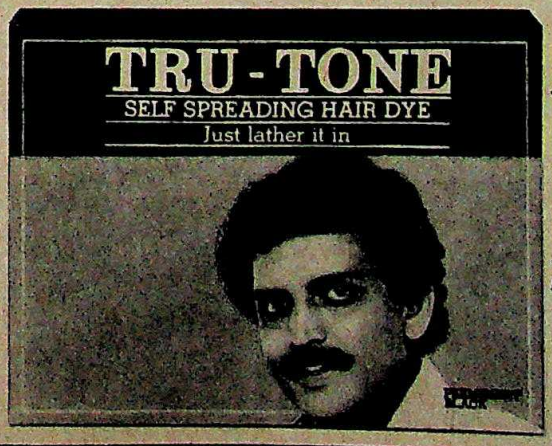

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MAHARISHI MAHESH YOGI

Coming Home

FOR Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, self-styled messiah of world peace and leading exponent of Transcendental Meditation(TM), the day was crucial. He had chosen to announce that he was shifting the capital of his World Government of the Age of Enlightenment from the snow-clad Alps of Seelisburg in Switzerland to the plains of the New Okhla Industrial Development Area (NOIDA) on the outskirts of Delhi. It was also the day that he was to launch his global programme for world peace.

But the importance of the occasion seemed to have been lost on the 5,000-strong crowd which had assembled last fortnight in the brightly lit Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in New Delhi. They had gathered to witness the first international yogic flying competition in the Age of Enlightenment and to see if man could fly as the title of the competition promised.

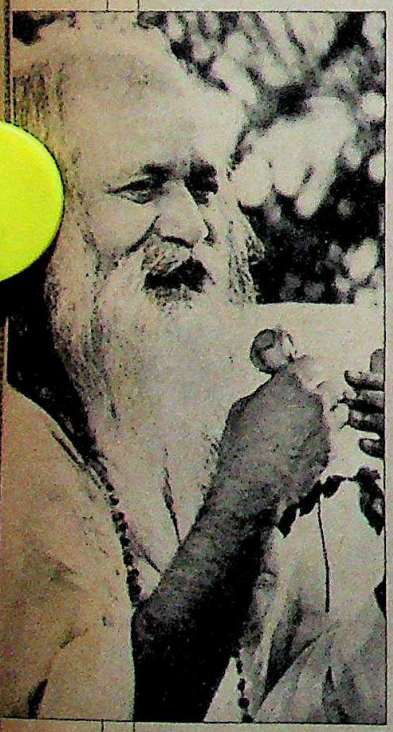
An expectant hush descended over the audience as six participants took up the classic lotus position at one end of a 50-metre foam mattress. Then at the tinkle of a bell, they hopped like rabbits to the other end. Some rose hardly four inches and the others at best a foot. "What we were demonstrating is only the first stage of yogic flying in which the participants can only hop " explained a portly Bevan Morris, Minister of Education and Enlightenment in Maharishi's World Government. He added that so far no one had been able to demonstrate the second stage (floating) and the ultimate stage (flying).

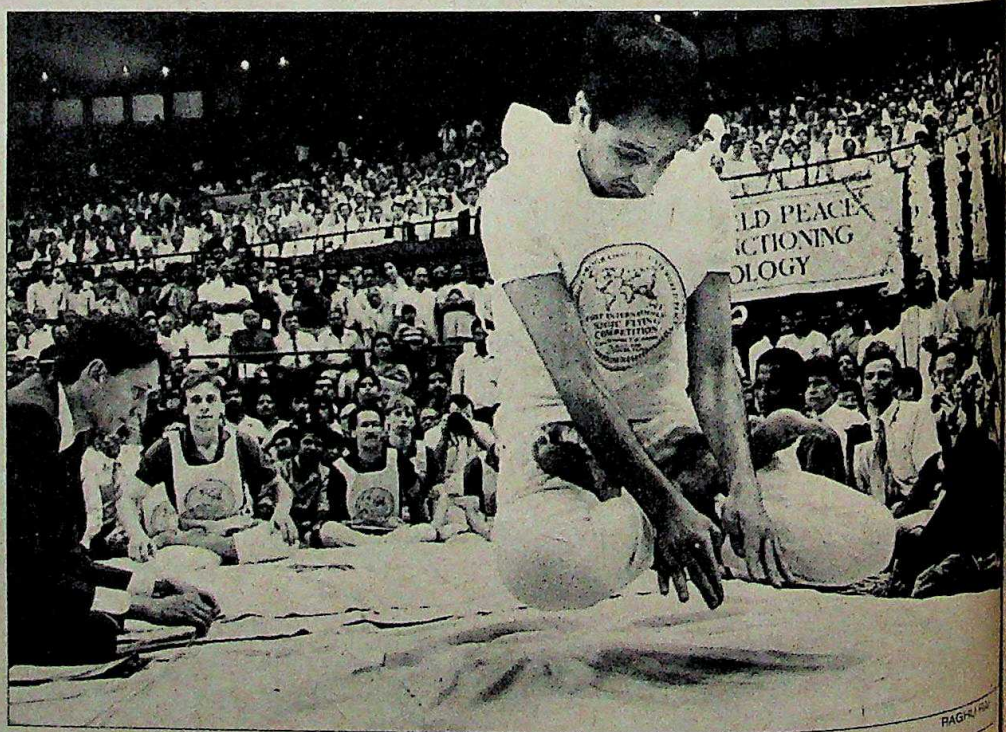
But if the Maharishi failed in his first attempt to convince a sceptical Indian populace, he is not giving up easily. In his closely guarded "capital", stretching over 600 acres, the Maharishi has been laying elaborate plans to entrench his movement firmly in India. Maharishinagar, as it is called, is a hive of activity. He has already started a school with 1,200 students to train them in the Vedic sciences. A 1,200-bed Ayurveda hospital for treating patients and conducting research in traditional medicines is almost complete. And also coming up is a giant fibre-glass roofed hall, appropriately called the "Flying hall," for 7,000 people to practice TM.

But seated on a deer skin topped chair, bedecked with his favourite marigolds, the balding Maharishi, with his Santa-Claus beard, is looking far, far beyond. Although his followers claim that "he has no pockets to keep money", in the last five years his organisation has been busy buying up land in all parts of the country and now has 22 ashrams apart from 75 centres for training people in TM. Apart from that it has two colleges and 11 schools. So quietly has his multinational organisation been buying up land, hiring buildings and opening schools and hospitals that its total investments have grown to an estimated Rs 50-crore in the country.

Immediately after his unpublicised return to the country in November 1984, the Maharishi has been busy trying to spread his movement. Last year, he launched what he called the Ajay Bharat programme for teaching TM to school students. By December his organisation had taught 7,000 students in 200 schools spread all over the country. He has also

Last fortnight's yogic flying competition was a renewed effort by the Maharishi to shift his operations to India and spread TM to every nook and taluk of the country.





The Maharishi (left); and yogic 'flying'

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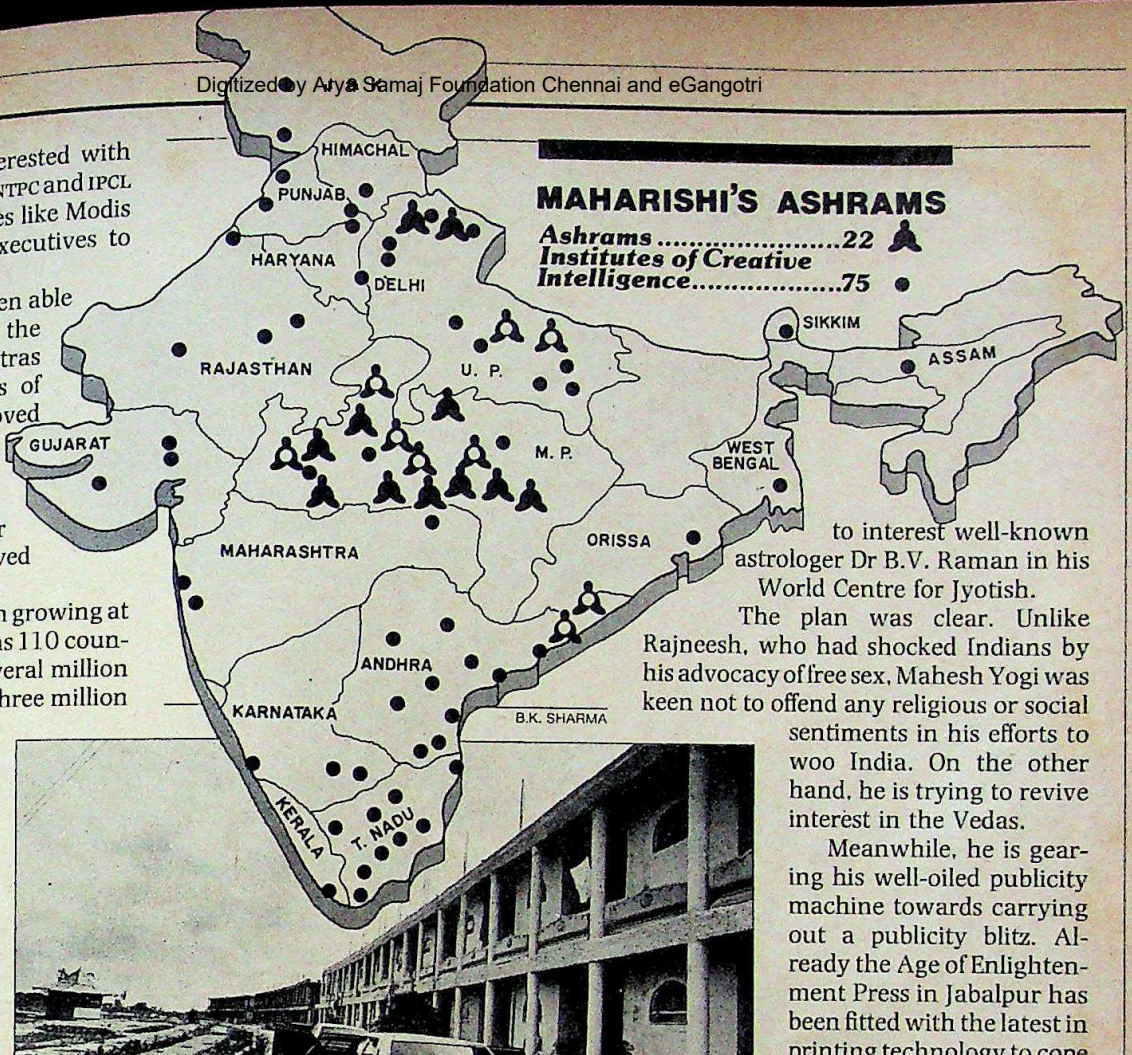

B.K. SHARMA

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Maharishinagar: an expanding empire

not the Indian industry interested with public-sector companies like NTPC and IPCL apart from private companies like Modis and Escorts getting their executives to enroll in TM programmes.

In fact, Maharishi has been able to successfully market TM the world over. Using mantras gleaned from the teachings of Patanjali, the Maharishi proved that by meditating a person can transcend the thought process and reach a state of "alert restfulness." Regular meditation reportedly improved one's personal life.

His global empire has been growing at a fantastic rate and now spans 110 countries with assets totalling several million dollars. Already more than three million people have been trained in TM and the movement has more than 20,000 teachers on its payroll. A physics graduate from the University of Allahabad, Mahesh Yogi moved west in 1959 and took America by storm through his TM technique.

The TM movement caught on so rapidly that soon American business schools and even prisons were running courses. Understanding that the "coin of the times" was science, the Maharishi attracted eminent scientists to study the effects of TM and, in the process, set up 10 universities spread across the world. Convinced that TM was an answer to world peace, he established the World Government in the Age of Enlightenment in 1976 and seven years later at Geneva gave the world "a taste of utopia" by assembling 7,000 TM practitioners and asking them to meditate for three weeks. Although the Maharishi's followers claimed that the world behaved more positively in those weeks, few believed them.

Last fortnight's renewed effort to bring world peace was also meant to launch his plan to spread TM to every nook and taluk of the country. Called Adarsh or Invincible Bharat, it is the most ambitious of his projects. In the next five years, the Maharishi plans to set up centres in 5,000 revenue blocks in the country each having a 15-room Ayurveda hospital apart from 10 rooms to teach 300 children TM.

Already 50 such centres have come up. Bramachari Shailendra, president of the Adarsh Bharat programme and a Delhi University physics graduate, said: "By this we hope we could train 10,000 people in TM and make India an invincible force in the process." Predicts Dean R.Draznin, a TM teacher: "It would be like a great big Eureka. Maharishi would be ringing the bell of pure knowledge in the country." They hope to raise the Rs 120 crore needed for this through donations.

But while moving to India Maharishi has been careful to keep a low profile shunning press interviews and getting leading religious leaders and Ayurveda practitioners to lend credence to his movement. For the flying competition held last fortnight, Maharishi kept away and it was Shri Jagad Guru Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath who presided. He had Dr Brihaspati Dev Triguna, president, All India Ayurveda Congress, to inaugurate his World Centre for Perfect Health. And for developing astrology he has been able to interest well-known astrologer Dr B.V. Raman in his World Centre for Jyotish.

The plan was clear. Unlike Rajneesh, who had shocked Indians by his advocacy of free sex, Mahesh Yogi was keen not to offend any religious or social sentiments in his efforts to woo India. On the other hand, he is trying to revive interest in the Vedas.

Meanwhile, he is gearing his well-oiled publicity machine towards carrying out a publicity blitz. Already the Age of Enlightenment Press in Jabalpur has been fitted with the latest in printing technology to cope with the movement's mounting propaganda.

In May this year he released a video recording where he outlined his plan to make India "the supreme power of the world" and reportedly circulated more than 1,000 copies, some even to government officials. But in his efforts to shift to India with his men and money he has already run into trouble. Maharishinagar has now become a subject of dispute with officials in charge of NOIDA sending him a legal notice for acquiring land that had been earlier earmarked as the green belt area.

But these would hardly deter the Maharishi's move to India which is seen by his followers as his final attempt to speed up the process of attaining world peace. Already touching 65, the Maharishi realises that he has little time left to realise his goal. As he told his followers last fortnight: "Time demands the rise of the supreme power of coherence in world consciousness. Every nation will rise in fulfillment. Every government will experience real freedom." Right now India would be quite happy if Maharishi brought some peace in the strife-torn Punjab or riot-hit Ahmedabad.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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DRUGS

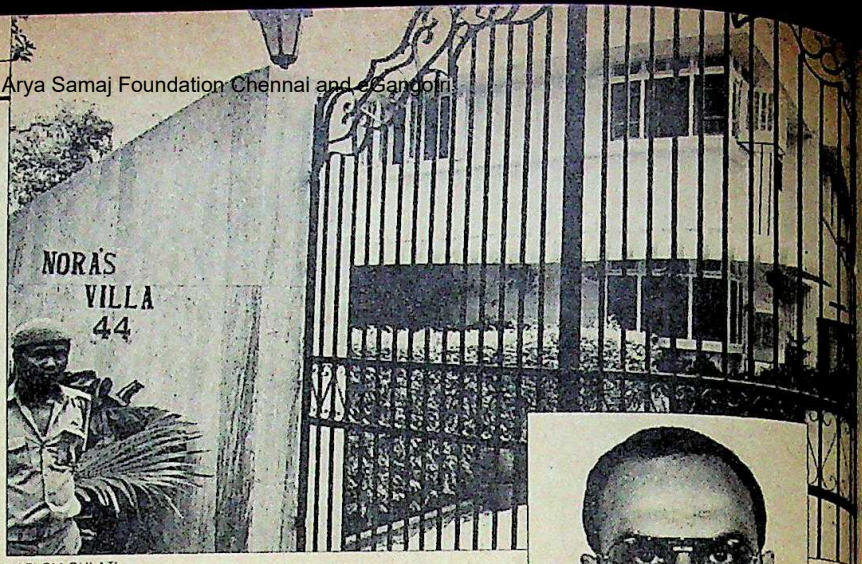
Rich Haul

FOR OVER two years the Delhi police had waited for this moment. And Sub-Inspector Rajinder Bakshi was not going to let it slip away. He rammed his car into the olive-green Maruti manoeuvring its way out of the Vikram Hotel parking lot in south Delhi. Following behind, Inspector L.S. Brar timed his move to perfection, jumping out of his car with the pistol cocked. The balding, tall and dark figure running out of the now battered Maruti had no chance.

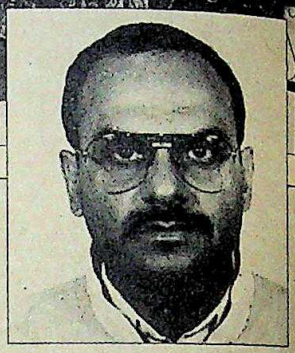
Thus ended yet another chapter in the saga of Ashok Solomon, Delhi's widely suspected white collar drug don. For months the police had looked for a scrap of evidence to nail him and despite a thick Interpol dossier which was circulated among the police top brass, it had been impossible to link him to any recent crime. Now, some of that evidence was visible: 100 kg of hashish packed in Pakistani newspapers lying in the car.

Within hours he was leading the investigators to his factory shed in Okhla where they found another 327 kg cache. "This is perhaps our biggest catch in a long time. Not so much in terms of the amount of hashish caught as in the sense that we have caught one of the major brains behind the drug racket," said a beaming Maxwell Pereira Kamath, the south Delhi deputy commissioner of police. Solomon promptly admitted that the seized hashish was meant to be shipped to Europe and the US in gift packages to be sent through a handling agent. It was part of a 900 kg consignment sent to him from Pakistan across the Punjab border.

But even more than the magnitude of the drug haul, what made the story so headline-worthy was Solomon's background. A second-year economic honours drop-out from St Stephen's college in 1968, Solomon is an old acquaintance of Delhi police and a familiar figure in the capital's social jet-set, living in his mother's imposing house in the exclusive locality of Golf Links and owning a number of private companies and boutiques. The poor drop-out who began his career by driving a DLY taxi in 1968 has come a long way. This, the late '60s, was the time when many American soldiers returned from Vietnam via India and they needed hashish. Solomon came in contact with them and his career began in right earnest. A year later he was arrested for forging a cheque on behalf of Jeanne Daniel, a European woman, by the Defence Colony police. Four years later he had moved into the big league: he was caught in connection with the recovery of 400 kg of hashish. But he secured bail, jumped it and was back in jail under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act. The hide-and-seek game continued with Solomon succeeding in securing his release from the Delhi High Court and then, after his arrest for illegally carrying about DM 3 lakh, defying a COFEPOSA warrant during the Emergency for seven months till he was able to procure a new passport under the name of Dev Raj. He escaped to the US but could not stay quiet for too long. In Minneapolis, the Drug Enforcement Authority intercepted a 600-kg hashish parcel from India addressed to him and Solomon was in the Minneapolis prison on a 10-year sentence later remitted to six. Even after he returned to India in 1983 and apparently engaged himself in business, suspicion of his remaining in the drug racket remained. "My husband is a victim of his past. He always knew he would never be allowed to live a normal honest life," his wife claims.



HARI OM GULATI



In the drug haul, what made the story so headline-worthy was Solomon's background.

Solomon's residence in Delhi: affluent

Solomon went into business with gusto: his garment and real estate firm, Chintel India, cashed in on the stock-market boom and saw its Rs 1 crore share issue oversubscribed by 60 per cent. For Clarex India, his television manufacturing company, he had already sold promoters' quota shares worth Rs 13 lakh. Among documents recovered from Solomon are three cheque-books, belonging to G.S. Sethi, Harbhajan Kaur Sethi and Mahesh Sharma. Each leaf in the cheque-books is blank but signed by the account-holder.

While the police have called in the Income Tax Department for help, Solomon's family is crying foul. "I will not say that my husband had nothing to do with drugs in the past. But now he has been framed. Having seen an American prison for six years he knows the real meaning of the word freedom. He could never have indulged in crime again," says Chandralekha.

The police deny the frame-up charge and, instead, are trying to crack the burgeoning drug business in the capital. Police Commissioner Ved Marwah points out with concern that the hashish seizures over the past 12 months have exceeded the 6,000-kg mark while the figure for 1985 was just about 400 kg. Even more worrisome was the discovery that the drug trade is now being run by the super-rich who have influence in political circles. A fact that was obvious from the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence look-out notice on Harnam Singh Toofan, an influential transporter of the capital, whose parties in the past had been attended by President Zail Singh and Home Minister Buta Singh, after 1,400 kg of hashish was recovered from a Mehrauli farm house belonging to his alleged business partner K.M. Virmani.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA

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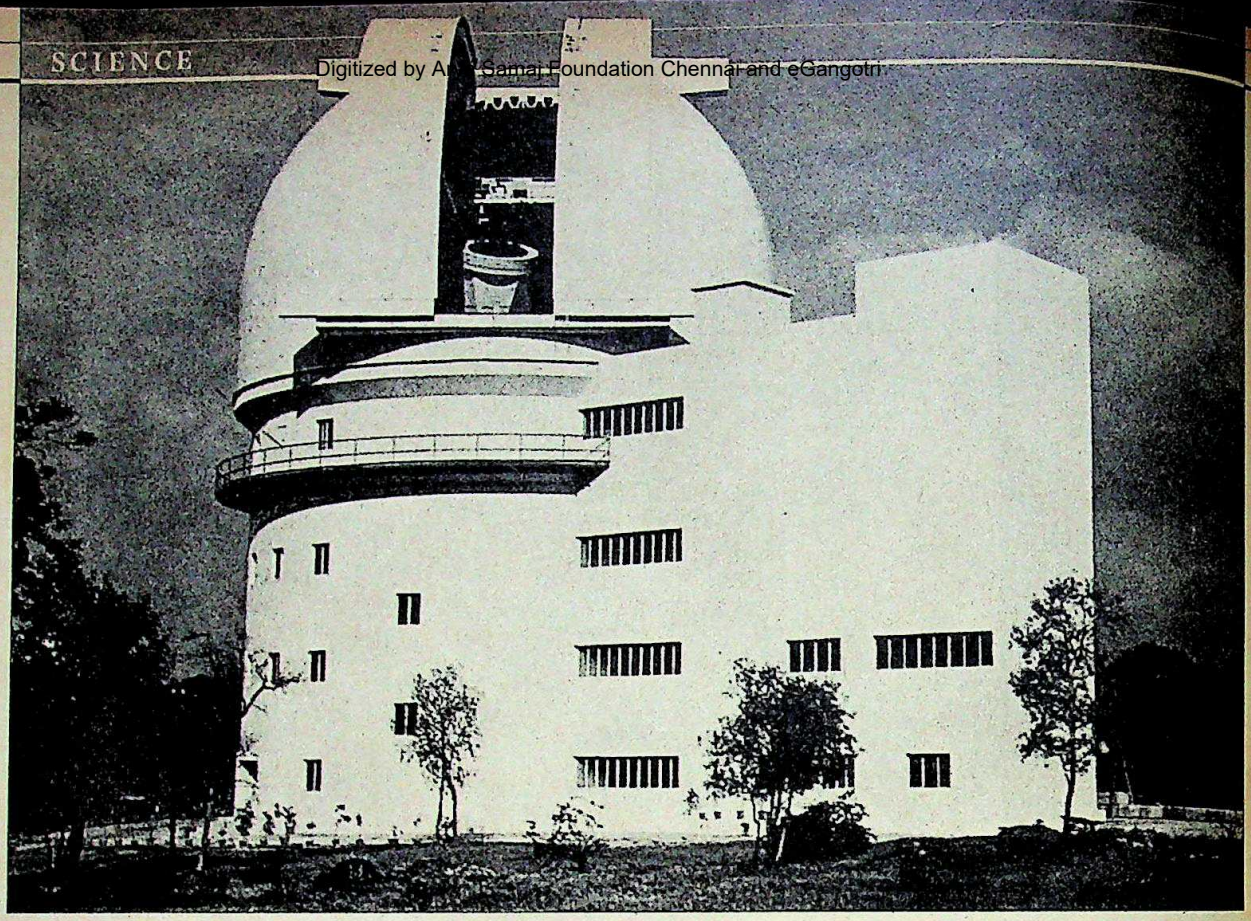


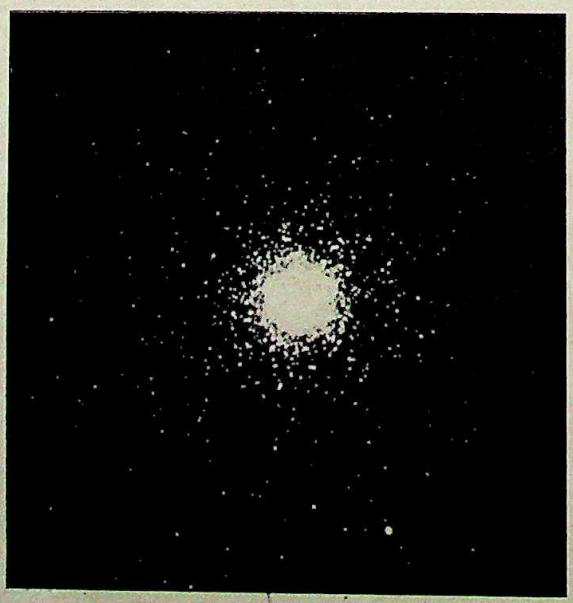
The 93-inch Kavalur telescope: Asia's largest

KAVALUR OBSERVATORY

India's Eye to the Sky

FROM a distance, the Vainu Bappu telescope appears like a giant thimble against the tapestry of a moonlit sky in Kavalur in Tamil Nadu. Inside the glistening aluminium dome, the telescope —120 tonnes of finely-crafted steel suspended on a horseshoe and steel yoke—resembles a medieval sling-shot. Through the prime focus lens, its 93-inch reflector, the largest in Asia, looks like a giant shaving mirror. Crouched inside the prime focus cage, a cylindrical tube three feet in diameter, Indian astrophysicists are suddenly finding themselves light years ahead in their quest to explore earth's final frontier—space.

Built by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) at a cost of Rs 6.5 crore, the telescope is the largest in Asia and the 18th-most powerful optical telescope in the world. Named after the late Vainu Bappu, the legendary Indian astrophysicist and a former director of IIA, whose brain-child it was, the 93- inch telescope is twice as powerful as any telescope built in the country. Says Dr J.K. Bhattacharya, IIA's bespectacled director: "It's an Indian eye to the universe and would enable us to work in the frontiers of astronomical research."



Globular star cluster pictured by the telescope

The giant "Indian eye" is a triumph of indigenous ingenuity. The technicians manning the control panel below depress a button on the computer console and the shutters of the dome slide noiselessly open—leaving a slice of the night sky visible. The telescope moves with a gentle, floating motion as it tracks a heavenly body and the giant dome rotates with a low hum. A few coordinates typed into the control system and the telescope tracks Alpha Aqlulae, 35 light years away—a blob of flame blue energised by a thousand twinkling specks of light.

A little later, Mu Cygni, which appears through the naked eye as a bluish green star, can clearly be seen as two stars rotating around each other. And then, in response to another

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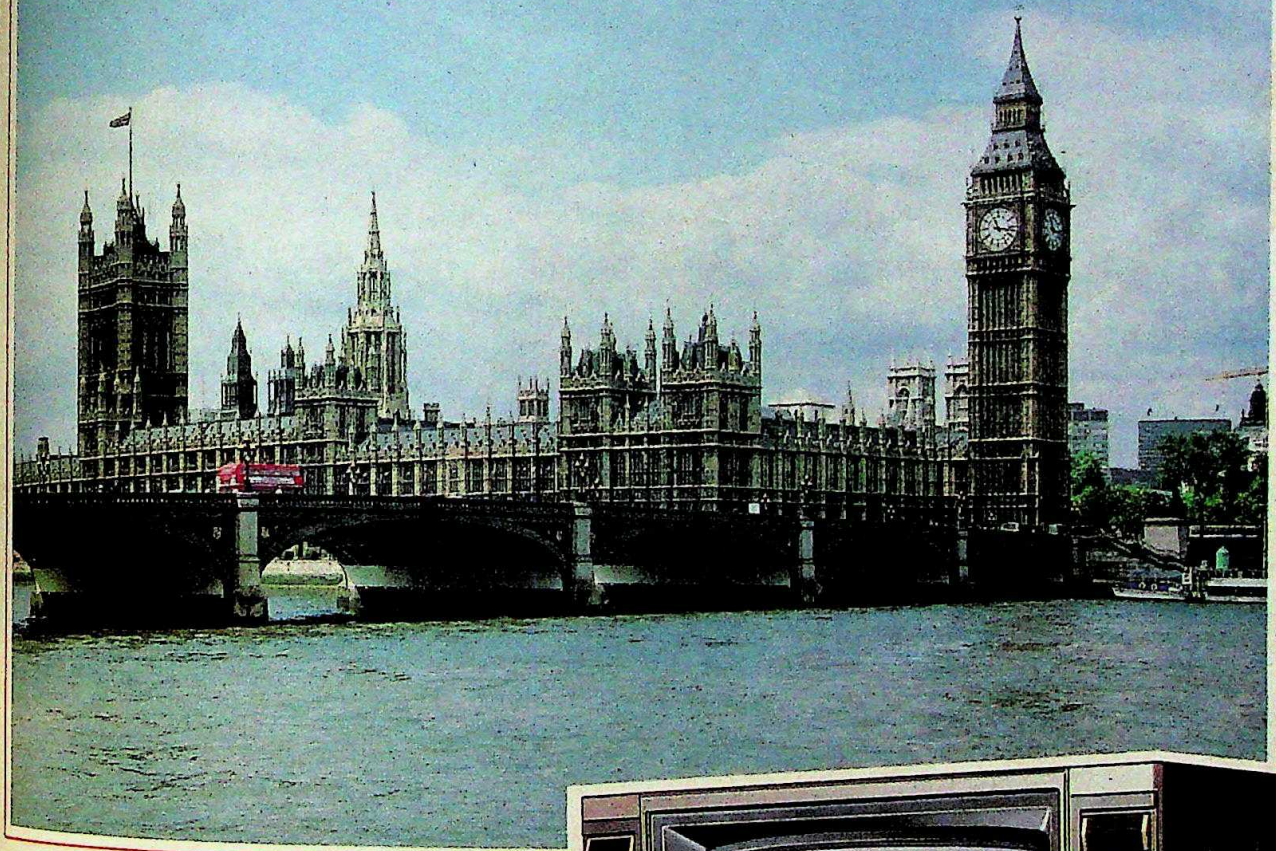

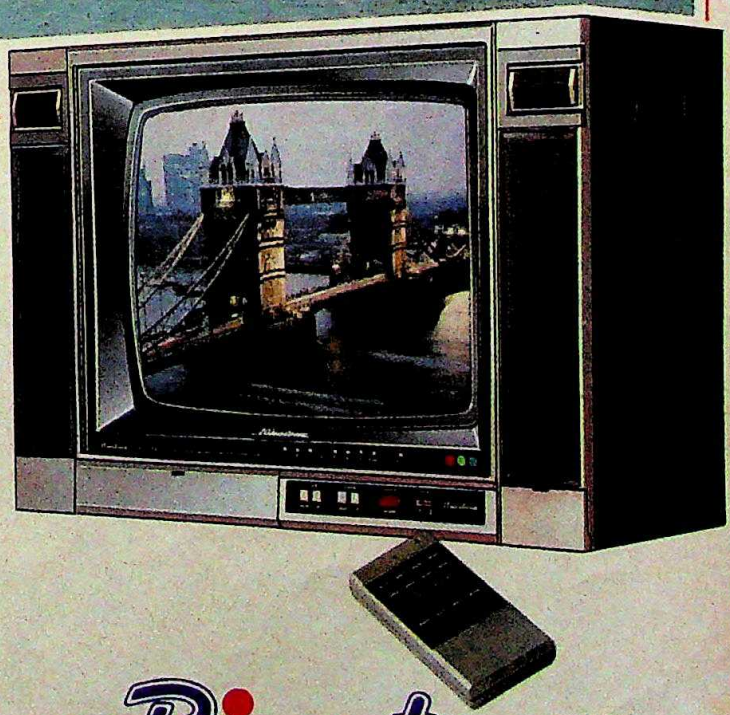

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Building the Colbun Dam involved a slight problem:

The site is hit by an earthquake once every 15 days.

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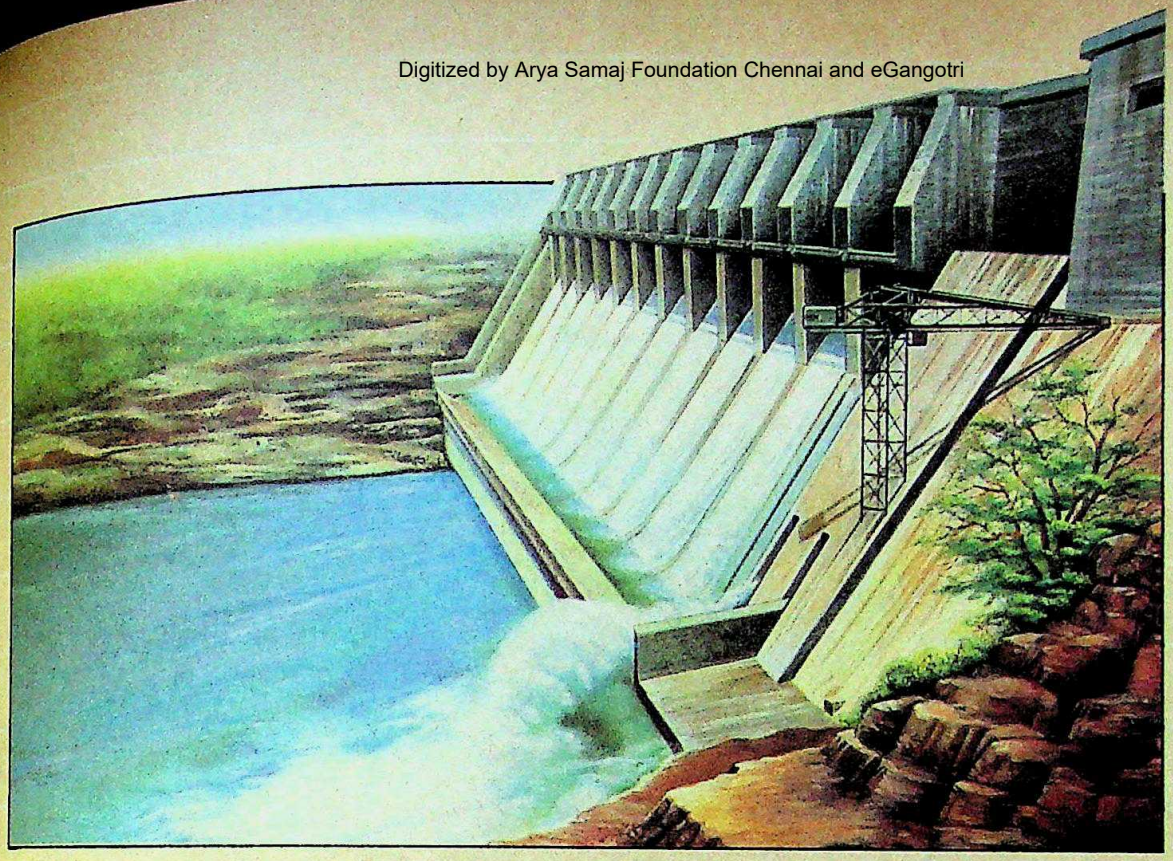

Designing Chile's 500 metre long Colbun Dam was something of an engineer's nightmare. Because, being in an earthquake-prone area, the Dam was subject to serious and persistent vibration – which would naturally cause dangerous misalignments in the assemblies supporting its flow-control gates.

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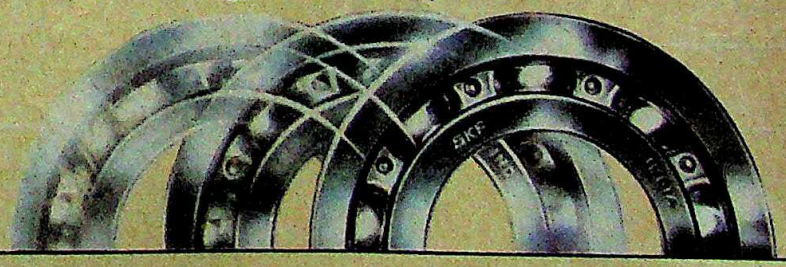

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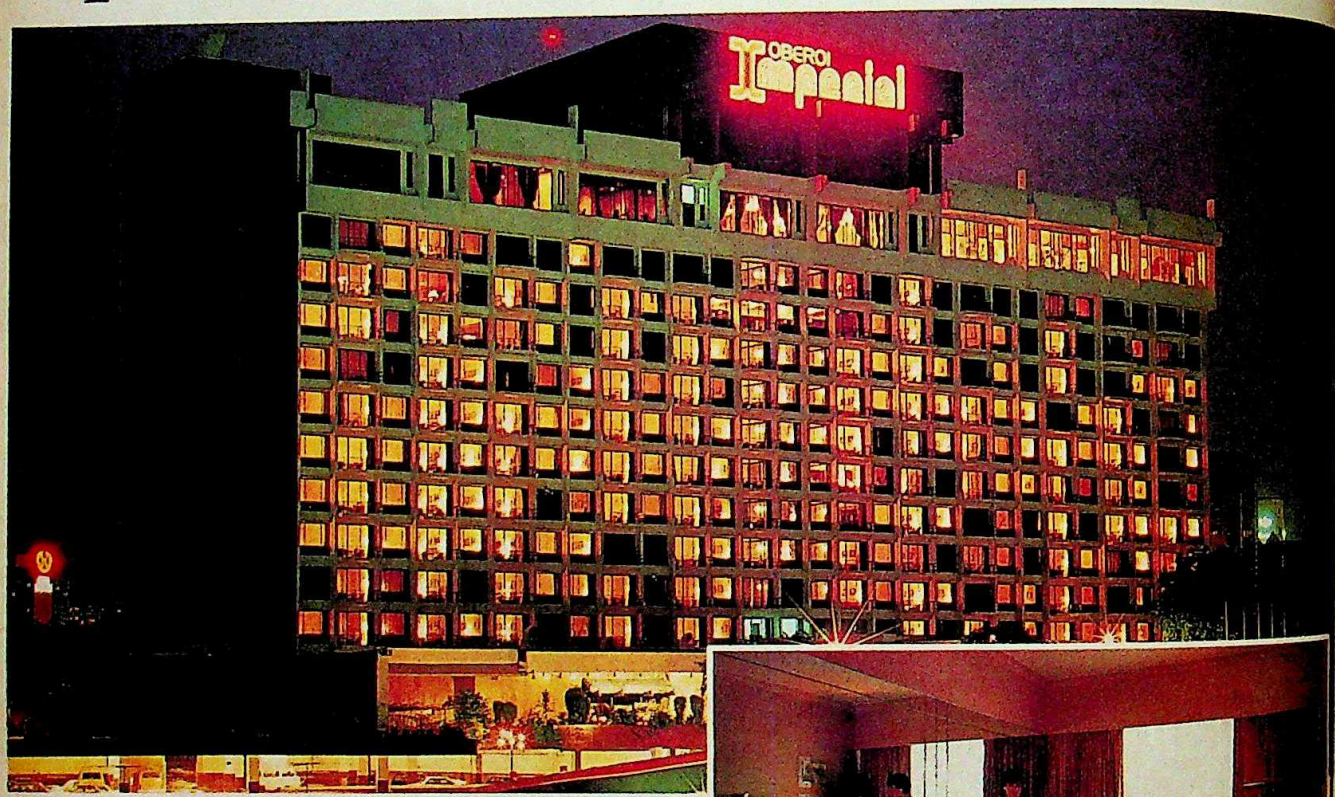

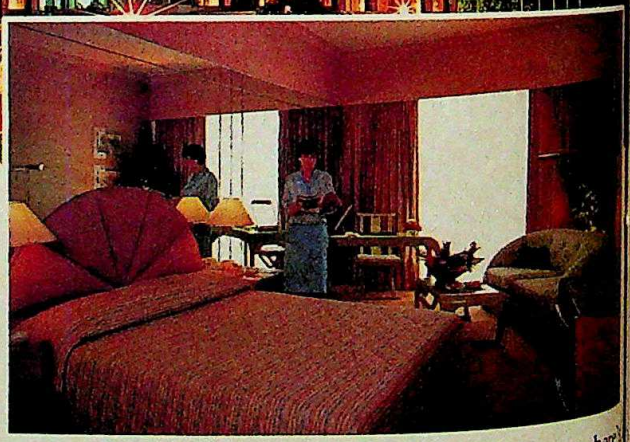

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command, the telescope starts scanning objects trillions and trillions of kilometres away, almost above the centre of the galaxy, about 9,500 light years away. M15, a globular cluster of stars so densely packed that its core looks like a fuzzy glowing ball, comes into view. Any spaceship sent from earth at present rocket speeds would take more than a million years to reach it.

M15, Mu Cygni and Alpha Aqlulae are just some of the millions of stars in the Milky Way, apart from those in other galaxies, that the giant telescope now being readied for research would bring more clearly into focus for Indian astronomers to study. Already, astronomers have lined up a whole series of experiments, including:

- A study of the physics of quasars or quasi-stars found in other galaxies that emit very strong radio emissions
- Probing the star-forming areas in the Milky Way galaxy
- Looking at distant galaxies to determine their evolution and content
- Trying to discover what constitutes the chromosphere or outer layers of stars.

All this would make it the busiest telescope in the country and the institute has worked out that each night's viewing would cost Rs 40,000. Building the Bappu telescope itself was a mammoth task that took 10 years to complete. Its most essential components—the giant reflecting mirror, the yoke and the horseshoe on which it rests, and the mechanisms that control the movement of the telescope—created initial problems because of their sheer size. In the mirror, for instance, a ceramic circular reddish-brown blank having a diameter of 93 inches was imported from West Germany and then had to be ground and polished to precision thinner than a hair split several times. It took four years for scientists to obtain the right precision—after they set up special facilities in Bangalore to grind the mirror first with diamonds bits, then with glass and finally coating it with less than a millimetre thick aluminium foil to give it the reflecting surface. Such accuracy was necessary because even the slightest variation would distort the image.

The giant yoke and the horseshoe which holds up the telescope and enables it to swivel in any direction, had to be floated on two pads which had oil pumped in under high pressure to allow completely frictionless movement—making the telescope so sensitive that even the push of a little finger could move it. And control mechanisms had to be developed to ensure that the telescope moved with an accuracy of less than a micron. All this makes the telescope so powerful that it is able to define a 25 paise coin placed 40 km away. In space, it is able to pick up light from some of the faintest stars, both in the Milky Way and in other galaxies.

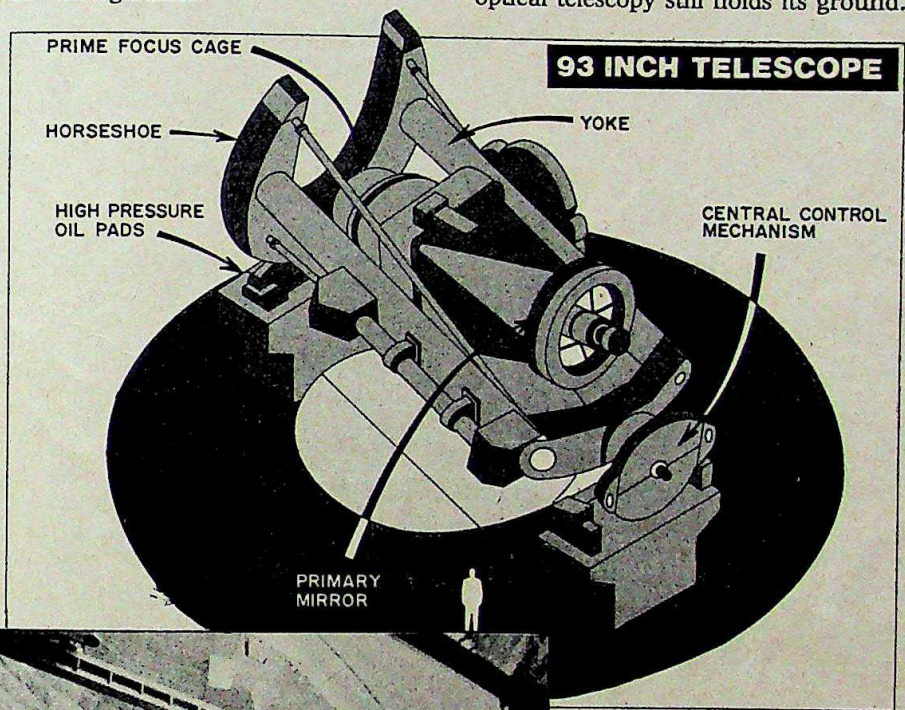
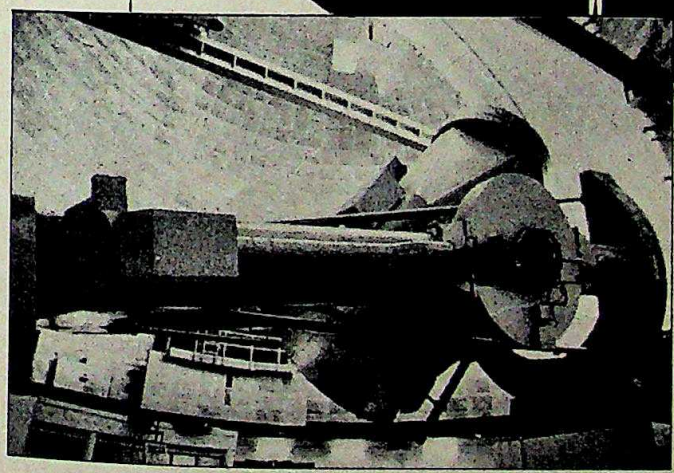


Diagram by B.K. SHARMA



Schematic diagram of the telescope (above): and on its yoke

The most crucial aspect in development terms is image recording. Astronomers no longer trust their eyes to observe heavenly objects. Photographic plates are still the most commonly-used technique to take pictures of faint objects. But these plates have only a 1 per cent efficiency for recording light from distant objects: the Bappu telescope, however, uses sensitive microchips called charge couple devices that are 50 times more efficient than plates. Exactly 1,85,440 of them are lined on a platform the size of a thumbnail and are able to pick up even very faint light rays and convert them into small electrical charges which are recorded in the form of digits. However unromantic it may seem, these digits are of prime interest to astronomers for finding variations that would give them clues about a star.

Although there has been tremendous progress in the field of what is called the "invisible bands" of the spectrum—ultra violet, infra-red and radiowaves—optical telescopy still holds its ground.

And, while the power of a telescope does make a difference, the individual ingenuity of the researchers is equally important and this is where Indian astronomers hope to score. Using the 40-inch telescope in Kavalur, Indian scientists were among the first to discover atmosphere on Ganymede, Jupiter's satellite, and the rings of Uranus. As Dr Bhattacharya says: "Till now we were handicapped but with the Bappu telescope, we will be able to study some of the faintest objects that our existing telescopes couldn't see." And hopefully, the 93-inch Indian eye peering into distant galaxies would give Indian researchers the edge they require to unravel some of the mysteries of the universe. —RAJ CHENGAPPA in Kavalur

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A natural for the corporate success.

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Executive Ladder

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COURT TRIALS

Historic Heroes

JUNE, 1908. Bombay. In the back, Tilak lies sleeping, oblivious of his flustered friends and colleagues in the front room. The police have come to arrest him. Tilak, dark, and intense-eyed, gets up with alacrity, as if waiting to go to jail.

1922, Sabarmati Ashram. A car drives up, the diffident and respectful British police officer tells Gandhi he has come to arrest him. Gandhi can't contain his mischievous little smile. This is the moment he was waiting for.

1928 Lahore. Bhagat Singh's parents regret that he never married. He replies: "My marriage will not take place in *ghulam* Hindustan. If it does, then death will be my bride and my funeral procession will be like a *shaheedon ki barat*.

Red Fort, 1945. Bhulabhai Desai visits the accused, Sehgal. He says: "If, in the course of the trial, our lives go, let them go. If death didn't come to us then (in Burma), it is not our fault."

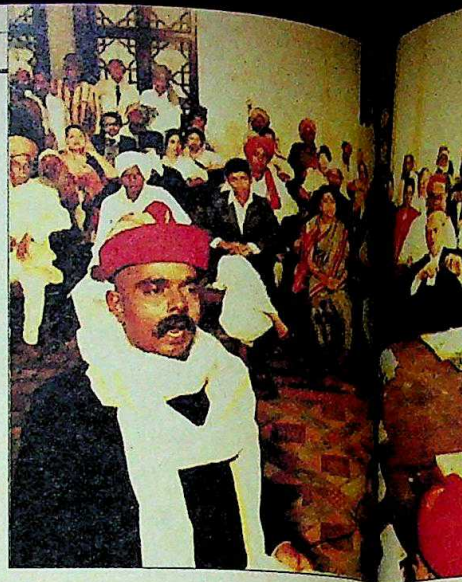
These men knew what they wanted; fear was alien to them. Now, Amal Allana's magnificent and well-researched 16-part series (*Raj se Swaraj*) on four famous court trials of pre-Independence India—to be televised shortly—will transport viewers to the times when ideals were not the prerogative of the foolish. Says Allana: "While doing these trials we were reliving history. We tried to understand what is happening today from a historical perspective.... After all, our political values have come from this period."

Director Allana

For TV viewers, history has been made a little easier: the personages from the drama of the independence movement come dramatically alive. Allana has recreated the court trials of Tilak, Gandhi, Bhagat Singh and Bose and the Indian National Army (INA) captains Dhillon, Sehgal and Shahnavaz Khan and also depicted both their characters and the events which led to the arrests.

It was not easy. Allana and her husband, Nissar Allana, the producer as well as the series' sets designer, worked on the project for nearly two years before filming began. There are over 50 locations; some in the very places where the event took place. They have worked together in theatre: Amal directed some outstanding plays, *Mahabhoj*, *Aashaadh Ka Ek Din*. Nissar did the set designs and both worked on Attenborough's *Gandhi*.

It started simply enough. Walking past an old bookshop in Pune, Allana came across Gouba's book on 20 famous trials and realised that they were ideal for TV. Foraging for facts and insights led her to Sehgal in Chandigarh and Dhillon in

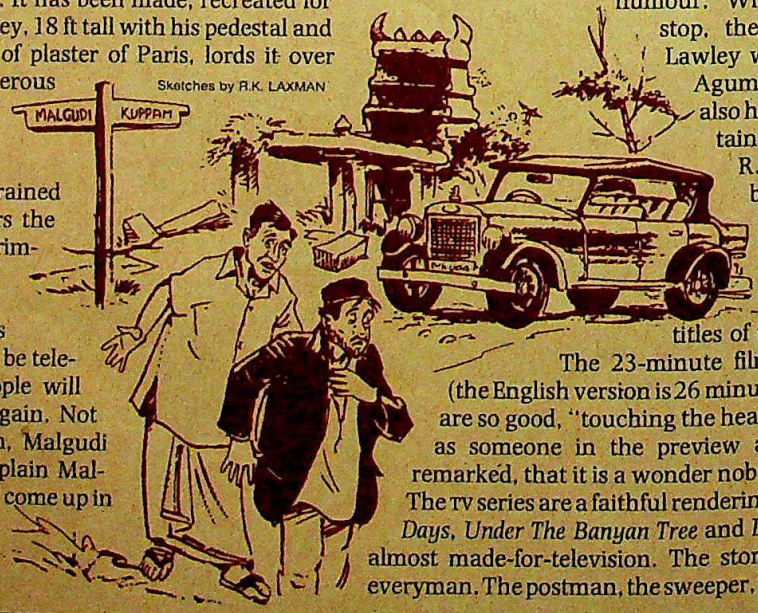


R.K. NARAYAN

Malgudi Days

MALGUDI does exist. It has been made, recreated for television. Mr Lawley, 18 ft tall with his pedestal and Rs 28,000 worth of plaster of Paris, lords it over Agumbe, a once-prosperous town in the middle of vibrant green forest country near Udipi. R.K. Narayan's little world ingrained in the minds of his readers the world over has been superimposed on Agumbe for *Malgudi Days*, a TV series which is based on his short stories and novels and will shortly be telecast. Agumbe and its people will never be quite the same again. Not only have Malgudi station, Malgudi hotel, Malgudi bank, and plain Malgudi signs on the main road come up in blue and red—causing some motorists believing themselves in Malgudi to take a few U-turns—but the people of Agumbe comprise half the cast of the series. Says the series' Director Shankar Nag: "We had the streets at our disposal....An old woman even came up to us when she saw Lawley and said that it was good that the British had come back. They certainly have a sense of humour. When puzzled motorists stop, they are often told that Lawley was the man who built Agumbe...." In fact, Agumbe also has a new, working fountain, courtesy the unit. And R.K. Narayan's younger brother, cartoonist R.K. Laxman, has immortalised Malgudi further in his drawings which are used in the titles of the series.

Sketches by R.K. LAXMAN



The 23-minute film (35mm) adaptations (the English version is 26 minutes) of Narayan's stories are so good, "touching the heart more than the head", as someone in the preview audience last fortnight remarked, that it is a wonder nobody thought of it before. The TV series are a faithful rendering of stories from *Malgudi Days*, *Under The Banyan Tree* and *Lawley Road*. Narayan's almost made-for-television. The stories are about any and everyman. The postman, the sweeper, the driver, the shepherd

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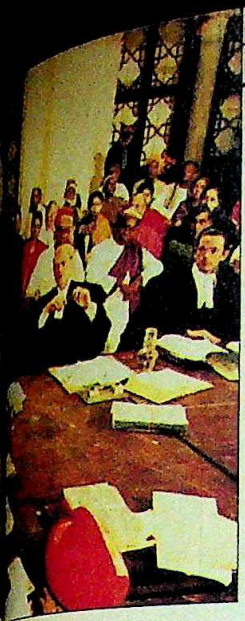
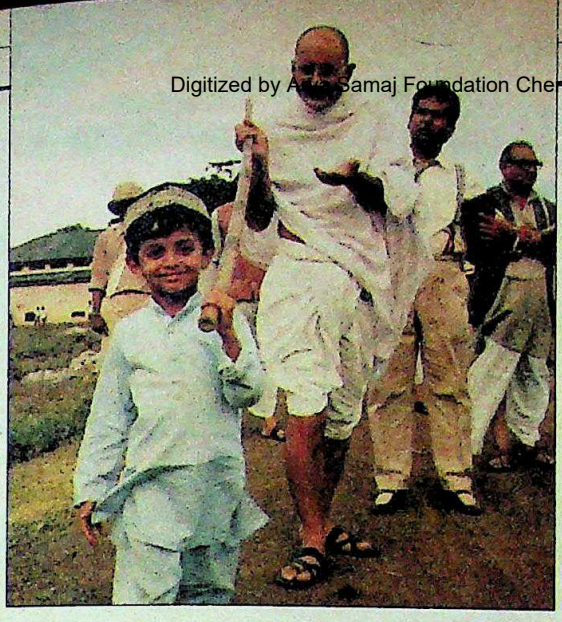
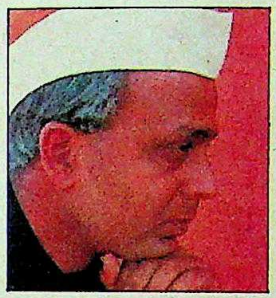




(Clockwise) Sadashiv Amrapurkar as Tilak; Anupam Kher as Gandhi; Ravi Khandwilkar as Bose; and Pramod Moutho as Nehru



remote farm in Madhya Pradesh. Details of the trials as well as the small details to add versimilitude, such as what their wives wore during the trials, were provided by them. It is these touches that make these trials memorable.

Each trial is treated differently. Says Allana: "For (Amrapurkar's) Tilak I wanted it to be urban and claustrophobic. I wanted dark sombre colours.... There is Tilak and his friends." The Gandhi episode is different—out in the open, airy and light. Even the music is different (Louis Banks has done a marvellous job). Anupam Kher plays Gandhi like Sarojini Naidu's Mickey Mouse: humorous, shrewd, and human. Says Allana: "I wanted to show Gandhi relaxed, his sense of humour....He made everyone wear a Gandhi cap, he never wore one.... "

Tilak and Gandhi were leaders, Bhagat Singh and the INA men represented the people. Says Allana: "In the INA trials, I wanted to show the predicament of an Indian man in the army: how it was possible for them to defect and form their own army to fight for independence." This episode is stark and bare, even the Bose bit in Singapore and the Red Fort....The Bhagat Singh episode is basically conspiratorial. The pace is fast. There is murder after murder; it is action-oriented. But it has the lyrical element as well. It is very moving because they were all so young. This episode has to be more personal: there is nothing beyond Bhagat Singh and his group.... He teaches us how a young man with passion can awaken people to violence...."

The series end with the INA trials. "This is the only trial the Indians won. It is the dawn of independence..it ends with Nehru, thoughtful, but proud and quiet," says Allana. For her, the biggest lesson of history is that the ideals these men were fighting for have not really changed.

—MADHU JAIN

the little village boy. Narayan is low on melodrama and high on humour (scarce and getting scarcer in Indian writing) and irony. His stories are funny, yet sad and extremely endearing. Most important of all, Narayan is a marvellous story-teller, and does not pretend to be anything more. Says producer, T.S. Narasimhan: "The stories are scripts in themselves...there was not much we had to do...."

To get Narayan to agree to give his stories was probably the greatest hurdle. After the author's experience of Dev Anand's film version of his novel, *Guide*, many a hopeful producer was snubbed by Narayan. Narasimhan was not sparing either: "When I called him a few years ago for permission to make a film on *The Financial Expert* (which he did make), he abused me and banged the phone down." But later, quite obviously pleased with Narasimhan's efforts, Narayan agreed to the TV series. Meanwhile, Contract Advertising had a similar brain-wave and contacted Narayan in Mysore. The author put Contract and Narasimhan together and *Malgudi Days* was launched. Each episode of the series has cost over Rs 3.50 lakh to make, since most of the shooting is on location. There are two versions of the series: Hindi and English. The series will probably be marketed in Europe, the US and Australia. Ten of the episodes will be screened at the Frankfurt Book Fair in October.

Malgudi then does exist. And it will for long because the 80-year-old indefatigable author gives his stories a certain timelessness: little boys will always try to be heroes, although their hearts pound away; there will always be a talkative man in a small town, with a tall tale for every incident; encounters between poor Indian shepherds and Yankee tourists wanting to buy large chunks of ancient Indian culture will always be much the same. And Narayan, he too will remain the same. When the lights in the auditorium came on again, there he was, his eyes twinkling. He had laughed at his own jokes. —MADHU JAIN

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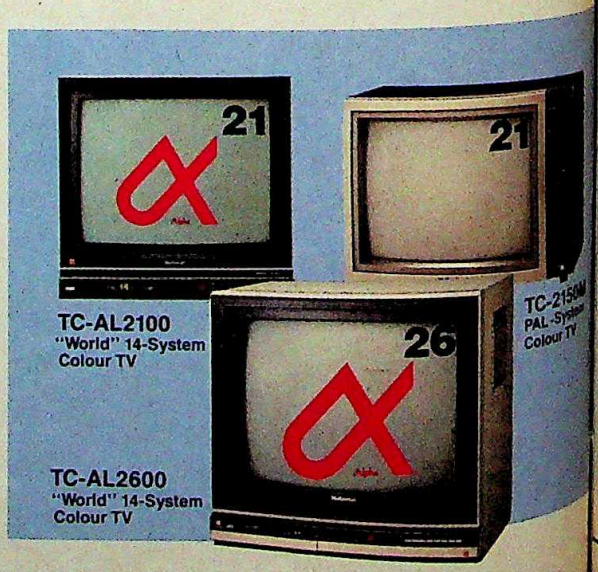

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MiG 29

Sky Master

THE INDIAN Air Force (IAF) has finally found the answer to Pakistan's F-16s. At least two IAF squadrons are being equipped with the the redoubtable MiG 29, the latest and most secret frontline fighter in the Soviet inventory, whose existence was known to the western world but not much else, till last fortnight when the first clear pictures of the plane were published.

The agreement for the purchase of the MiG 29s was signed in Moscow in May by a high-level team of the Defence Ministry. According to this agreement, the IAF will receive 40 planes in fly-away condition, with the option to later build the plane within the country. A decision on indigenous manufacture will be taken after the air force completes its assessment of the long-term requirement of MiG 29s. As part of the agreement, the Soviet Union has agreed to transfer the technology to manufacture the R60 M air-to-air missile in India.

Delivery dates are being kept secret but it is reasonably certain that the planes will not arrive before the beginning of 1987. Indian pilots have to be flown to the USSR for training, and six months is the minimum time needed to introduce a new aircraft type.

The MiG 29, whose raised cockpit makes it look like a hooded cobra, is a versatile air defence fighter which should give the IAF complete mastery over South Asian skies. It has two engines which develop 45 per cent more thrust than the F-16's single engine, greater range (850 km compared to the F-16's 630 km, according to a US Defence Department publication) and, more importantly, a very powerful radar which give the plane Beyond Visual Range (BVR) capability. Its pulse doppler radar can track hostile aircraft 100 km away in the look-up mode and 60 km in the look-down. The MiG 29 carries missiles with a 30 km range. Comparatively, the F-16's radar can see barely 30 km and its Sidewinder missiles have only a 6 km reach. With this kind of radar and missile, one MiG 29 can mount a combat air patrol for three airfields like Amritsar, Pathankot and Adampur.

Air Chief Marshal D.A. La Fontaine opposed the acquisition of the MiG 29 as he favoured continuing with the Mirage 2000. "A decision should have been taken long ago whether we need the Mirage 2000 or the MiG 29. We don't need both," said a senior IAF officer. Why then has the Government decided to go in for the MiG 29? It appears that the debate raging between two schools of thought among defence planners—one favouring multi-role aircraft and the other single-role ones—may be finally getting resolved.

The Mirage 2000 is a genuine multi-role fighter with armaments carrying capacity, dogfight ability and the range to carry out escort missions. The IAF visualises using it as an escort plane for deep-strike missions by Jaguars. And when attacked it can look after itself.

But the Defence Ministry's decision to acquire the MiG 29 could mean that it favours the other concept of having dedicated single-role aircraft. The MiG 29 acquisition is therefore seen as a logical step in the wake of the earlier decision in 1982 to manufacture the MiG 27, a pure ground attack aircraft which will be deployed in the frontline airfields to provide close air support to army columns. Just as the MiG 27 is a dedicated ground attack fighter, the MiG 29 will take on air defence duties. Defence planners think six to eight squadrons may be required to ensure the air defence of Delhi, Bombay, Tarapore, Bombay High and the Kashmir Valley.

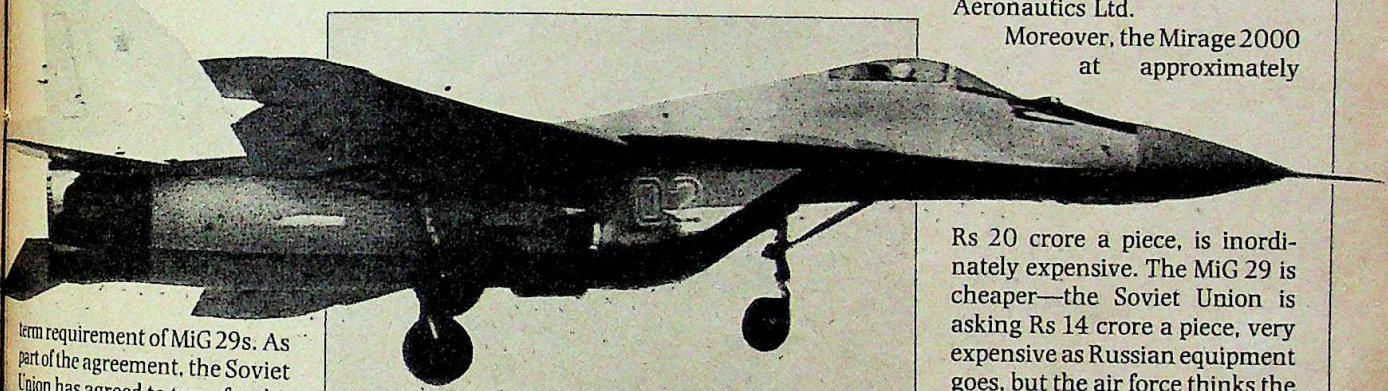
If that many planes are required, it makes sense to manufacture it in the country. And the MiG 29, being a conventional aircraft, will be easier to manufacture compared to the Mirage 2000 which has complex electronics for its fly-by-wire system and composite materials in its structure. The MiG 29 components have a fair degree of commonality with the MiG 27 which has just started rolling out from the Nasik factory of Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd.

Moreover, the Mirage 2000 at approximately Rs 20 crore a piece, is inordinately expensive. The MiG 29 is cheaper—the Soviet Union is asking Rs 14 crore a piece, very expensive as Russian equipment goes, but the air force thinks the agreed price will be about Rs 11 crore.

With the acquisition of the MiG 29, the IAF will have virtually all important members of the MiG family in squadron service—the still effective MiG 21, two squadrons of the air defence version of the swing-wing MiG 23, half a squadron of the high level long range intercepter MiG 25, which it is using merely for reconnaissance, and the MiG 27.

Russia has kept the plane pretty much under wraps since its induction into the Soviet Air Force started in 1985. The first clear pictures and an eye-witness description of the plane were published only last fortnight after the Soviets sent six of them on a sales promotion tour to Finland, obviously to show the West that they had closed the technology gap in the matter of fighter aircraft. India is the first country to be offered the MiG 29 which has not been supplied even to the Warsaw Pact countries.

—RAMINDAR SINGH



The MiG 29, the latest and most secret Soviet fighter, is a versatile air defence aircraft which should give the Indian Air Force complete mastery over South Asian skies.

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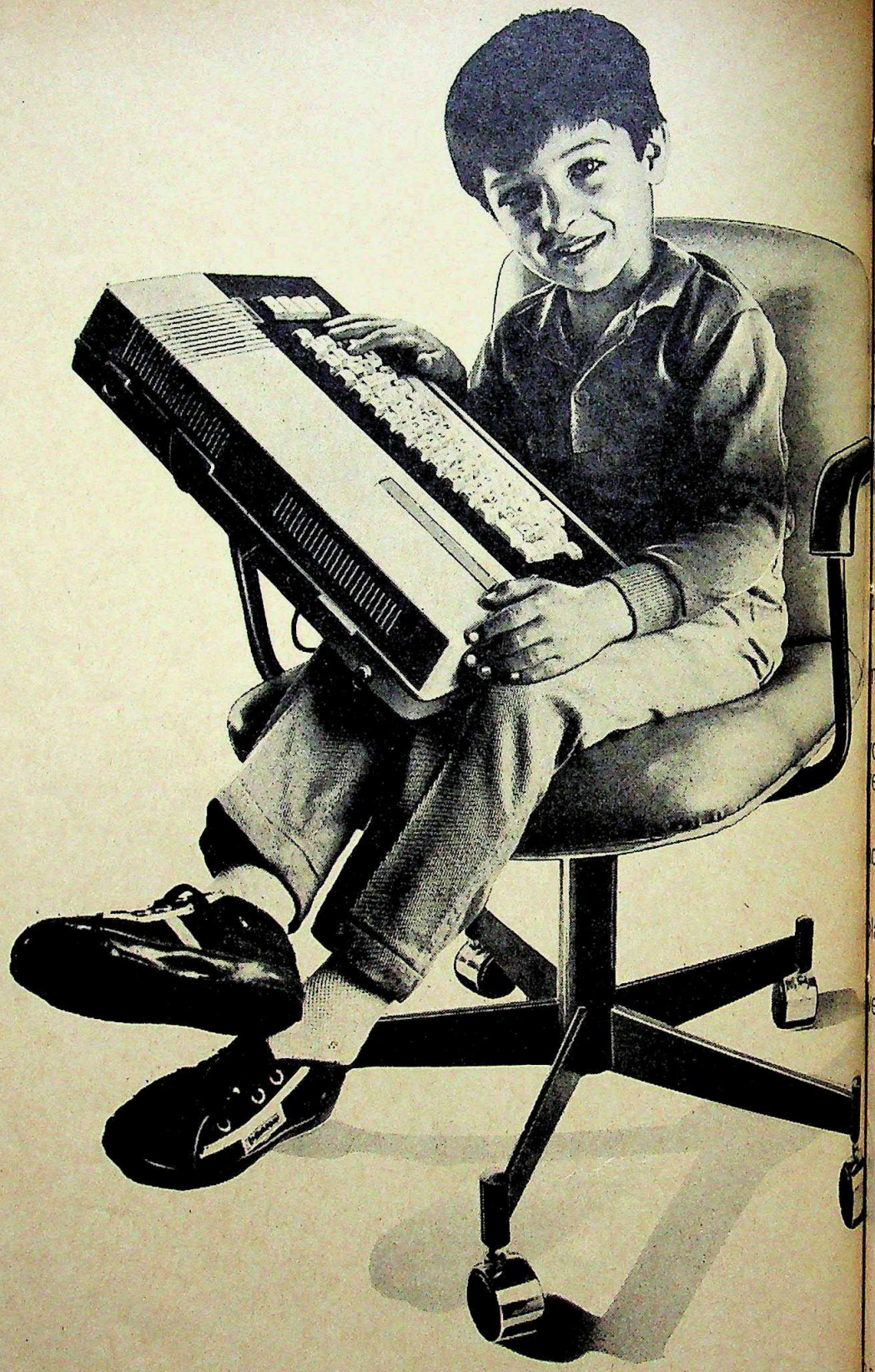

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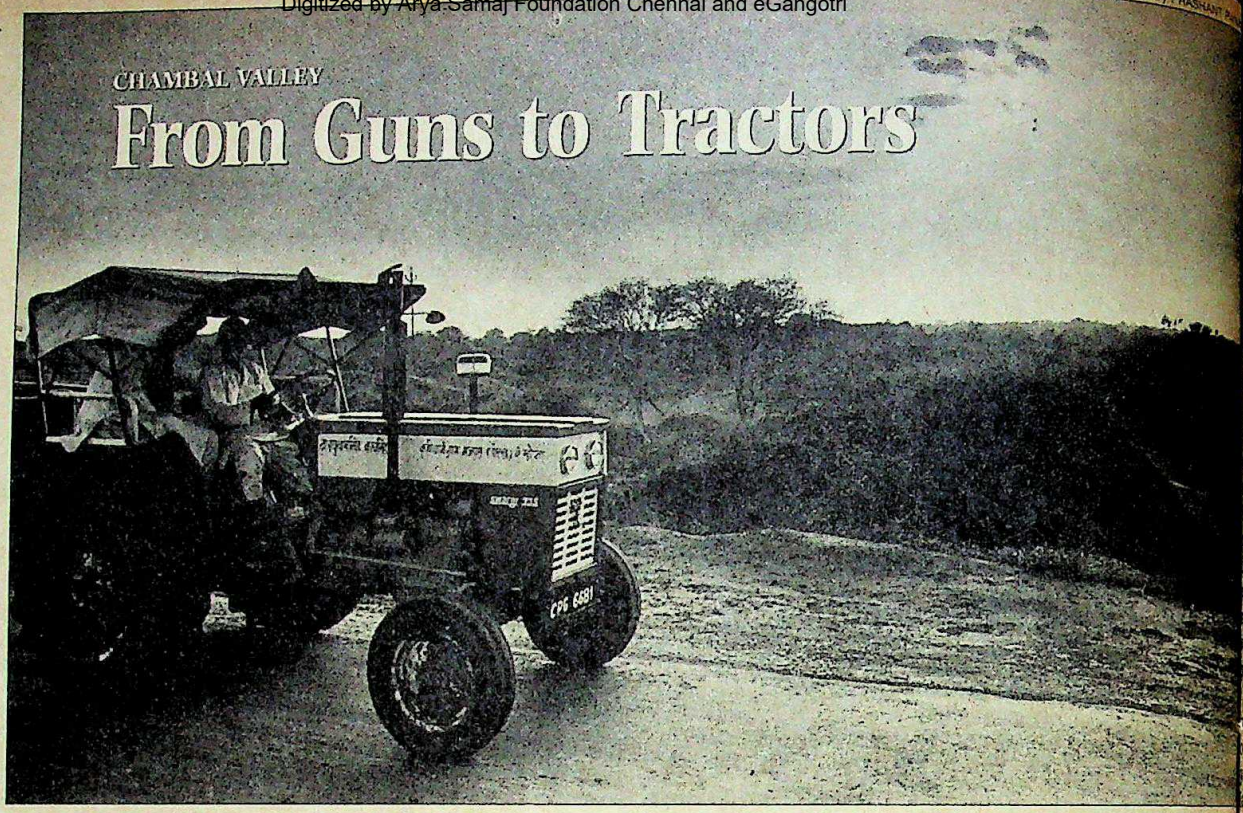
CHAMBAL VALLEY

From Guns to Tractors

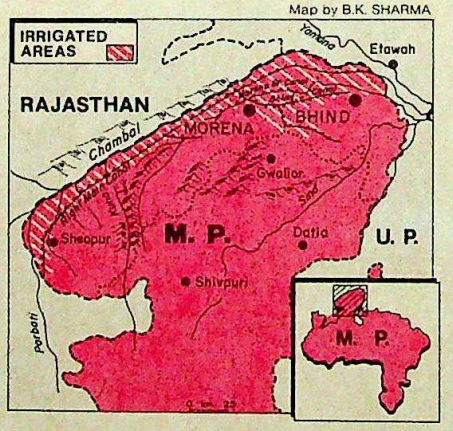


Chambal farmer: transformation

NO LONGER is the gun the most visible symbol of the Chambal valley. Today, it is the tractor, ploughing the field in the sowing season, carrying the produce in overflowing trailers during harvesting or, most often, transporting farmers and their families to the bustling mandis and towns of Bhind and Morena districts. For the better part of this century, the two districts have been the breeding grounds of a host of dacoits ranging from the legendary Man Singh in the 1950s to Malkhan Singh in the 1980s; but today they are in the throes of an agricultural upsurge that promises to make dacoity a mere milestone in their history and to establish the valley as the latest success story in Indian agriculture.

Evidence of the new affluence is to be seen everywhere: in the power-driven threshers that are almost as common as tractors, in the TV antennae that are sprouting in the villages, in the eight-fold increase in bank deposits and loans in the last decade. Says Bashir Ahmed, who works for a tractor agency in Amba: "People here have so much money they keep wads of notes hidden under bricks in their huts." Adds Arvind Joshi, collector of Morena: "You can see a dramatic change in people's attitudes. In Amba block—the home of Putlibai—most people had not even seen the face of wheat till a decade ago. Today, the same people harvest over 30 quintals of wheat per acre."

Map by B.K. SHARMA



As recently as the early 1970s, there were more than 50 gangs of dacoits listed in the police files of the two districts; today Morena has just one gang, and Bhind has none. Where murder and kidnapping were common, Morena had only two such instances this year, and Bhind has had none. Not long ago, guns were a common sight; today, says Anand Kumar, a general merchant of Amba: "People just don't carry guns any more."

The Chambal valley, with its rich alluvial soil, has always been relatively prosperous, and the rudiments of a canal system were laid as early as the 1920s, then expanded in the 1950s and 19... But the canals leaked or were choked w... weeds. Then, in 1974, came the Cham... Command Area Development Autho... (CADA). And the Rs 80 crore that the C... has spent for the 1.7 million residen... Bhind and Morena has spurred agri... tural growth.

Meanwhile, law and order has b... maintained. The 10 companies of arm... police posted in the region when Malkh... Singh and Ramesh Sikarwar were a... are still in place. Says Joshi: "Now I de... most of my time to development-rel... activities, and much less to law and o... problems."

Pritam Singh Patel, 56, is the m... prosperous landowner of Rayatpur... village of Sikhs, which is 6 km o... Gwalior-Bhind highway. Life was a... till CADA came up and the supply of w... became more assured. Today, the ... odd acres of land that Patel and his f... of five sons own give them enough in... to own two tractors, a bio-gas pla... sprawling house, a refrigerator, a t... sion set, two Alsatians, a dozen h... cattle and the luxury of half a d... "bhaiyas" who work the fields for Rs... day. Says Patel: "Five years ago, it w... rare farmer who grew 100 kg of w...

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...the same farmer grows ...2,000 kg."

In nearby Sherpur (pop: ...), Subhran Singh ...mar, 67, draws the same ...ure of a dramatic change in ...quality of life as he relaxes ...his drawing-room, where ...most striking co-occupant ...Bajaj scooter. Where barely ...per cent of the villages had ...tricity a decade ago, now ...per cent have light connec-... Where telephones were ...known, the village now has ...dozen connections. Says ...mar: "Once farmers here ...to resist fertiliser, now ...fight for better fertiliser. If ...neighbour gets 10 ...unds (roughly 375 kg) of ...eat per *bigha*, you want to ...w 15 maunds."

The CADA has not dug any ...canals; it has merely tried ...ensure that the irrigation ...stem works to its full poten-...—prodded by the World ...k, which has largely fi-...nced its activities. Since ...mers at the tail-end of the ...nals always complained of ...getting any water, CADA is ...w spending nearly Rs 3 crore ...digging 75 huge tubewells ...t will go more than 250 ...res into the ground and ...ch water that will then be fed ...the canal system. This is ...only irrigation system in ...country to go in for this ...nology.

Again, since reforestation ...the only way to stop the ...nes from advancing at the ...e of 800 hectares a year, ...A has had aircraft over from Delhi's ...dardjung airport and even roped in the ...force for aerially seeding over 30,000 ...ares of land last month. The figures ...k of CADA's success. Over the last ...ade, it has:

- More than doubled the gross value of ...CADA area's agricultural produce, ...Rs 75.62 crore to Rs 168.5 crore.
- More than quadrupled the number of ...ors in the area: from 656 to 2,981.
- More than doubled the number of ...wells: from 1,803 to 3,881.
- Nearly doubled agricultural pro-...ivity per worker as well as fertiliser ...sumption.

But perhaps the most striking success ...been the increase in the yield of seven crops, including coarse grains and oilseeds. Chambal now has yields which are well above both the state and national averages. In bajra and gram, for instance, Chambal's yield per hectare is 47 per cent and 43 per cent higher than the all-India average. In wheat, which is almost entirely a post-CADA phenomenon, the Chambal yield is almost as good as the all-India figure. Double cropping was earlier practised in barely 30 per cent of the area. Now four out of five farmers take two crops. Says Baldev Singh of Rayatpura: "The canals have made the fields come alive."

No one has the time for dacoity any more; farming is more paying and decidedly safer. Says Ran Singh, 30, of Saintra village in Morena: "Earlier, marriages were big social occasions for us. Today, people find it difficult to get time for them. If the Government were to give us water round the year, only grooms will have time to go for their marriage." Porsa, in fact, is the symbol of Chambal's progress. A small town of barely 10,000 residents, it has a rich hinterland which has seen the number of trucks registered sky-rocketing from less than 50 a decade ago to over 500 now. Says Ayodhya Nath Pathak, deputy-inspector general of the Gwalior range who has spent the best part of the last decade in the area: "Till a few years ago you could not find a light on in Porsa after 7 p.m.—people were so scared of the dacoits. Today, the place is buzzing with activity.

Long-time observers of the Chambal region feel the greatest change that has come about is the absence of fear: Mohammed Hussain, 56, superintending engineer of CADA, has been associated with the Chambal irrigation scheme for over two decades and says: "Earlier, even if people had a tractor they would not display it lest the dacoits came to know of their affluence. Now, the first thing they buy is a tractor, which they proudly park outside their gate." Adds Ajay Shanker, commissioner of Gwalior who was till recently doubling as the commissioner of Chambal "As you drive into Bhind and Morena the most heartening thing you notice is the tremendous amount of construction activity going on."

And yet, the full potential of the Chambal area is only beginning to be tapped. Even now, as much as 69 per cent of the land in the CADA area is left fallow during the kharif season. Chambal's commissioner and executive head of CADA, K.S. Swaminathan, feels that if Bhind and Morena can raise their produce to their full potential they can feed all of Madhya Pradesh plus another state as well. And the experts in Gwalior feel that day is not more than a decade away. When that happens, the Chambal region will truly have become Madhya Pradesh's granary.

—AJAY KUMAR in Bhind and Morena

"Five years ago it was the rare farmer who grew 100 kg of wheat. Now, the same farmer grows over 2,000 kg."

PRITAM SINGH PATEL
landowner, Rayatpura village

"The canals have made the fields come alive."

BALDEV SINGH
farmer, Rayatpura village

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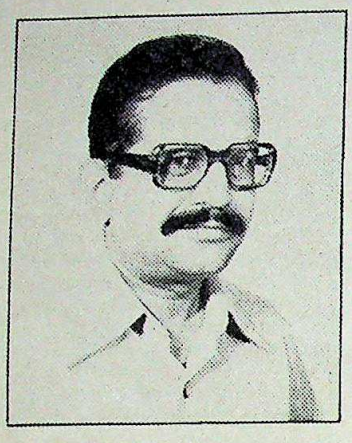
SILVER JUBILEE YEAR



Shri Moosa Raza

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

- **GSFC ENTERS THE SILVER JUBILEE YEAR WITH A RENEWED PLEDGE TO SERVE THE NATION**
- **AN ALL ROUND PEAK PERFORMANCE MARKS GSFC's RECORD GROWTH IN 1985**
- **NATION FORGES AHEAD WITH CONFIDENCE UNDER THE DYNAMIC LEADERSHIP OF THE PRIME MINISTER**
- **FRESH THRUST FOR TIME BOUND ACTIONS AND PROGRAMMES IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE WITH A DEEP CONCERN FOR A RAPID SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANFORMATION GIVES A NEW HOPE TO THE COUNTRY**
- **BUDGET FOR 1986-87 REFLECTS A HIGH DEGREE OF PRAGMATISM AND REALISM WITH COMMON MAN AS THE FOCAL POINT OF ALL PROGRESS**
- **BLENDING OF LONG TERM AND SHORT TERM ECONOMIC AND FISCAL MEASURES LENDS A NEW PERSPECTIVE AND DIRECTION TO FUTURE DEVELOPMNET**
- **FAI AWARD HAT-TRICK FOR THE BEST PERFORMANCE IN PHOSPHATICC FERTILIZER PRODUCTION AND AWARD OF HONOUR FROM THE U.S. SAFETY COUNCIL FOR MANAGEMENT AWARENESS TESTIFY TO GSFC'S COMMITMENT TO PRODUCTIVITY AND SAFETY**
- **SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION OF BIOFERTILIZER TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATED SEED-CUM-FERTILIZER DRILL AND EXPERIMENT OF THE RICE GARDEN TECHNOLOGY ARE NEW ADDITIONS TO GSFC'S PACKAGE OF SERVICES TO FARMERS**
- **GSFC IS WELL POISED TO IMPLEMENT AND COMPLETE ITS RS. 60 CRORE EXPANSION PLAN ON TIME**
- **GSFC PREPARES A PERSPECTIVE PLAN FOR INTEGRATED GROWTH TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY.**

The following is the text of the Statement made by Shri Moosa Raza, Chairman, Gujarat State Fertilizers Company Limited at the Twenty-Fourth Annual General Meeting of the Company held on the 19th May, 1986 at the Registered Office of the Company.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great privilege and pleasure to extend to you my warm and hearty welcome to this 24TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of your Company. The year 1985 has been a significant year in the history of your Company. It is in this year that your Company has completed about 2 1/2 decades of its dedicated service to the farmers and the nation and has entered the momentous period of the SILVER JUBILEE YEAR. I and my colleagues on the board rejoice in extending special greetings to all of you who have all along stood by your Company and supported its developmental programmes.

HIGHLIGHTS

The perfomance of your Company during the year is marked with enviable records. Your Company has achieved a high growth rate never reached before. The production has achieved new peaks, sales have crossed new milestones, logistics have achieved new breakthroughs, abatement of pollution has maintained the environment and industrial safety and health have achieved new standards of excellence. Your Company has achieved the rare distinction of securing a quantum jump in turnover and gross profits. His Excellency Giani Zail Singh, the President of India inaugurated the Modern Computer Centre of your Company. Two distinguished Awards won by your Company - the FAI award from the best performance in the phosphatic fertilizer production consecutively for the 3rd year and the Award of Honour from the Safety Council of the U.S.A. for displaying management awareness towards safety and health of the workers have added feathers to its cap. Your Company has also entered the export market by commencing export of Melamine. Also the continued efforts of your Company in transfer of agricultural techonology by successfully implementing the novel idea of Rice Garden for continuous production of rice crop throughout the year has opened new vistas for development of Rice Garden technology in India. Your Company also gave a new dimension to farm implement technology by developing and manufacturing on a commercial scale the two coulter and five coulter Seed-cum-Fertilizer Drill especially for the small farmers. The development of nylon safety helmet and nylon box strappings from Gujlon are a part of your Company's pioneering market development efforts for the benefit and growth of the plastic industry.

ECONOMIC SCENARIO

As you know our country has turned the corner under the inspiring guidance of our Prime Minister. Our country's economy has been forging ahead with a new thrust on all round growth, thanks to several socio-economic and fiscal measures which have provided tremendous fillip in the recent past. The Union Finance Minister's budget for the year 1986-87 has reflected a high degree of pragmatism and dynamism imbued with a deep concern for the uplift of the common man. The liberal import policy will augment the pace of growth in selected sectors. The long term fiscal policy has given a new perspective and direction to future development. The trend towards lower taxation and tax reliefs followed by a series of exemptions and relaxations in controls are aimed at providing the much needed boost to the economy and industrial activity in the country.

Some of the budget proposals will have a far reaching salutory effect on the economy. The basic exemption limit for gift tax and standard deduction on salary income is raised. So also is the exemption limit for deduction of expenses on medical needs. The rules for valuation of assets are simplified. All these steps are ideed a welcome departure in the country's fiscal po[illegible] Likewise the post-budget new concessi[illegible] announced by the Union Finance Minister [illegible] excise duties, customs and direct taxes are wi[illegible] welcomed. They will certainly instil a new [illegible] sure of confidence in small enterepren[illegible] Indeed the "open budgetting" system th[illegible] dialogue and interaction wth the taxpayer[illegible] promised by the Government as a part of the [illegible] fiscal regime is both rational and fair. Ho[illegible] there are still some snags hindering the pa[illegible] growth. They are replacement of investment [illegible] wance with a funding scheme, postponem[illegible] abolition of surtax on corporate income and [illegible] allowance of capitalisation of interest for the [illegible] pose of income tax. It is hoped that the Gov[illegible] ment is aware of these difficulties and the va[illegible] representations made by the trade and indu[illegible] would be given due consideration in the [illegible] of the rapid growth of the economy. The [illegible] light of the Union Finance Minister's relief [illegible] kage is the retention of the existing concess[illegible] inter-corporate dividend, which is largely [illegible] mended by all quarters including the stock [illegible] ket. The concessions and reliefs to small [illegible] sector are also well received and I am sure [illegible] would go a long way in giving an impetus [illegible] economy of the country. The introduction [illegible] MODVAT scheme has now enabled the [illegible] ufacturers to take credit for the duty paid [illegible] against the duty payable on the final prod[illegible] However the scheme has not been able to [illegible] about the desired results as it involves [illegible] payment of duty and also increases the [illegible] impact of duty on products, which the Gov[illegible] ment has never intended. Some of the mod[illegible] tions announced with regard to MODV[illegible] exempting capctive consumption of inputs [illegible] duties alongwith some other exemptions [illegible] relaxations to the small scale sectors would [illegible] helpful. While the intention behind the MODV[illegible] scheme still requires to be translated o[illegible]

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at the field level, it will succeed with more understanding, more positive and pursuasive efforts at all levels.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC MILIEU

As you know the new dispensation in the country is imbued with a deep concern for a rapid socio-economic transformation. There is a new urgency, a sense of impatience and a kind of heightened haste for a more positive and constructive approach to solve all problems. The fresh thrust for time-bound actions and programmes in all walks of life has provided a new perspective to plans and schemes. The anxiety for an ideal blending of the short term and the long term planning to make a multi-pronged assault on the overwhelming problems and find permanent solutions has infused the country with a sense of new awareness and action. The eagerness and the anxiousness to know the hardships and aspirations of the people through first hand knowledge and to initiate fast action to mitigate their griefs has created a new hope in the country. The emphasis on high tech with our feet on earth is no doubt relevant to the demand of the contemporary times but high tech would have to be compatible with the grassroot philosophy and the interest of the millions of people of this country. Let me assure you that your Company deeply shares these national concerns, agonies and aspirations and would seize the first opportunity to participate, as in the past, in any socio-economic resurgence programme within the framework of its resources and in keeping with the interest of the shareholders.

YEAR OF RECORDS

You will happy to know that your Company has accomplished several records during the year 1985. Fertilizer production has hit a new high of 7.35 lac metric tons with a capacity utilisation of 108%. Sales have crossed a new milestone of 9.13 lac metric tons of fertilizers with a record handling of pool fertilizers. The peak turnover of Rs. 328.12 crores representing an increase of 43% over the previous year is a new feather in your Company's cap. The maiden export of Gujarat of 628 M.T. to Korea and Japan earning 4.76 lac $ of foreign exchange has opened a new horizon in your Company's export activity. In the light of the overall progress of your Company, the rate of dividend has been increased to 27% which is the highest in the fertilizer industry. You will also be happy to know that your Company has earned the rare distinction of winning the FAI trophy for best performance in production of phosphatic fertilizers for the 3rd consecutive year in 1985. The gross profit of your Company has reached a new watermark of Rs. 56.78 crores with an increase of 48% over the previous year.

I am happy to inform you that Company has maintained this upward trend of production during the current year and I am confident that if every thing goes well, your Company is well poised to achieve new heights in productivity and establish still higher records during the current year.

FUTURE PLANS

You must have noticed from the Directors' Report the corporate planning of your Company with regard to furture projects. Your Company has initiated work with regard to expansion of its urea-ammonia plant from the present 20,000 tons to 50,000 tons per annum. Preliminary work with regard to replacement of the old Ammonia plant by a large capacity 1350 TPD Ammonia plant has started. The work on the coastal DAP project at Sikka has reached an advanced stage of progress. It would be of interest for you to know that the schedule of commencement for the Sikka project has been advanced with a view to taking advantage of the investment allowance which is proposed to be withdrawn from April, 1987. Your Company has geared up its efforts and fully concentrated its energy for early commissioning of the project. The major civil and other related works are in progress and necessary manpower and materials are also mobilised. The financial tie up to the tune of Rs. 70 crores with the IDBI will further help in speedy implementation of this project. With the dedicated efforts of the staff and officers at al levels and the active co-operation of all concerned, I am sure that your Company will be able to achieve an early completion of this project and set a new record in project completion. The progress on the Gujarat Industries Power Company in which your Company has a major share is proceeding satisfactorily. Your Company is also planning to make equity participation in the Gujarat Nylon Limited - a Company promoted by the Gujarat Industrial Investment Corporation. The participation in this project will provide adequate control at the Board and management levels and a further outlet to Caprolactam and Nylon-6 products of your Company. Your Company has also shown interest in the petrochemical project coming up in Gujarat.

The on-going and future plans would involve a total capital outlay of about Rs. 600 crores in the next five years. The resources for capital investment are proposed to be met through institutional and market borrowings in future. At present your Company has succeeded in tying up with financial agencies to the tune of Rs. 70 crores for the DAP project out of which loan agreement for Rs. 50 crores has already been executed with IDBI as lead institution on behalf of other financial Institutions and the banks have agreed to participate in the cost of the project. Similar arrangements are envisaged for the other projects. However, inspite of these, more resources would be required for which your Company looks forward to your continued support in its effort for mobilisation of resources. All these projects, when commissioned would auger a new era of growth opportunities for your Company in the coming years.

SPECIAL AGRICULTURAL SCHEMES

Your Company has made pioneering efforts in the development and commercialisation of biofertilizers by making a major breakthrough in the application of biofertilizer technique. Biofertilizers tend to augment the yield by about 20%. In order to mitigte the scarcity of fodder in drought-hit Gujarat, your Company has planned fodder cultivation through distribution of the biofertilizers to farmers growing fodder on their fields particularly in Surat, Valsad, Banaskantha, Mehsana and Junagadh districts as part of its scarcity relief programme. The free distribution of 75,000 packets of biofertilizers to the farmers is likely to yield around 2,25,000 tonnes fodder in the irrigated areas during the scarcity period. Your Company has continuted the Rice Garden technology programme and has taken up experiments to try cold resistant varieties on its research farm.

Your Company's success in developing the 2-coulter and 5-coulter seed-cum-fertilizer drill is acclaimed by farmers, academicians, farm experts, and Government circles. Your Company has organised the commerical production through mobilisation of village artisans to meet the increasing demand of the farmers. The new seed-cum-fertilizer drill has come as a boon to the small farmers to whom the drill is made available at a competitive price. Government of Gujarat has also extended subsidy on this drill to the farmers. The Leap Forward Project meant for betterment of the backward and tribal areas operating for the past several years is doing well. Similarly the Dry Farming Project whose importance and significance cannot be underestimated in unirrigatd areas is being implemented by your Company are vigorously. The benefits of both these projects are being made available to newer areas and larger populuation than in the past. Your Company's participation in the Government sponsored Intensive Fertilizer Promotion Scheme is being intensified and the areas under this scheme have indicated achievement of higher levels of fertilizer consumption. Seed Development programme is another area where your Company has done commendable work. A sizeable quantity of high quality and new varieties of seeds were produced and made available to farmers. Still other varieties are being brought under experiment for the benefit of the farming community.

PERSPECTIVE PLAN- 21ST CENTURY

Our country is preparing for entry into the 21st century. Your Company cannot remain far behind. To enable your Company to meet the future challenges successfully, a Perspective Plan is being prepared. This plan would cover different aspects of your Company's activities- production, marketing, finance, human resource development, agriculture development, innovation and research. The perspective plan of different areas would make a Corporate Perspective plan which would help in a total integrated approach to the future growth of the Company to meet the needs of the 21st century. This is not an easy task but your Company is known for 'taking the time by forelock' and it is fully equipped in terms of human resources, finance, technical expertise and capacity to absorb technologies. With these inputs, it expects to accomplish this mission and be a part of the emerging national milieu.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am glad to convey on your behalf my appreciation to Government of India, Government of Gujarat, Financial Institutions, Banks and other agencies for their wholehearted support in the furtherence of our objective by rendering very valuable assistance, support and help. I am grateful to my colleagues on the Board for their valuable contribution and guidance from time to time. I would also like to thank the team of staff and officers of your Company for their loyalty, dedication and untiring efforts which they have been making for upholding the reputation and continuous growth of your Company.

JAI HIND

Note : This does not purport to be a record of proceedings of the Twenty-Fourth Annual General Meeting of the Company.

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UPPER KRISHNA PROJECT

An Expensive Mess

THE UPPER Krishna Project (UKP) began in the late 1950s as a relatively modest irrigation scheme designed to cover about 2.6 million acres of parched territory in Karnataka's drought-prone areas of Bijapur and Gulbarga. Today, it has bloated into a monstrously expensive white elephant—the victim of widespread waste, mismanagement and corruption.

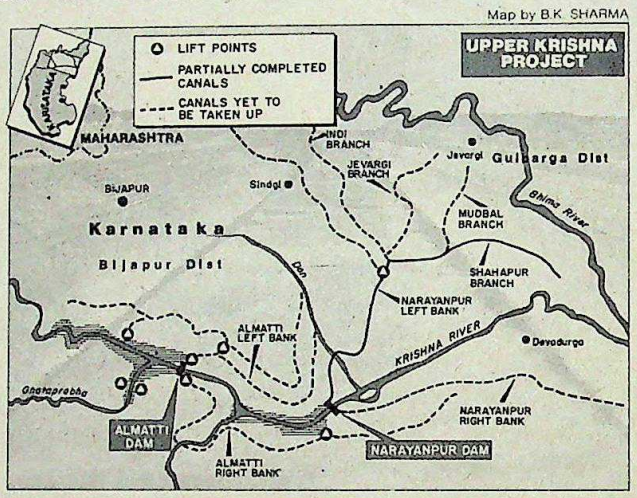
The bungling has resulted in a mind-boggling cost overrun: the original cost was Rs 100 crore. But Irrigation Department engineers estimate that when the project is finally completed in 1990, the final bill could skyrocket to over Rs 2,000 crore. Already, more than Rs 300 crore—three times the amount estimated for the entire project—have been spent. But only one-sixth of the area under the scheme has been covered.

The whole mess was brought forcefully out into the open last fortnight when the state's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) released a blistering report: "The committee finds that the officers have not acted with diligence and have failed to protect government interests." The PAC report noted that contractors were awarded work even before estimates were sanctioned; and when work was delayed, no action was initiated either to blacklist them or impose the heavy penalties provided for in the contracts. The report added: "Departmental inefficiency and lapses in individual works are the causes of the inordinate delay in extending irrigation benefits to people."

The project's critics charge that both the planning and execution of the scheme have been reckless and lethargic. The project report was prepared in 1958, but government approval took five years, and work finally began in February 1964. It was to be taken up in two stages, with the first stage estimated to cost Rs 58.2 crore and the second stage a little less.

Two months after work began, the dam to be built at Narayanpur was considered too lengthy and expensive. So the dam was moved three miles downstream. Work stopped and a fresh project report was prepared—the cost going up to Rs 115 crore. Work began and stopped again after engineers realised that shifting the dam would submerge an unnecessarily large area. This stop-go pattern was to become the story of the UKP's life.

Map by B.K. SHARMA



The original cost was Rs 100 crore. But the final bill is expected to cross Rs 2,000 crore when the project is completed in 1990.

Faced with mounting criticism, Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde promised last fortnight that "we will complete the project." But serious doubts remain as to how he will do this. Until 1978, when Rs 47 crore in World Bank assistance was given to the project, successive state governments had allocated no more than Rs 5 crore a year for the scheme. But even with the added bonanza only 44,000 acres of land were brought under irrigation by March 1983 against the targetted 2.63 lakh acres.

Part of the reason for the delays was the constant bickering and arbitration between engineers and contractors over design and cost estimates. Contractors argued last fortnight that the root cause for arbitration was the engineers's "faulty line estimates," which made the contractors realise that they had more work to do than originally planned. For example, a rough estimate prepared after inadequate homework put the cost of a tunnel at Gundalegere at Rs 7.8 crore. But when completed by the contractors its cost escalated to nearly double this amount.

Politics too, dogged the project in the initial stages. Says its former chief engineer I.M. Magdum: "In the early 1960s, the then chief minister Veerendra Patil forced the engineers to change the course of the canals so that his native Gulbarga district could benefit more." Of the 10.5 lakh acres to be irrigated in the first stage, only 3.37 lakh acres are under Bijapur, which is more drought-prone than Gulbarga.

For three decades, successive state governments neglected the project because the area carried little political clout. Hegde claims that it was only after the Janata took over, and more funds began to be allocated for irrigation projects and the UKP that the project was speeded up. In his first year, Hegde allocated Rs 50 crore which was increased to Rs 76 crore for 1986-87.

But even Hegde's increased allocations appear niggardly, considering the amount of work still to be carried out. Last fortnight, his government was still answering questions on the financial and technical viability of a Rs 545 crore estimate sent to the Centre for getting a second loan from the World Bank. Hegde plans to spend this amount in the next five years for the completion of the 220-km-long Mudbal and Indi canals. This means the Government has to allocate a minimum of Rs 100 crore a year to the project and, considering the limited resources of the state Government, Hegde will be hard-pressed to put the money where the mouth is.

L.B. Kolur, a 46-year-old farmer and father of five whose land was to have been irrigated by one of the yet-unfinished canals was more distraught: "During elections all parties make grandiose promises. But I wonder whether we will have water even after my sons inherit my land." The assessment of this illiterate man seems to be the most accurate.

—SRINIVASA PRASAD

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"New India Assurance? Of course."

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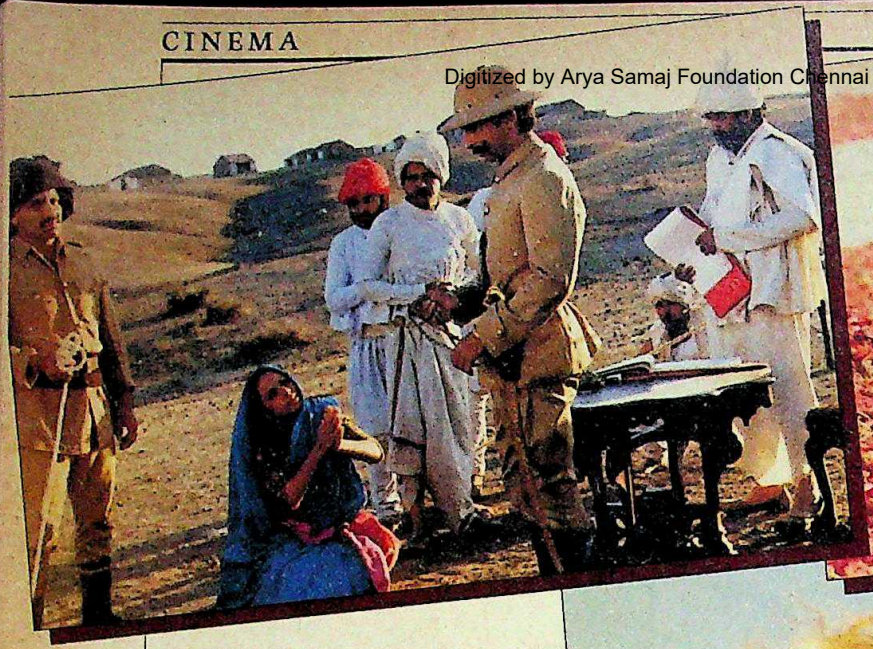

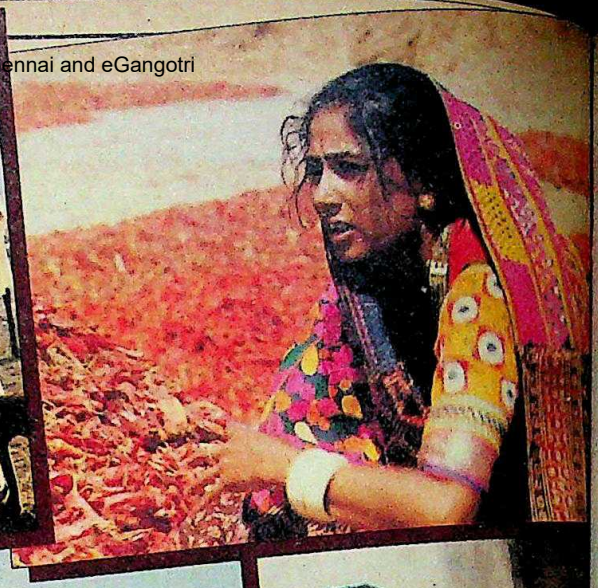

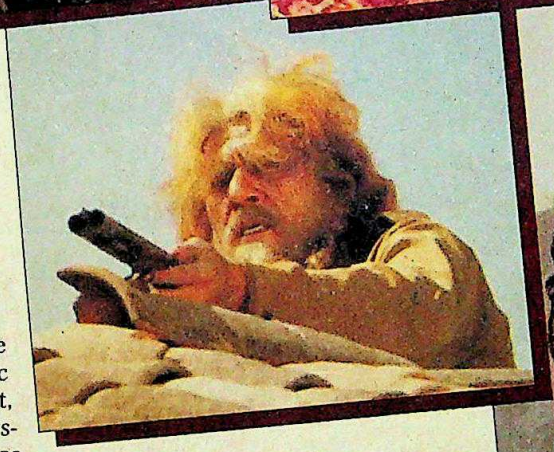

(Clockwise) Shah as the subedar; Smita Patil in the chilli factory and with Raj Babbar; and Om Puri as the chowkidar

MIRCH MASALA

A Lyrical Ballad

KETAN MEHTA talks like a cafe Marxist. He spouts the classic phrases: lumpenised proletariat, internalised fascism, alien oppressive systems. But his new film, *Mirch Masala*, has jumped the tall walls of any Indian Marxist school of thought or in fact any other school of thought. Labels, do not stick to him. The film, his third, is a *tour de force* in Indian cinema. *Mirch Masala* has the lyricism of the ballad about it, a certain myth-like quality and a stunning use of the colour red. In his two earlier films, Mehta tapped Indian tradition for structures to tell his story: *Bhavani Bhavai* used the Gujarati folk form to treat the subject of untouchability, in *Holi*, Mehta turned to tribal narrative structure to talk about youth. The latest film is more eclectic. And the seams don't show, so effective has been the synthesis of all the elements: stylisation, melodrama, folklore, circular movements and groupings....But the concerns in all films are the same: oppression.

Mirch Masala based upon a short story by Chunilal Madia ("stretched both ways") is set in the early 1940s. It is Rann of Kutch country—the typical famine landscape of Saurashtra and parts of Rajasthan as the lushly embroidered cholis of the women and the complicated turbans of the luxuriantly-moustachioed men indicate. A quiet, almost sleepy village, is suddenly transformed with the entry of the subedar, superbly played by Naseeruddin Shah. The subedar is attracted to the fiery village belle (Smita Patil at her best), who escapes from him and hides in a factory in which women grind red chillies. The factory's chowkidar is Om Puri, in a very difficult role poised as he is on the brink of melodrama—"*a la* Sohrab Modi", as Mehta says.

The story moves with the inevitability of a fairy tale: the beautiful maiden being lusted for and chased after by the dragon-like subedar. The chowkidar with his flaming, henna-tinted leonine hair style (not too unlike a character out of the Wizard of Oz) protects her to the end. The characters of the film— whether it is Mukhi, the patel of the village with the 16 tonnes of false pride he carries, embodied in his moustache, the greedy *seth*, the idealist khadi-clad masterji dreaming of Swaraj, the loquacious pujari who can twist religion to suit his material ends, the pure young lovers, and of course the villianous subedar—are all familiar and exaggerated, almost to the point of caricature. But it is the complexity Mehta invests them with which makes this film a little milestone in Indian cinema.

Naseeruddin has a very difficult role indeed; tyrannical and nasty he is, but insanity flickers beneath the tough exterior, as does his vulnerabilty and awkwardness. His ridiculous moustache is wonderfully apt. The subedar installs in a beautifully furnished tent by the sea. A shining gramaphone plays the songs of the '40s, as he listens, misty-eyed, to which makes the tyranny chillingly menacing. The gramophone, is the disembodied voice of the *sarkar*, which stunts and subdues the people; technology equals magic in other words, and power.

Where the film hits the hardest is the apparent emasculation of the

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IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

The Hidden Persuaders

They are the hidden persuaders, manipulating massive arms deals and commercial contracts through carefully-cultivated contacts in government and bureaucracy. A report on the growing tribe of lobbyists who prowl the parlours of power.

COVER STORY 62

The Rajiv Rage

Last fortnight's Youth Congress jamboree in Delhi revealed the sea change that has taken place in the party. Gone are the rowdy Sanjay squads. In their place, sophisticated and affluent yuppies fervently swearing loyalty to Rajiv Gandhi.

CURRENT EVENTS 25

A War of Nerves

August 14 marked the start of Benazir Bhutto's bid to dethrone General Zia ul Haq. But as her supporters took to the streets, the Government arrested her and the rebellious fervour cooled down with both sides claiming victory. An on-the-spot report.

NEIGHBOURS 56

The Tribal Farce

The crash welfare scheme for the poverty-stricken tribals of Kalahandi in Orissa is a farce. The Orissa Government has misled the prime minister's office in its claims. INDIA TODAY investigations reveal that the condition of the tribals has not changed.

INVESTIGATION 74

A Desperate Dilemma

The continuing terrorist actions in Punjab and elsewhere have sent tremors of insecurity and fear through the ranks of the Sikh community living outside Punjab. A wide range of interviews analyses their trepidations and their future plans.

SPECIAL FEATURE 86

The New Nightmare

The world's biggest law suit may end up the world's biggest legal mess. After 20 months, the costly Bhopal gas tragedy compensation battle involving the Indian Government, American lawyers, and Union Carbide, has now assumed mind-boggling dimensions.

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OPINIONS TODAY

Your chance to speak out

Who should get the Padma Vibhushan for achievements in art & culture? You decide.

Would you give it to Amitabh Bachchan? Or, say, R. K. Narayan? What about Mrinalini Sarabhai, M.F. Husain, Pupul Jayakar, Raj Kapoor, Bhimsen Joshi, Lata Mangeshkar?

These eight persons are among the many who have contributed a lot to Indian art & culture. Some obvious personalities have not been considered because they have already received the award in question. In this fifth Opinions Today poll, you now have the rare opportunity of assessing their contributions.

Your task: to rank them on a table from 1 to 8.

Thus when you finish, each name will carry a number from 1 to 8 beside it.

Since this is a ranking and not a grading system, no two persons can have the same number.

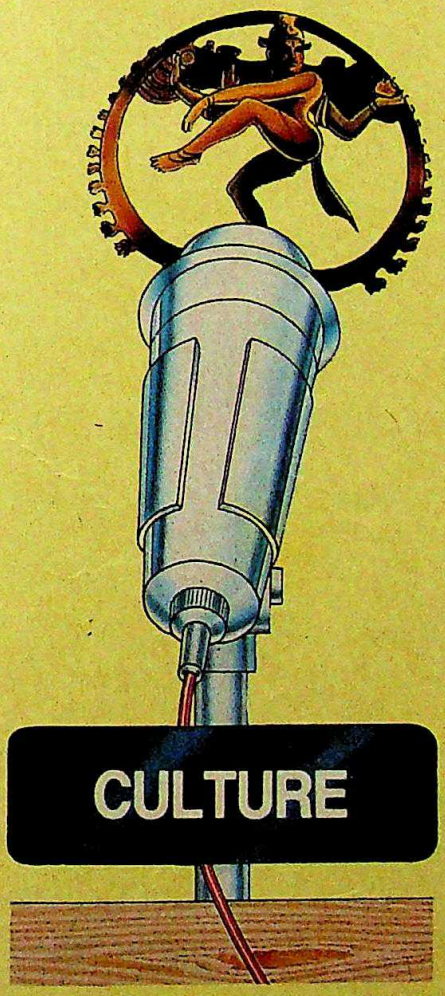
Explain your first choice.

If person 'X' is your number one choice, then in not more than 50 words, you have to tell us why.

The entries will be evaluated by a computer to determine the national average.

If your entry ties in with this average, you'll also become a contender for the awards associated with Opinions Today.

The entry form, and a list of rules and regulations, are at the back of this page.



The awards.

For this poll:

First	: Weston Colour TV and VCR, courtesy WESTON ELECTRONIKS.
Second	: Encyclopaedia Britannica.
Third	: Weston 2-in-1, courtesy WESTON ELECTRONIKS.
Consolation	: Annual subscriptions to INDIA TODAY.

Across six polls:

First	: Return First Class air tickets for two to Los Angeles, courtesy PAN AM.
Second	: A specially commissioned painting (30"× 40") by M.F. HUSAIN.
Third	: PC Junior computer with printer, courtesy EIKO COMPUTERS.
Consolation	: The World and its People – a twenty seven volume set.

Turn overleaf to express your opinion.

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OPINIONS TODAY

Your chance to speak out

Rules and regulations

Since the entry forms will be processed by computer, it is important that you follow these procedures carefully. Incorrect or incomplete entries will be rendered invalid.

1. You can voice your opinion only through a valid entry form, such as the one below.
2. In case you have difficulty in obtaining the entry form, please mail a stamped, self-addressed envelope marked 'Opinions Today' to us at INDIA TODAY, 316 Competent House, F-14 Connaught Place, New Delhi-110 001.
3. An individual can send in only one entry form per poll.
4. The entries will be evaluated by means of a software package, specially designed by Tata Consultancy Services. The package will be run on a Burroughs B 6900 mainframe.
5. Important : while filling in this entry form, please ensure that you leave one square blank between the various units in your name and address.
6. All the eight options in each poll have to be ranked from 1 to 8. No two options can have the same ranking.
7. The name should start with the family name, followed by the first name.
8. Also ensure that you enter your first two or three initials in the space provided.
9. The date of birth should start with the date (two digits), followed by the month (two digits) and the year (again two digits). For example, if your date of birth is February 9, 1956, it should be entered as 090256.
10. Please tick the appropriate square, for other details such as sex, education, occupation.
11. In your address, please also give the pin-code number.
12. Please ensure that you fill in your particulars consistently across all polls.
13. In every poll you will have to explain the reasons, in not more than 50 words, for your No. 1 ranking. This is the 'tie-breaker'. Be sure to write the tie-breaker. You can miss out on the big awards if you don't. However, if your entry ties in with the national average, you will still be entitled to receive consolation prizes.
14. The entries will be evaluated by a panel of judges.
15. The results will be published in the forthcoming issues of INDIA TODAY. The winners will also be notified separately by post.
16. Employees (and their relatives) of Living Media India Pvt. Ltd., its associate companies, Tata Consultancy Services, and Interface Communications Pvt. Ltd., are not eligible to participate in this opinion poll.
17. INDIA TODAY will not be responsible for any postal delays.
18. The decision of the judges will be final and binding and no further correspondence will be entertained on the decisions.
19. ALL ENTRIES MUST REACH LIVING MEDIA INDIA PVT. LTD., P.O. BOX NO. 29, N.D.H.O. NEW DELHI-110 001, BY THE LAST DATE INDICATED ON THE ENTRY FORM.

ENTRY FORM : 5

Please fill in BLOCK CAPITALS

NAME : Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____ Surname _____ First Name

DATE OF BIRTH: D D M M Y Y SEX : M [1] F [2] INITIALS : _____

EDUCATION : Professional [1] Post-graduate [2] Graduate [3] Matriculate [4] Others [5]

OCCUPATION : Service [1] Business [2] Housewife [3] Student [4] Others [5]

ADDRESS : _____

CITY _____ Pin-code _____

Have you participated in any previous Opinions Today poll? Yes [1] No [2]

PERSONALITIES	RANKING
AMITABH BACHCHAN	
M. F. HUSAIN	
PUPUL JAYAKAR	
BHIMSEN JOSHI	
RAJ KAPOOR	
LATA MANGESHKAR	
R. K. NARAYAN	
MRINALINI SARABHAI	

Please give reasons for your No. 1 ranking _____

Signature of participant : _____

Your opinion must reach us by 20.9.1986.

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INDIA TODAY
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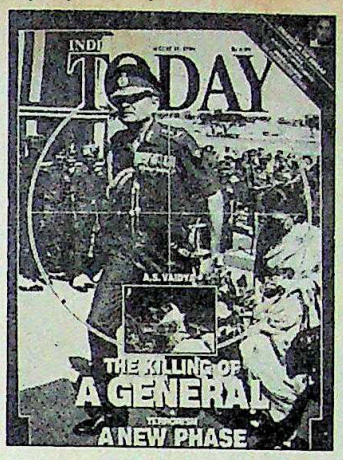

HEINOUS CRIME

The assassination of General Vaidya ("Killing of a General", August 31) has put the country's security system under a cloud. It has become clear that the spectre of Sikh terrorism is not confined to the north-west. How many more innocents will be killed by the terrorists before our security system can grapple with the situation? It seems the terrorists are endowed with a carte blanche to perpetrate one murder after another.

Bangalore S. NAGESH KUMAR

■ The heinous and dastardly assassination of General Vaidya has left the nation paralysed and created a fear psychosis. Terrorism seems to have reached its acme and attempts to demur the upsurge by the Government have been miniscular. It is essential that people in the hit-list be protected. Every breach of security must be sealed promptly and care taken to ensure that similar incidents do not recur.

Bangalore V. CHIDANAND KUMAR

■ What a dirty way have our politicians treated this brave, true son of India. General Vaidya's death is a mockery on every Indian true to his salt. While lakhs of rupees are spent on Rajiv Gandhi's security, is the life of a top Army general so insignificant that he was given only a head constable? On top of it, neither the prime minister nor the President thought it important enough to attend the funeral of a true martyr.

Bombay SHASHI VARDARAJAN

RELIANCE OBSESSION

Suddenly the whole world is against Reliance ("Under Pressure", August 15). Do they want a flourishing industry to go into ashes? It seems that people who rule the roost have gone mad in an anti-prosperity drive against one company. None of the charges against Reliance have been proved and none is so serious that it cannot be enquired into without screaming headlines. If the Government has now turned its guns against Reliance, was it sleeping earlier?

Jodhpur VINEET KOTHARI

■ Regarding your story on Reliance, though Ambani may have involved himself in crooked deals, yet he remains probably the most talented person in the country: he has converted credit into wealth, for himself and for others and created any number of jobs. What the country should be worried about is not whether he has done anything wrong, but why such talented people have to resort to such activities.

Berlin P.V. INDIRESAN

FINAL OPTION

It was disheartening to read about the demand for Gorkhaland by the GNLF ("A New Belligerence", August 31). The responsibility for this situation lies entirely on the so-called national parties and the Government who are responsible for the growth of regional parties and groups. Individual demands are not met until they form a group—strikes, *satyagrahas* and terrorist acts are the only effective steps to achieve anything.

Ahmedabad P.V. RAGHUNATHAN NAIR

Snapshot (Page 152) is a regular feature introduced in the last issue which will reproduce candid, offbeat black and white photographs that portray India with a touch of humour. The magazine invites photographers, professional or amateur, to send in their contributions. There is no restriction on the subject matter as long as it is Indian and the photographs are of an acceptable quality for printing. INDIA TODAY will pay Rs 1,000 for every photograph published. The print should be in the size of 21 × 33 cm. in either horizontal or vertical frame. The magazine, however, does not accept responsibility for returning the photographs.

Send entries to
SNAPSHOT
Picture Editor
F-14/15 Connaught Place
New Delhi 110001

—Editor

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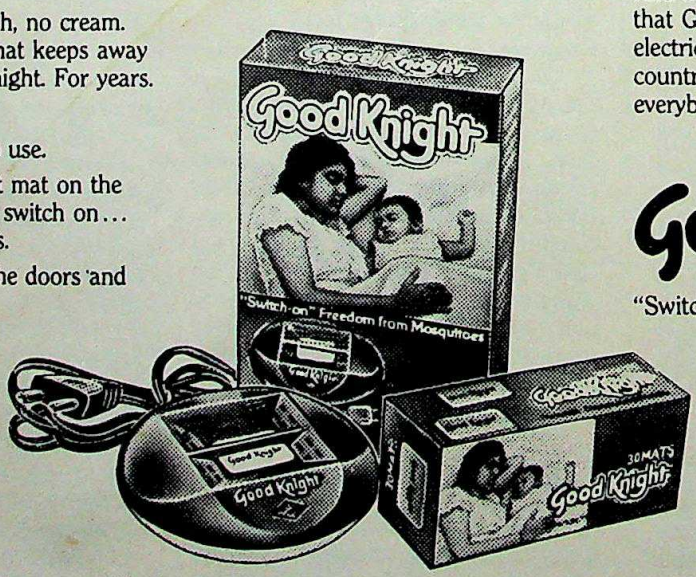

Good Knight

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WOUNDED FEELINGS

Your cover story ("Born to Die", June 15) has titles like 'Kallars are killers' and 'Kallars: Savage traditions'. The story is about female infanticide, which we condemn in unequivocal terms. Such stray instances of female infanticide are perpetrated in every community and this cannot be generalised to tarnish the image of the entire community. We can quote innumerable instances in every community of such barbarity and savagery.

But, with reference to these instances, the author blames the whole Thevar (Kallar) community of Tamil Nadu, which has been discredited and its image tarnished. The Thevars are a warrior community of royal descent, and are not savage. It is unbecoming of a journal of your reputation to publish, magnify and give publicity to isolated cases of barbabrism.

So, I request you, on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Thevar Peravai, to publish our objection and record your regret for using these terms as this has wounded the feeling of the people of the Thevar community who have contributed to the Independence struggle.

Madras — Dr V. RAMAKRISHNAN
general secretary, Tamil Nadu Thevar Peravai

■ *The purpose of our report was to focus attention on a problem of infanticide. Nowhere have we said in any headline that 'Kallars are killers'. Our report did not talk of the Thevar community as a whole, and was specific in talking of the Kallars from one particular area. We also took pains to portray the parents not as ruthless murderers but as hopeless victims of circumstance. And we have quoted a local activist as saying that the community has descended from the warriors of the Chola emperors.*

In fact, one of the positive results of our story has been that Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity have adopted a few Kallar children from Usilampatti taluk. And the Indian Council for Child Welfare is also considering opening a centre in Usilampatti.

—Editor

DEFORESTATION SCARE

It was a matter of profound satisfaction to the officers of the Indian Forest Service Association that you have highlighted the grave consequences of deforestation ("An Environmental Holocaust", August 15). It is not however, the smugglers-cum-forest officials combine, but the large population of human beings and the numberless herds of cattle that have been the main cause of the destruction of tree vegetation and the formation of wastelands. Non-recognition of technical advice rendered by foresters at crucial times have demoralised their cadre and they are fighting a lone battle.

Dehradun — R.B. LAL
secretary, IFS Association

■ Your article on environment has put the onus of destruction of forests on the forester. The common man presumes all forests are under his control which is not true. The reserved forests are getting degraded because they take the brunt which was meant to be borne by the community forest land. When reserve forests were constituted, gomal lands were meant to meet grazing needs and district and civil forests the fuel needs of the rural population. Now both these demands are met by reseved forests.

Bangalore — S. SHYAM SUNDER
principal chief conservator of forests, Karnataka

LACK OF LEADERSHIP

Your Comment ("A Failure of Leadership", August 15) has rightly underlined the demonstrable lack of our national leadership on the communal issue. While our prime minister is busy resolving international problems, he is doing precious little to arrest the deteriorating communal situation in the country. The Congress(I) must shed all its electoral illusions and realise that communal polarisation only helps communal parties, and eventually it will be their party which will suffer. The present failure of the Congress(I) to check communalism will herald the sad end of the strategic superiority of the party which is fast loosing its mass appeal.

Aligarh — TARIQ WALI

EYE OPENER

Your article on the sordid medical crime enacted in Uttar Pradesh was very heart-rending. A common feature of such ill-fated eye camps seems to be the failure of the organisers. It is sad that tragedies of this nature might inevitably trigger public reaction to such an extent that humanitarian service rendered by voluntary organisations might suffere undeserved disrepute.

Dharwad — VISHWESHWAR BHAT

UNRESOLVED CRISIS

The Tamil militants ("The Militant Mood", August 31) have started to sound their bugles, which was not at all an unexpected move. Even as the TULF was hoping to reach an agreement, the militants are creating trouble because of some impressive terrorist successes against the Sri Lankan Government's security forces. If they continue their militant tactics, this would put the Indian Government in an awkward predicament. The Indian Government has often advised Jayewardene not to resort to a military option; but they have hardly ever done the same with the Tamil militants. So long as these people are free to move to and fro between India and Sri Lanka and violate India's immigration rules in the process, they can continue to play havoc with the situation in the troubled island. Unless India deals firmly with the militants, the Lanka problem will remain completely unresolved.

Pune — P.S. NARAYAN PRASAD

ELUSIVE GOALS

Your Comment ("The Challenge of Change", August 31) rightly commends Vasant Sathe on breaking the "perverted theorem" for contorted socialism. The dictates of socialism, so preoccupied with an equitable redistribution of wealth, remain silent when confronted with the corrupt, inefficient and wasteful variety which has emerged in India.

Calcutta — SUNIL GARODIA

CHARMED CIRCLE

It is indeed refreshing to know that our prime minister is surrounded by a select group of talented, proven MP's who are trustworthy and yet not sycophants ("Changing Orbits", August 31). Also, these politicians are also competently handling their respective ministries, thereby proving that their ideas are more than mere plain talk.

Bangalore — KALYAN KUMAR BANERJEE

CORRIGENDUM

In the article "Swap Success" (INDIA TODAY, August 31), the photograph of Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation Chairman S.V.S. Raghavan and that of State Trading Corporation Executive Director S. Jayaraman were inadvertently interchanged. The error is regretted.

—Editor

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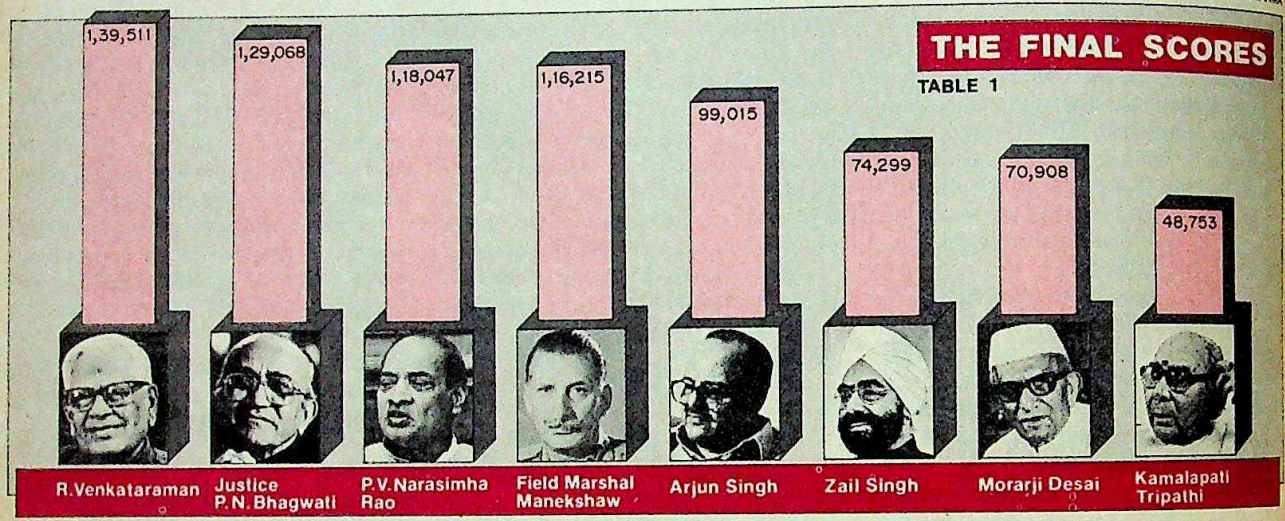
POLL 2 RESULTS—CHOICE OF EIGHTH PRESIDENT OF INDIA

A Difficult Choice

IN THIS, the second in the series of opinion polls, INDIA TODAY invited its readers to nominate their candidate for the eighth President of India from a list of eight names. Approximately 22,000 readers responded to the poll, slightly less than the number of respondents to the first poll on Political Competence. For an independent assessment of the results, INDIA TODAY commissioned Dr V.L. Mote, a founder professor of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. Professor Mote holds a doctorate in statistical methods from the State University of North Carolina in the US. His analysis:

Charts by B.K. SHARMA

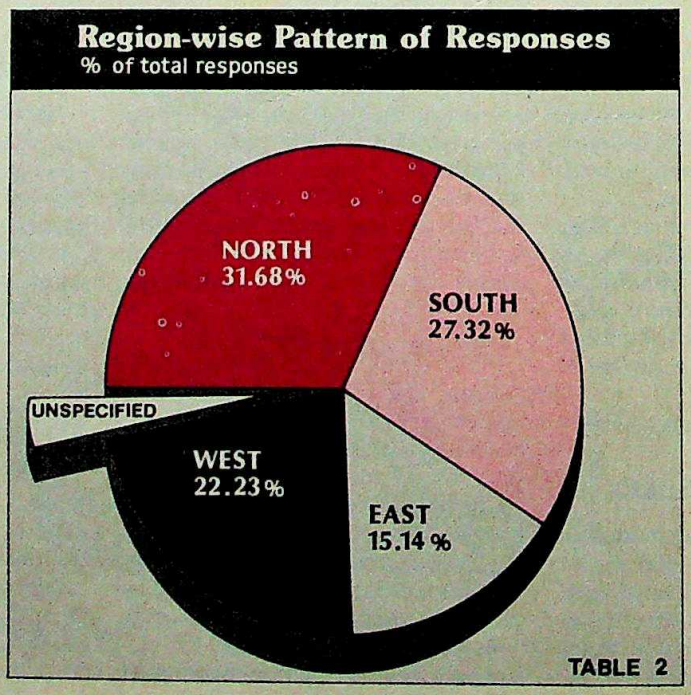


THE RESULTS revealed that Vice-President R. Venkataraman was the most preferred choice while Congress(I) Working President Kamalapati Tripathi was the least preferred candidate. Significantly, President Zail Singh ranked third from the bottom, just above former prime minister Morarji Desai and Kamalapati Tripathi.

The computerised analysis of the results showed that there was a greater agreement on the choice of the least preferred person (43.5 per cent) than there was on the most preferred candidate (35.5 per cent). Apparently, it is far more difficult to decide who the next president should be than to decide who should not be.

Table 1 illustrates the preferences expressed as a score by the respondents for the eight candidates listed in the poll (for a description of the methodology used in scoring see India Today, August 31, 1986).

Table 2 gives a region-wise pattern of the responses for this poll while table 3 is a performance appraisal which gives the percentage of the total respondents who ranked each personality at the various positions. Table 3 also indicates the average score obtained by each candidate which has been worked out by dividing the total score in each case by the total number of respondents.



The reasons given for the choice of candidate is an indication of the kind of qualities the eighth president should ideally possess. Venkataraman was given top ranking because he is perceived as a man who acts independently and has clarity of thought and vision while Justice Bhagwati scored heavily because of his knowledge of the Indian Constitution and his apolitical and non-controversial nature. Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, who ranked as fourth choice, was preferred for his courage, discipline and values. There was, in fact, a marked consistency of opinion among the respondents regarding the qualities that a presidential candidate should have. The four preferred qualities that stand out are:

► Independence both in thought and action ("should not be a rubber stamp").

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▸ A strong sense of values and ability to shape the values of the nation.

▸ Vision and the ability to lead the nation under "unusual circumstances".

▸ Ability to subordinate the interests of the party and self interest to the national interest ("shall be above politics").

What could be the reason for the unanimity among the readers regarding the qualities that they would like to see in the president? It is not possible to answer this question from responses given by the readers since the responses were too brief because of the limit of 50 words imposed by the rules of the poll. We have, therefore, to look at history to see if the developments in the past can provide an answer to the expectations of the future.

The Sino-Indian conflict took place soon after Dr. Radhakrishnan was appointed as President of India. During his visit to Tejpur in the eastern sector he told the jawans: "We were living in a dream world. Now we are waking up to a reality." Compare this sharply worded indictment of the Government by Dr. Radhakrishnan with a justification of the actions of the Congress(I) Government on imposition of Emergency in the country in 1975 by former president Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed. He said: "We were sliding towards anarchy because of the dominance of permissive politics in our national life. Drastic steps were called for to curb political adventurism and indiscipline in all walks of life. The Emergency which was promulgated under the provisions of the Constitution has not only been approved by

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

The figures represent the percentage of total respondents who ranked each personality at the various positions.

Average Score*	Candidates	Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
6.31	R. Venkataraman	1	35.5	22.4	15.2	9.5	6.6	4.8	4.8	1.2	100.0
5.84	Justice P.N. Bhagwati	2	18.3	24.1	21.3	15.8	9.3	5.3	2.4	3.4	100.0
5.34	P.V. Narasimha Rao	3	9.8	19.5	18.9	20.8	16.6	8.7	3.7	2.0	100.0
5.26	Field Marshal Manekshaw	4	18.1	13.9	15.6	15.9	16.0	10.3	5.7	4.6	100.0
4.48	Arjun Singh	5	6.3	9.0	14.4	17.6	21.9	16.3	9.4	5.2	100.0
3.36	Zail Singh	6	6.7	4.4	5.4	7.7	12.1	22.5	23.5	17.6	100.0
3.21	Morarji Desai	7	4.5	3.8	6.7	9.5	11.6	18.7	22.8	22.4	100.0
2.21	Kamalapati Tripathi	8	0.7	3.0	2.5	3.2	5.8	13.4	27.8	43.5	100.0
		Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

*Maximum average score attainable is 8.

TABLE 3

A total of 51 readers sent in entries that corresponded with the final national score. To select the three winners, a panel of four judges assessed the reasons they had given for ranking R. Venkataraman first. The judges selected the winners on the basis of their assessments of the presidential qualities perceived in R. Venkataraman, the present vice-president and chairman of the Rajya Sabha, and the manner in which these were presented.

First Prize: Vinayan Varrier
Bakrol road, Vallabhvidyanagar, Gujarat.

Assessment: "Venkataraman is a worthy presidential contender because he is an able administrator, great parliamentarian, eminent scholar, uncorrupt leader and, in general, a personality of high calibre, apart from being the vice-president."

Second Prize: Dulcine Lobo
Loudale, Mangalore, Karnataka.

Assessment: "His choice will assure a smooth transition into the Presidency without unpleasant political vibrations. He is a gentleman politician, mature in administrative affairs, has remained non-controversial, and can conduct himself with honour and dignity at ceremonial functions."

Third Prize: Neeraj Kulshrestha
C-2/249 Janakpuri, New Delhi.

Assessment: "He has vast administrative experience, having served in various capacities in the Government. An asset to the august office of the President. As vice-president and chairman of the Rajya Sabha, he enjoys a good reputation amongst the members. An intellectual with a clean image, he is also well-known internationally."

Consolation Prizes: Yash Parekh (Bombay), Venkatachari Prasad (Madras), Mohan Menezes (Mangalore), Pramod Nagpal (New Delhi), Soumitra Sankar Samaddar (Calcutta), Balveer Singh (Zawar), Pradeep Narang (Delhi), Balwinder Singh (Ludhiana), Suryam Champati (Hyderabad), Madhu Sethi (Bombay), Jogesh Sachdev (Calcutta), Gopalan Ramachandran (Tiruchirapalli), Jaya Raju Yeggoni (Kurnool), Tridib Sen (Bombay), Jayanta Chaudhry (Shillong), Diwakar Khanna (Cambay), Ramjilal Pareek (New Delhi), R. Chandra Sekaran (Salem), Gopal Swaroop (Jaipur), Gurudutt Kishore Kamath (Bangalore), Surendra Gupta (Kanpur), Devender Sharma (Bombay), Debabrata Banerjee (Calcutta), N.R. Jayaram (Bangalore), Susheela Menon (Cochin), Vikram Kumar (Chandigarh), Suraj Bhan Sharma (New Delhi), Raman Ramachandran Iyer (Madras), Nitish Khanapure (Pune), Prashant Sahu (Jabalpur), Pushpa Sonwaney (Aurangabad), Ramesh Nagappa Shetty (Bombay), Satish Modi (Narwana), Vinay Pande (Lucknow), S. Bala Krishnan (Delhi), Dilip Kumar Mittra (Bhopal), Rajan Kumar Gianey (New Delhi), Dushyant Jain (Jodhpur), Venkatramana Achar (Bangalore), Alka Mahajan (New Delhi), Gulshan Mirchandani (Agra), Nandkumar K. Menon (Bombay), Rajendra Bahadur Singh (Shahdol), Alok Gupta (New Delhi), Gayatri Tandon (Faridabad), Santosh Kumar Mishra (Shillong), Sunil Saxena (Jaipur), Amitabha Basu (Calcutta).

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Parliament but also welcomed by the people at large."

The action might have been approved by Parliament but was it welcomed by the people? History would hardly support the assertion that the Emergency was welcomed by the citizens. It is possible that historical developments such as this counted with readers when they preferred a president who was "not a rubber stamp".

BEARER bonds introduced by the former finance minister R. Venkataraman with a view to divert funds from the parallel economy to the official economy: was it an admission of the Government's inability to tame the parallel economy or was it an admission of the fact that the party in power lacked political will to come to grip with the parallel economy?

In an interview with INDIA TODAY (July 15, 1982) H.R. Khanna, former judge of the Supreme Court, observed: "I believe that despite the limited role of the President, he can make a positive contribution in many spheres. There is a general degeneration of political life. People are losing faith in politicians. The President can arrest this trend by not involving himself in it directly." The readers seem to be echoing his sentiments when they say that they want a president who has a sense of values and can shape the values of the nation.

Former president N. Sanjiva Reddy dissolved the Lok Sabha after the fall of the Government headed by the former prime minister Charan Singh. Commenting on this decision, N. Palkhiwala observed: "The President's decision to dissolve the Lok Sabha is, to use the language of studied moderation, unjustified to the point of constitutional impropriety."

Palkhiwala then pointed out three other options that the President could have considered to the one which he actually followed: namely, that of dissolving the Lok Sabha. This particular incident could, again, have influenced readers' preferences for a president who can lead the nation "under unusual circumstances".

We can also speculate on the reasons that led readers to observe that a candidate for the presidential poll should have the four qualities stated above. The speculation will be of academic interest but a more practical question is whether the nation would find such a person. The lack of unanimity among the readers concerning the choice of the candidate for the presidential poll shows that, at least in their opinion, a person with all the desired qualities is not in sight.

Samples of the respondents' comments on the seven candidates other than R. Venkataraman gives some indication of their respective image as leaders and public figures. Some samples:

JUSTICE BHAGWATI

Has translated concern for social needs into precedent-setting actions.
Vishakapatnam — **R. Pingali**

At this juncture we need a president who is well versed with the Constitution, above party politics and a well-known public figure.
Delhi — **Nangyal Tsewang**

Has a conscience and a sharp legal brain that will enable him to give judicious counsel on legislation.
New Delhi — **Pallav Bhattacharya**

ZAIL SINGH

Has maintained the dignity of the office under trying circumstances.
Bangalore — **Pushpa Kanekal**

He is a deeply religious man.
New Delhi — **Uday Singh**

India needs a president from a minority community to keep the country united.
Patiala — **Inderjeet Kaur**

NARASIMHA RAO

A gentleman politician known for his understanding of Indian culture.
Roorkee — **Padma Kalavagunta**

Distinguished himself as a civil servant, parliamentarian and minister. Respected for his intellect.
Allahabad — **Ajay Misra**

Is a good speaker who can deal with problems with patience and tact.
Secunderabad — **Sankaran Menon**

SAM MANEKSHAW

He will at least look authoritative.
Bombay — **Samir Jariwala**

A non-politician, leader of men and a national hero. Will lend credibility, statesmanship and style to the highest office.
Hyderabad — **Virendra Chhikara**

To stem the present drift, India needs true soldiers of discipline and dedication at the helm.
Vizianagaram — **Siva Prasad Gali**

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Strong-willed and independent of vested interests.
Calcuttta — **Himanshu Lathia**

Principled, steadfast believer in his convictions, and able administrator.
Bombay — **Hasmukh Gaglani**

He is the only real Gandhian leader of stature. His clean record is itself a big achievement.
Dharamshala — **Thakur Swaroop Singh**

ARJUN SINGH

He has become the central figure in the country's political horizon.
Jabalpur — **Naseer Zuberi**

A very competent person. Is in the good books of the prime minister.
New Delhi — **Abhishek Verma**

His handling of the Punjab accord and dissidents prove he has the prime requisites of a president.
Patna — **Divya Singh**

KAMALAPATI TRIPATHI

Making him president would be the most honourable way of getting rid of him since it would be dangerous to expel him from the party.
Sambalpur — **Soma Gupta**

He is the senior-most among Congress leaders and possesses the strength to criticise the party.
Hyderabad — **Inani Ramakanth.**

Has the kind of moral fibre, tenacity and faith needed to keep current political trends in check.
Pune — **Harish Vadgama**

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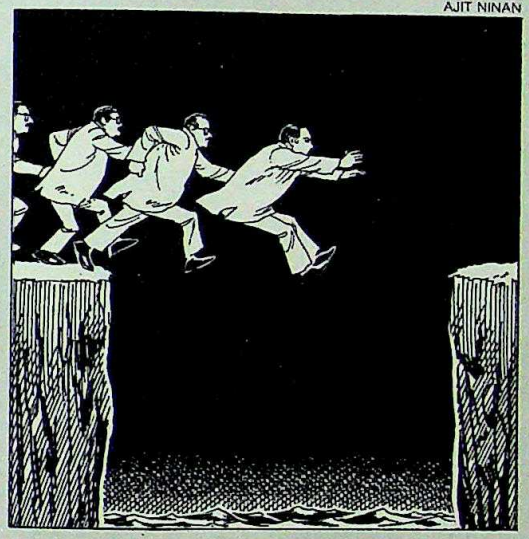
Acting First Thinking Later

AT HIS first formal press conference in New Delhi after assuming office as prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi had said that he would like his government to be known as one that 'works faster'. Twenty months later, Rajiv Gandhi's Government is getting a reputation for acting first and thinking later. The impression that is created in the public mind—of confusion at the top, of a surfeit of advisers talking and acting at cross-purposes, and of mature judgement being at a premium—can hardly help instil confidence in the wisdom and solidity of government when the country is passing through increasingly difficult and trying times.

There have been all too many instances in recent weeks of ill-considered flip-flops for these to be dismissed as stray gaffes by a government led by a young and inexperienced prime minister. The chief ministers of the states that have a border with Pakistan are summoned to New Delhi at such short notice that only half of those invited are able to come in time. Tamil militant leaders invited to New Delhi for talks are made to cool their heels in New Delhi for two days, and within an hour of their heading back to Madras a special government plane flies Central ministers to Madras to conduct talks there. The Government then finds it impossible to decide whether Governor's Rule should be extended for another six months in Jammu and Kashmir, or replaced with President's Rule: the governor is first asked by the prime minister's minions in New Delhi to recommend one course of action, then asked to recommend the other. For good measure, the governor is subjected to the same treatment as the militants: summoned to New Delhi for talks and then forced to return without meeting anyone of note in the Government.

AJIT NINAN



Then, there are the hasty pieces of legislation. The Muslim Women's Bill some months ago was almost certainly a case on which the Government should have considered its course more carefully (as the fall-out of the legislation in the courts makes clear). Before that, the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue was badly handled, kindling the communal tinder-box. The more recent decision to prohibit the denigration of women in films and advertisements has obviously laudable objectives (as with so much else that the Rajiv Gandhi Government attempts), but the precise wording of the law leaves so much scope for varying interpretations and harassment as to reduce this to misconceived legislation. But the most notable case of all is the move to first assume special powers through a Constitutional amendment to Centrally administer the border districts of Punjab. This was dropped when an opposition parliamentarian pointed out what the law minister should have done earlier: that the Government already had such special powers. When the move to invoke these powers in Punjab provoked the kind of protest that should have been anticipated from the Akali Government in Punjab, the move was extended to all the states bordering Pakistan, and then—in a breathtaking turnabout—dropped altogether after the Rajya Sabha had already given its assent.

Sometimes, the gaffes take on the character of bizarre farce, as in the case of the amendment suggested by an opposition member to a Bill that proposed higher salaries for judges: the Lok Sabha could not take this up for consideration because the Government had failed to get the President's assent (as was required) in this case. Speaker Balram Jakhar was forced to ask in the House whether all the MP's should sit "and chat with each other" while the Government got back to the President. At a slightly different level, the ambassador in Washington was interrupted in the midst of his final farewell party and asked to unpack his bags and stay on till further orders.

There cannot be such a list of snafus without something being wrong at the top. The prime minister is young and inexperienced, and this may explain some of the instances when he was hustled into action (for example, the Muslim Women's Bill). The prime minister also seems far too keen to live up to his promise of working faster: he has set unrealistic and unnecessary deadlines in areas where patience might have delivered better results, or at the least avoided the stamp of failure when the deadlines that had been set came and went without anything being achieved. But inexperience and occasional unwise haste are only a part of the problem. For the prime minister's senior ministers and advisers are long in the tooth, grey eminences with many years of experience behind them. Certainly, Rajiv Gandhi has no dearth of advisers, for he has appointed a host of advisory committees, while even more numerous informal advisers and a kitchen cabinet of sorts also manage to get their tuppenny-worth in.

Yet the very plethora of advisers now seems to be the problem: there are crossed wires, cross-talk, and when something goes wrong, no one on whom to pin the responsibility. The commerce minister seems to count for more in legal matters than the law minister, there is confusion in the Home Ministry, Central ministers complain about the demi-gods in the Prime Minister's Secretariat, and the chain of command is confused. The country is now on a short fuse, and there is a sense of looming crisis as communalism raises its head ever higher. There is a clear need at this juncture for firm and steady leadership, and solutions with a cosmetic appeal will simply not do. The people today need to believe in the Government's ability to handle things right. The recent record makes this difficult. It is time the prime minister and his colleagues got their act together.

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Serial on Rails

● It would ordinarily have been a great idea: a 13-episode TV serial (*Yatra*) on the railways by Shyam Benegal. But several questions may need to be answered by Minister of State for Railways, Madhav Rao Scindia about the manner in which the Benegal project has been handled.

The railways provided Benegal a 10-bogey train—free of charge—for 50 days of travel the length and breadth of the country. The official

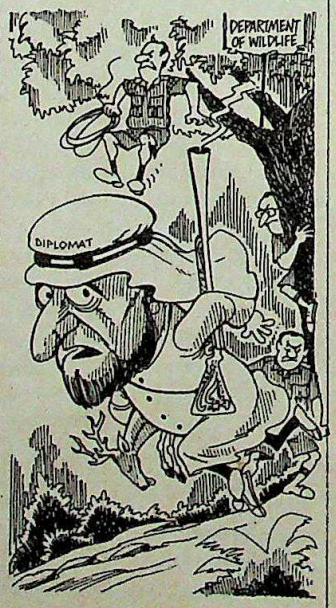
estimated cost to the railways: less than Rs 3 lakh. Unofficial estimate: Rs 50 lakh. Railway officials had insisted that the legal department should prepare a detailed agreement spelling out Benegal's liabilities and contractual obligations. But the project was cleared directly by Scindia without seeking the prior consent of the financial commissioner in the Railway Board.

The film is being sponsored for Doordarshan by Bombay Dyeing, the company in which Scindia has a shareholding interest and whose chairman, Nusli Wadia, is a Scindia buddy. Benegal has said that it was he who chose Bombay Dyeing, but the choice of promoter remains curious as there is a possible conflict of interest between Scindia's roles as a public servant and as a shareholder of Bombay Dyeing.

Diplomat Trapping

● The External Affairs Ministry and the Wildlife Department has been engaged in a furious slanging match. It started a year back, when a wildlife warden in the Sivalik game sanctuary nabbed a party of poachers who had killed a cheetal while hunting at night. The poachers quite surprisingly turned out to be two prominent ambassadors from West Asia. The guard recommended fines and prosecution. Then all diplomatic hell broke loose.

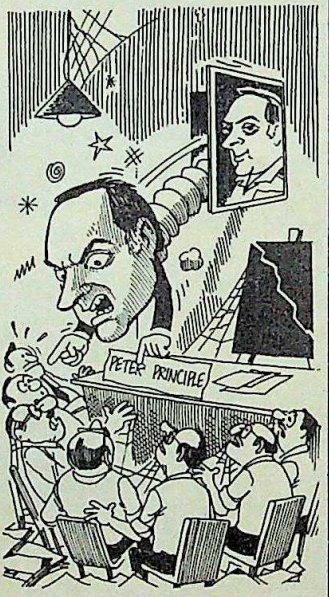
The foreign office sent out a flurry of telexes and letters to the Wildlife Department, demanding withdrawal of the case and suppression of the records in order to avoid diplomatic tension with the countries of the oil-rich poachers. But the wildlife boys not only extracted a handsome fine from the diplomats but refused to cow down to the foreign office. In fact, they recently



warned the Ministry of External Affairs that they will not soft-pedal on diplomatic poachers, and currently they have on their surveillance list at least two more suspected poaching plenipotentiaries.

Mr. Tough

● Rajiv Gandhi, who has cultivated the public image of the cool, apparently unflappable leader, has, however, a belly-full of fire which he unleashes with acerbic ferocity on unsuspecting senior bureaucrats. Frustrated by the slow implementation of his programmes, the prime minister let this show recently in a meeting with senior government secretaries. Using the metaphor of the Peter Principle, which holds that officials



finally rise to the level of their own incompetence, Rajiv intoned tongue-in-cheek at the meeting that it appeared to him that all mediocre IAS officers ultimately rise to the level of secretary.

Then, at a Planning Commission meeting, Rajiv wanted to know—out of the blue—the exact figures on the total private per capita investment in Punjab. He was greeted by silence which was eventually broken by a few officials who mumbled that this kind of figure was rarely compiled and in any case not immediately available. "I want them now," Rajiv demanded. One official said it would take a few days to compile them. But Rajiv would have none of it. He gave them a deadline: the figures would have to be produced before breakfast the following day. And with that he departed, leaving behind panic-stricken officials scrambling hurriedly for their files.

The Kashmir Tangle

● Internecine warfare within the Congress(I) has become another element affecting the political fate of J&K. To most people it appears the battle to control the state is being waged solely between the Congress and the National Conference(F). But the truth is that factions within the ruling party at the Centre are locked in a wrangle over the method of exerting control. Rajiv favours extending Governor's rule under Article 92 of the J&K Constitution, thereby insulating the Centre from direct political consequences.

But state leaders are pressuring the Governor for implementation of President's rule under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution. Under this, Jagmohan has to seek prior approval of the Home Ministry before taking any policy deci-

sions. The Political Affairs Committee of the Cabinet has approved extension of Governor's rule but the decision has been kept in abeyance due to pressure brought by the Kashmiri lobby in the Congress.

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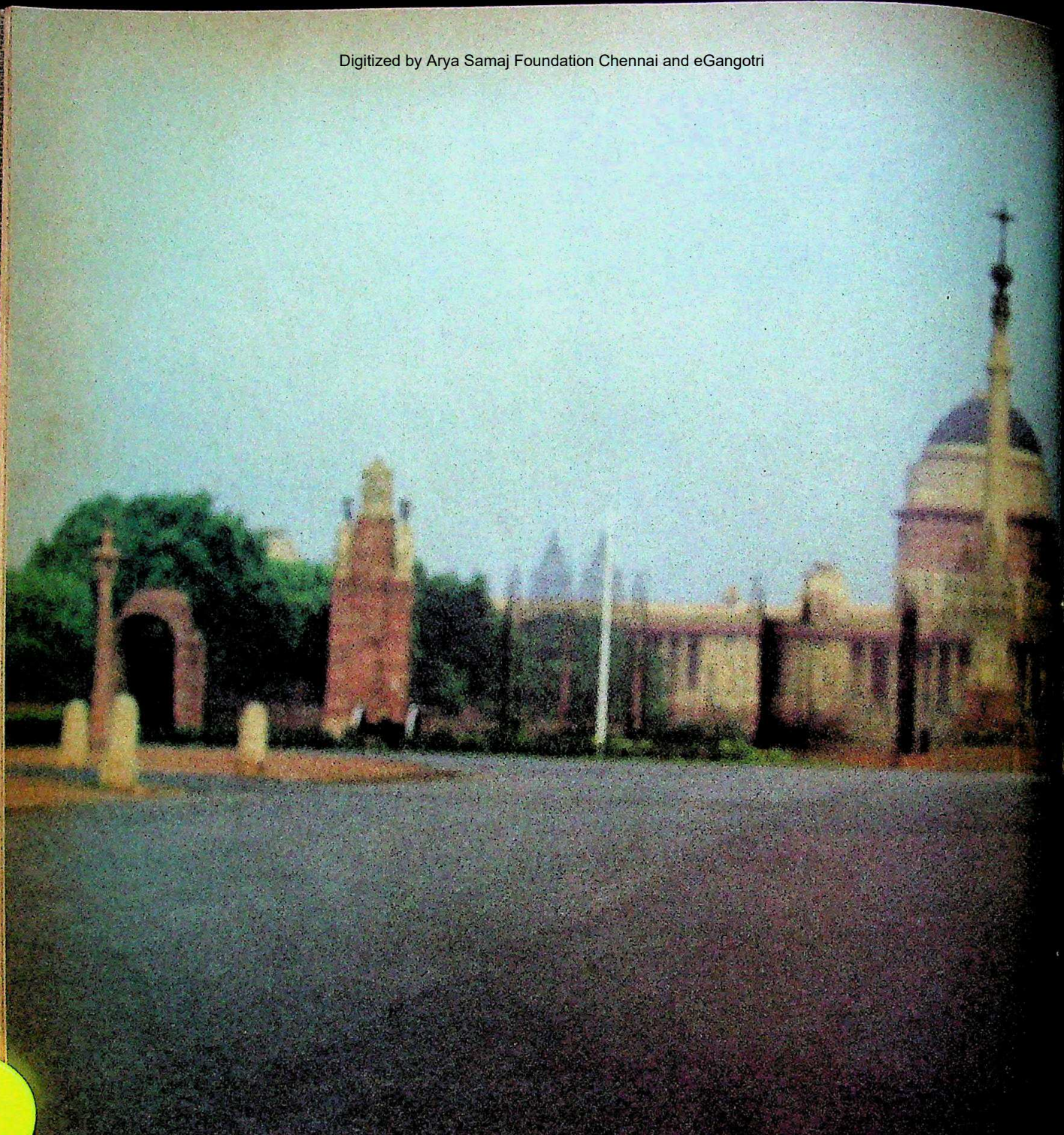

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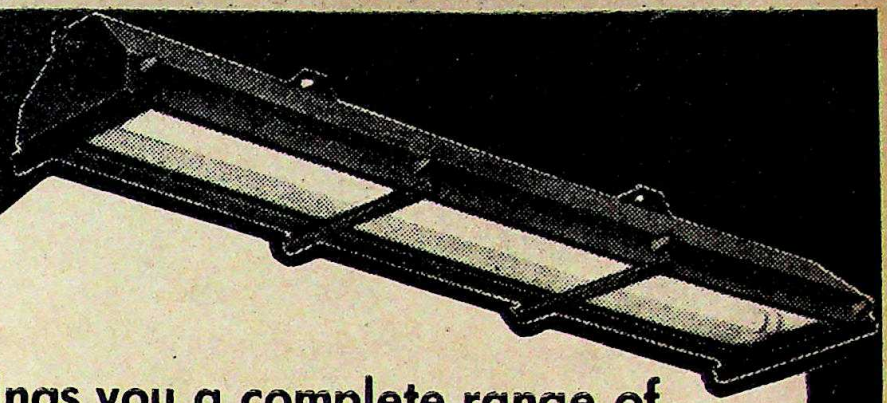

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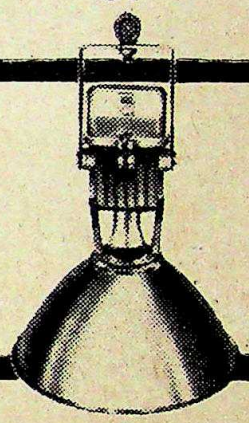

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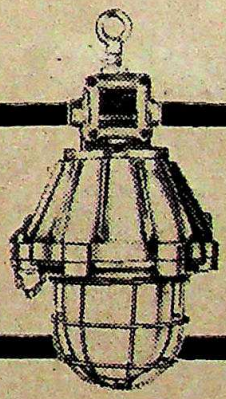

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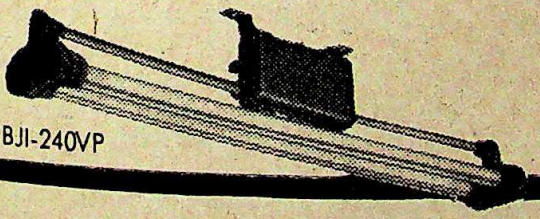

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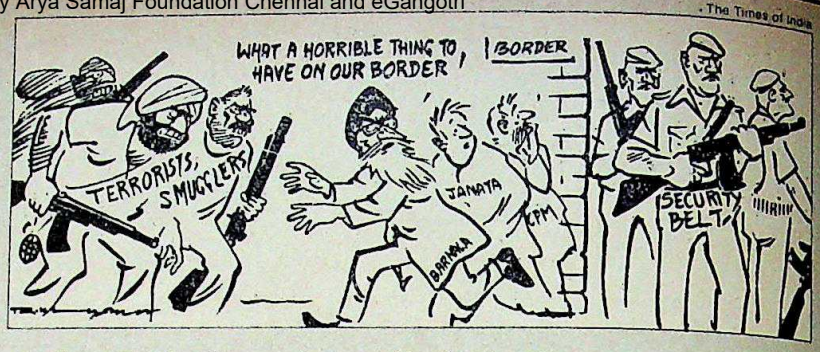

Gandhi: What has happened to our bloody aircraft?
Aide: Not yet repaired sir.
Gandhi: What has happened to their bloody aircraft?
Aide: Not arrived yet sir.
Gandhi: Dammit

■ Conversation between RAJIV GANDHI and aide at Moscow airport as reported by *The Sunday Observer*

● *Sometimes I also feel that I could address myself to the national problem, maybe emerge as a Muslim Nehru. But one's energy and time are limited. And even a Doctor Schweitzer keeps busy treating the patients that reach his hut.*

■ SYED SHAHABUDDIN, MP in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

● *It is at sensitive moments like the one we are passing through, that the need is greatest for leaders who talk the language of peace and brotherhood. Mr Shahabuddin is dangerous because at this moment he is instead telling Radio Australia that he fears that blood will flow in street after street as Muslims are forced to protect their interests through violence.*

■ M.J. AKBAR in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

● *I am at my wits' end to understand the motives of Mr Sathe. He has embarrassed us. To my mind, Mr Sathe's exercise is a gross violation of propriety, norms and principles governing the conduct of ministers.*

■ K.K. TEWARI, minister of state for public enterprises, in response to Union Minister for Energy, Vasant Sathe's critical articles on the public sector

● *My brother was my hero, my beloved, my everything. There were many occasions when I did not agree with him politically, but I had a kind of adoring passion for him which, I realise was not perhaps correct. But to be wrong with him was better than to be right to anyone else.*

■ VIJAYA LAKSHMI PANDIT on Jawaharlal Nehru in *Gentleman*

● *Jyoti Basu may call himself a Marxist but his administration in Darjeeling is purely communal. Else why should this democratic movement (the GNLF agitation) invite such brutal suppression?*

■ SUBASH GHISING, president, Gorkha National Liberation Front, in *Frontline*

● *Nearly 10 per cent of the faculty of Jawaharlal Nehru University—the Kremlin-on-the-Jamuna—have applied for jobs in American universities. H.N. Bahugana may fume about American perfidy and wax eloquent about friendly USSR, but for by-pass surgery, he went to Houston. No wonder Marxism has no future.*

■ SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY in *Imprint*

● *Have you ever seen a woman standing on her head and making love or three men making love to one woman? It is in Khajuraho. All over India you have statues of Shiva lingams and only one of Brahma the creator of the world. But who bothers about him. He retired.*

■ RAJNEESH in *Sunday*

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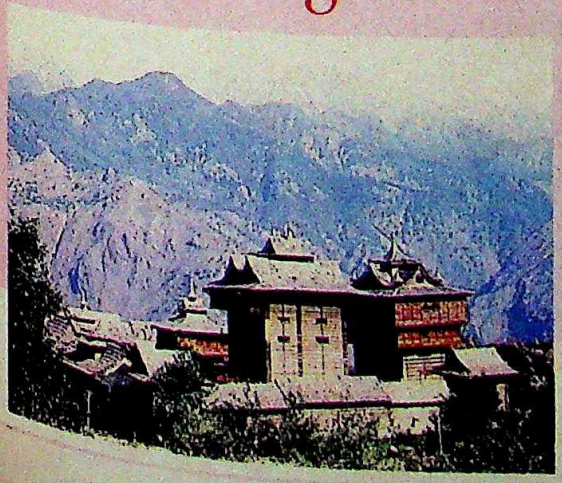

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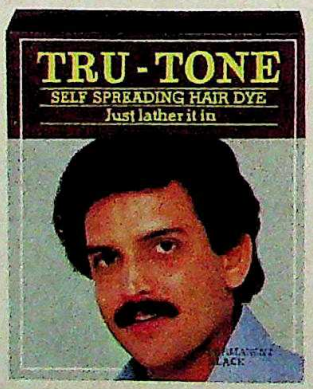

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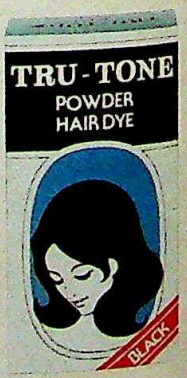

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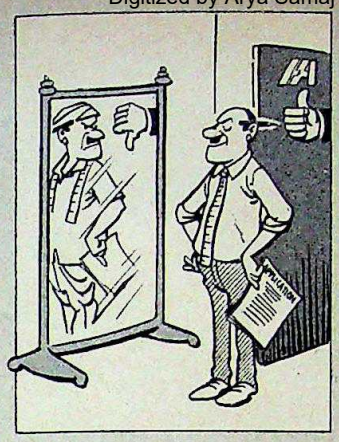

■ What's in a name? Quite a lot actually if the name of the game happens to be an application for employment in Indian Airlines. Take the case of the gentleman who was born in Darzi-kuan, an obscure little hamlet situated in the wilds of Rajasthan. In accordance with traditional village custom, his family name was Darzi which, however, had very little to do with his chosen profession but eventually became an occupational hazard all the same.

Having migrated to Jorhat, in Assam's tea-growing area, and obtained the necessary educational qualifications, Mr Darzi decided that he would apply for a job in the local office of Indian Airlines. Year after year, he went regularly through the "apply, apply, no reply" procedure till, on the advice of a more knowledgeable friend, he decided to tailor his application to the airline's needs.

He employed the simple ploy of getting his name officially changed from Darzi to Tailor and sent in his annual application signed R.K. Tailor. Not only did he get an immediate response from the airline authorities but he now occupies the office of the airport manager at Jorhat having effectively proved the point that a switch in name can save time.

MISSING MEDIA

■ Politicians can offer press conferences at the drop of a Gandhi topi. Except there are times when it can drop with quite a clanger. One rather voluble member of the species arrived at Calcutta airport last fortnight having decided during the flight to air his views on arrival. Having ensconced himself at the VIP lounge, and announced his intentions to hold forth, he waited for the city's press corps to beat a path to his requisitioned abode.

Unfortunately, he had forgotten to inform the uniformed gentleman guarding the portals. When the media arrived and pressed for admittance, the guard put his boot down—only those with a security pass would be admitted.

The VIP's aide then went into a tailspin trying to find someone who could issue the Open Sesame order. Hours passed and the press corps, fed up of waiting, trooped off to have their overdue lunch. When last heard of, the aide was rushing around the airport waving the coveted passes in desperate search of the missing media while the VIP's press conference eventually boiled down to a few choice words.

IDENTITY CRISIS

■ Talking about VIP's, the country's headstrong dash into the 21st century and the induction of a new breed of modern-looking politicians is creating some peculiar problems. And none so peculiar as that of Ashok Nath Verma, a young political newcomer, who recently bagged a Janata ticket to the Rajya Sabha from Uttar Pradesh. Eager to assume his new responsibilities, Verma packed his bags and was due to arrive in Delhi on the Janata Express, travelling, as befitting his new station, in a first class compartment. The Janata Party unit in Delhi had made elaborate plans to welcome him to the city—and a berth in the Upper House. Verma, who was fittingly occupying an upper berth, had, unfortunately, chosen the wrong outfit.

When the train steamed in, a crowd of party workers invaded the compartment, garlanded a portly paan-chewing gentleman dressed in khadi kurta pyjama, and carried him off protesting feebly on their shoulders. On alighting, Verma, who was wearing jeans and a T-shirt, enquired of the porter what the fuss was all about only to be told that the over-enthusiastic crowd had come to welcome a newly-elected Rajya Sabha MP.

DOGGED EFFORT

■ Policing a border can be an invitation to boredom apart from the odd moments of comic relief. And the oddest of all must be the dogged efforts of the Himachal police post on the Dharamshala-Chandigarh road where it crosses over into Punjab, to recover a .303 rifle and some cartridges that were stolen recently from the hut housing the cops. With the terrorist scare in the air, the Himachal police left no stone unturned in their hunt for the missing weaponry and finally decided to roust out a police dog from his cosy kennel in snowy Shimla.

The keen canine arrived on a sweltering day and with his tongue hanging out from the unaccustomed heat, tried gamely to pick up the scent with a huge crowd of locals

and policemen trailing behind in eager anticipation. After sniffing around for a while, the dog headed unerringly for a nearby pond and jumped in. The pond was dredged after a round-the-clock operation but no rifle. Only then did it dawn on the mud-caked cops that the dog, used to colder climes, had only jumped into the pond to cool off from the heat.

—DILIP BOBB

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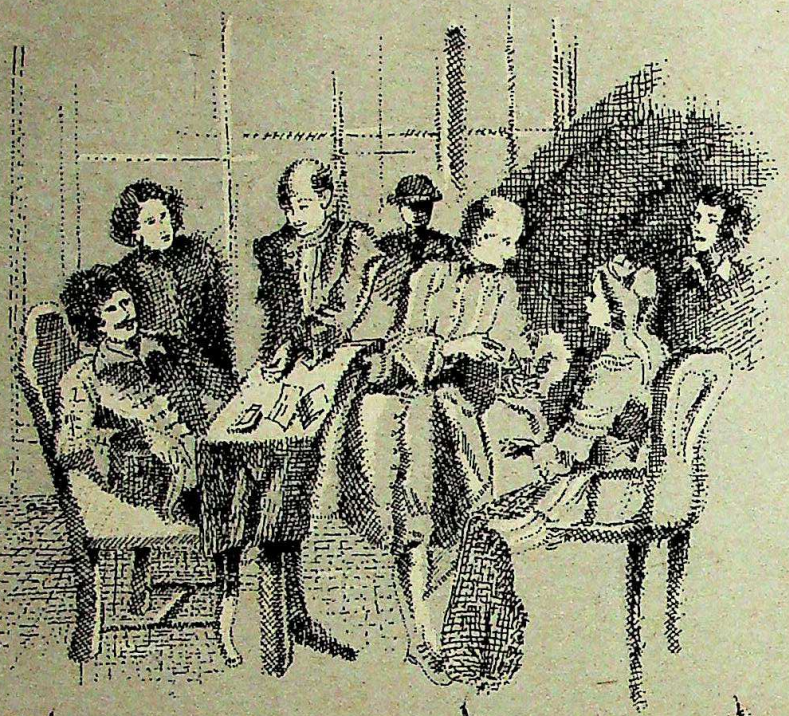
Did you know 2

The term 'banker' originated in Genoa from the bench on which the money dealer sat!



In those early times, when banking was in its infancy, the banker was a man who, with a capital sum, sat on a bench to transact business.

In India, indigenous banking, was in the form of rural money lending. Conducted as a private family business, money lending assumed even greater importance during the Mughal reign. Western type of banking was introduced in India begining with the second half of 18th century. With British colonisation, a totally new form of banking activity evolved.

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Rajiv addressing the session: attracting a new breed

Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR

CURRENT EVENTS

INDIAN YOUTH CONGRESS

The Rajiv Rage

THE INDIAN Youth Congress (IYC) has gone ritzy. In its new avatar, in evidence at the massive jamboree in New Delhi last fortnight, it has come out smelling like roses—and assorted French perfumery. Like the legendary phoenix, the new plumage of the party on display by the 6,000 "under-40" delegates comprising MP's, MLA's and party officials was in keeping with its image as the new Rajiv brigade. Dazzling silk saris and salwar kameezes for the women and custom-tailored kurta-pyjamas for many of the men. Even the party resolutions, neatly wrapped in plastic folders and carried under the arm like badges of loyalty, were invariably typed on electronic typewriters.

For the IYC, the gathering was as much a symbolic farewell to the Sanjay era as it was an orchestrated salutation to their new lodestar—his brother Rajiv Gandhi. Gone were the indisciplined and street-smart college drop-outs and rustic rowdies. In their place was the new breed, sophisticated, with a gleam of idealism in their eyes matching the glint of their Cartier pens and the diamond buttons in their kurtas. Mainly drawn from the rich peasantry, erstwhile royalty and the urban rich, the delegates represent a sea change in the membership of the organisation and in the political mainstream that has started to flow behind Rajiv. Said Bhubaneshwar Kalitha, IYC general secretary: "There is no doubt that the IYC has got a new look. We are an organisation which has a lot of floating population. Now it is full of educated youngsters with drive and confidence." Even Kamal Nath, a key member of the former Sanjay Gandhi

Anand Sharma, 33
president, IYC

"Is there any harm in attracting those young people who can communicate and perform better?"

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Jayanthi Natarajan, 32
member, Rajya Sabha

"But for Rajiv I would not have been in politics. I joined the Youth Congress soon after he did."

Praveen Dawar, 35
member, IYC national council

"I joined politics because I want to help the IYC in combatting communalism and regionalism."

Reena Singh, 28
MLA, Uttar Pradesh

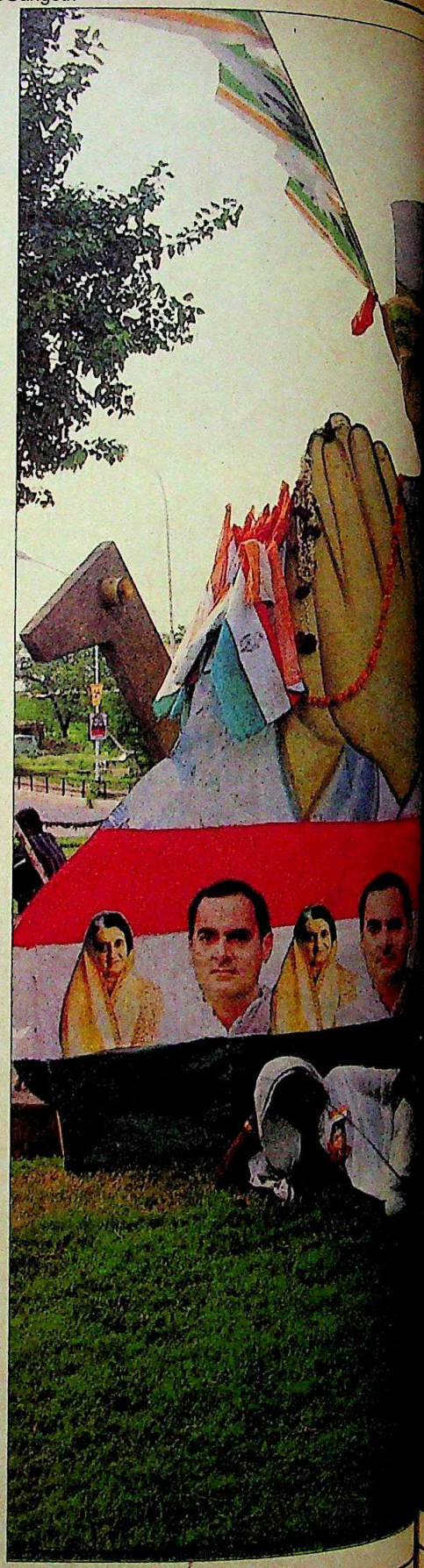
"Joining politics was the best thing which could have happened to me. One doesn't mind sacrificing a bit."

brigade, was moved to admit: "The organisation has changed beyond recognition. It has more educated, disciplined and intelligent people now. And it is better organised."

What was most glaringly obvious was that not a tear was shed for the passing of the Sanjay era. This was the first IYC convention where not even a single slogan was raised in memory of the man who catapulted the organisation on to the national horizon and, in the words of Mrs Gandhi, "stole the thunder" from the parent body 10 years ago. Inside the Talkatora Indoor Stadium in New Delhi, a stark 20"x 30" black and white portrait of Sanjay hung in a dimly lit corner as the only concession to his memory. And he was more than conspicuously absent from the row of huge cut-outs of Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv prominently displayed at the entrance. Admitted an IYC office-bearer: "We may not agree, but it is a fact that we have made a conscious attempt to delink the organisation from the Sanjay era. Most of us didn't like his style of brashness."

BUT MORE than the seemingly deliberate attempt to de-Sanjayise the organisation, what marked the jamboree was the sudden profusion of educated professionals who have virtually taken over from the Sanjay loyalists. The majority of the 25 Pradesh Youth Congress(I) Committee presidents and 500-odd office-bearers have joined the party only after Sanjay's demise. Over 200 of the 600 district level presidents are sons and daughters of the local rich or aristocracy who have left their urban cocoons or family businesses and plunged into active politics. Defending the change, Anand Sharma, 33, a post-graduate and president of the IYC, argued: "Is there any harm in attracting those young people who can understand better, communicate better and perform better? Under Rajivji's leadership it has been our endeavour to bring out the educated, clean professionals so that politics is not considered to be a bad thing." Added Tariq Anwar, former IYC president: "The Youth Congress is basically a feeder-line service for our parent organisation. When we had to fight our opponents, we needed fighters. Now we have to consolidate and do constructive work, so we need a different set of people. Rajivji wants a much wider involvement from a cross-section of society."

In his address, Rajiv himself harped on the "development of the man" and the involvement of a much larger number of people in building the character of the nation. "It is all right to have faster industrial development but we must aim at the total development and all of you must go back to your areas and participate in inculcating the spirit of Bharatiyata (Indianness). I request



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Sanjay finds no place in the row of cut-outs of Nehru, Indira and Rajiv put up outside Talkatora Stadium: conspicuous change

the organisation to chalk out a Bharat Banao (Build India) programme," he said.

Undoubtedly, the primary reason for the cultural change by the sudden influx of a new breed of IYC workers is Rajiv himself. Most of the recruits projected at the convention by being selected to speak on important issues displayed an unabashed admiration for their leader and spoke fervently of their desire to "sacrifice everything" for his benefit. Said Jayanthi Natarajan, a 32-year-old advocate and a Rajya Sabha member from Tamil Nadu who moved the economic resolution: "But for Rajiv I would not have been in active politics. I joined the Youth Congress in 1982 soon after he entered into it." Added Mabel Robello, a post-graduate in sociology and a member of the IYC National Council: "I found that under the new leadership, people like me can do better."

THOUGH the ardent, even fawning adulation smacked suspiciously of old-style sycophancy in a new garb, there was also no mistaking the sense of purpose and dedication among the new recruits to the Rajiv brigade. One prime example is Reena Singh, 28, from a Moradabad royal family who became an MLA in Uttar Pradesh and is now actively involved in youth politics. The convent-educated Singh quit her career as a furniture designer to join politics. Coyly covering her head with the end of her saree, she said: "Joining politics was the best thing which could have happened to me. Rajiv Gandhi wants committed, young and clean people. I think it is good to work with such people in politics. One doesn't mind sacrificing a bit for the country and the party."

Singh's colleague, Mitul Pradeep, the 26-year-old daughter of film lyricist Pradeep, says she plunged into politics to help the IYC develop its cultural cell. A graduate and diploma holder in business management, Mitul was appointed chairperson of the Maharashtra Youth Congress cultural cell and was introduced into politics by film actor Sunil Dutt during his Lok Sabha election in December 1984. Said Mitul: "It was entirely due to Rajivji and Sunil Duttji that I am in politics. I want to be a good politician. Earlier girls were afraid of joining the Youth Congress, but I don't see any problems in the organisation". Added Praveen Dawar, a member of the national council of the organisation and a former Indian Army captain: "I quit and joined politics because I want to help the IYC in combating communalism and regionalism. The Youth Congress is the right forum for launching an offensive against these evils."

Clearly, it is people like these who will represent the new force and leadership in the organisation. As was obvious at the conven-

A. Jayamohan, 32
member, Lok Sabha

"Congress politics is irrelevant without Rajiv Gandhi. Our politics begins and ends with him."

Mitul Pradeep, 26
chairperson, IYC, Maharashtra

"Earlier, girls were afraid of joining the Youth Congress but I don't see any problems in the organisation."

Mabel Robello, 33
member, IYC national Council

"I came into politics by accident. I found that under the new leadership people like me can do better."

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tion, the traditional party workers from the villages and small towns were studiously kept at a distance and denied any opportunity to air their views. In fact, so deliberate was their distancing—and their sense of alienation—that most of them stayed only to listen to Rajiv's speech and then dispersed. Admitted Suryu Prashad from Bihar: "Everything seems to have changed. There is a premium on image and language and not on political work."

Prashad's was a perceptive comment on the proceedings. The Natrajans, Dawars and Mituls clearly represent the kind of people who have a bright future in the refurbished organisation. Said Vijay Laxmi, a doctor and member of the Madhya Pradesh Assembly: "A political party has to face the people. Those who represent it must be clean, presentable and should be able to communicate convincingly with the electorate. It is due to Rajiv that this change has come about in the Youth Congress." Added A. Jayamohan, 32, a Lok Sabha member and a fiery advocate from Tamil Nadu and chief of the state's Youth Congress: "Congress politics is irrelevant without Rajiv Gandhi. Our politics begins and ends with him."

BUT MORE than a display of the obvious genealogical changes, last fortnight's gathering carried another not-so-subtle message—the exhibition of total support for Rajiv Gandhi by an influential and youthful section of society and a warning to the 'Old Guard' opposing him. The tone was set by the welcome address delivered by Anand Sharma himself. Thundered Sharma: "On behalf of 6,000 delegates I want to warn those who are trying to raise their ugly heads against the leadership that they will remain confined to the dustbin of history, like their ilk in the past who dreamt of throwing out Nehruji and Indiraji." Added Marvin Godinho, 27, an industrialist who is the Union territory's Youth Congress president: "We are here to express our solidarity with Rajiv and his ideals. He represents the sentiments of modern youth and modern India. We will support him with all our might."

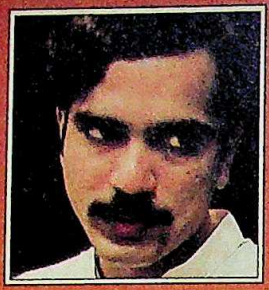
Even the resolution made it clear that the convention's primary purpose was a show of strength. "This convention is of the considered opinion that the party will emerge healthier and cleaner with the purge of corrupt power brokers and disgruntled individuals who lack both stature and credibility...History is witness that while Nehru and Indiraji remained undeterred by such attacks, those who acted as impediments were swept away and reduced to non-entities. History will repeat itself again."

History, of course, was also repeating itself at the convention, which was "dedicated to India's unity, development, and clean value-based politics". Ten years earlier, another Gandhi had galvanised the youth into becoming storm-troopers for the Congress(I), and against Mrs Gandhi's opponents. Now, his brother was inspiring another youthful resurgence—and for somewhat similar reasons—to counter his own opponents and form the nucleus of a new force, this time shorn of its earlier destructive character. Said Sharma: "We in the Youth Congress and Mr Rajiv Gandhi are on the same wavelength." Added his general secretary, Jagmeet Singh Brar: "In the Youth Congress it is our duty to put into practice the ideas and directives of our leader. It is Rajiv who represents both change and progress. And no one else matters for the country and the organisation."

That all the stops were being pulled out to accommodate the new force was patently obvious. The organisers faced no shortage of finances or support from the Government. The decision to organise the convention featuring the new Rajiv inductees and to give it top billing was taken by Rajiv himself. The Prime Minister's Secretariat had written to all the Congress(I) chief ministers and the PCC(I) presidents to mobilise both resources and manpower so that Rajiv loyalists were predominant. In addition, all the state bhawans in the capital, the sports stadia and vacant government flats were put at the disposal of the IYC for lodging the delegates. Admitted a senior IYC leader: "We were specifically told that we should put up a better show than the one in Bombay. It should be disciplined, more vocally in favour of Rajiv and a signal for the old guard."

While Anand Sharma and his team ostensibly organised the jamboree, its progress was monitored daily by Rajiv's aides. Even the resolutions which were formally adopted were vetted. In fact, AICC(I) Vice-President Arjun Singh, who is in charge of the IYC, issued instructions on almost all aspects of the convention and sat through most of the deliberations. Singh's involvement was meant to provide the stamp of approval from the parent body, while the party's Working President, Kamalapati Tripathi, was conspicuous by his absence. Said IYC General Secretary and MP Kalitha: "The massive response to our convention is a clear indication that the Youth Congress is now ready to offer workers who can make the party of Rajivji's liking. They are not only honest, hard-working and aggressive, they are also loyal to Rajivji and no one else." If that statement is any indication, Rajiv Gandhi now has his very own outfit, tailor-made for his usage.

—PRABHU CHAWLA



Marvin Godinho, 27
president, IYC, Goa

"We are here to express our solidarity with Rajiv. He represents modern Indian youth."

Jagmeet Singh Brar, 29
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"In the Youth Congress it is our duty to put into practice the ideas and directives of our leader."

Vijay Laxmi, 28
general secretary, IYC, MP

"Those who represent the people must be clean, presentable and be able to communicate."

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WEST BENGAL

Tough Tactics

A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdhury, Union minister for programme implementation, has never been known for tactness. Almost fanatical in his zeal to serve his constituency of Malda, Chowdhury has a reputation for bulldozing any hurdles in his path, as bankers in Malda district learnt the hard way last month.

Taking advantage of a state Government decision to declare parts of Malda district "hail-storm affected", Ghani Khan pressurised the district authorities—say Malda's bank officials—to consider the entire district affected so that banks could disburse loans liberally. As some 53,000 loan applications poured in, all the 125 banks in the district hastened to fall in line—with the sole exception of the State Bank of India (SBI), which has 17 branches in the district.

The reaction was inevitable. Claiming that, "the worst offender was the Shujapur State Bank branch. Out of 2,900 applications received by them, they had disbursed loans to only 60 persons in a month", Ghani Khan promptly drove down to Shujapur, a small market town 15 km from Malda, on August 4 and summoned the bank manager to his car. Recalls Manager N.N. Chakraborty: "The minister got agitated while I was explaining our problems and getting out of his car, he pushed me by the neck to my office." To add to Chakraborty's humiliation, the huge mob that had gathered around was clearly delighted with the minister's dramatic action.

Bank officials claim the minister shouted: "The bank's money is not your father's money." They also alleged that he had demanded a written explanation from the manager for the delays. When one official, Pradip Bhattacharya, tried to explain that delays were inevitable due to the shortage of staff and the bank's guidelines to strictly observe loan disbursement norms, Ghani Khan apparently grabbed him by the collar and shouted: "What norms?" Before leaving, the minister said he would return, and unless the bank cleared all the loans, he would organise a public meeting and ask the people to withdraw their deposits and not repay loans.

But this time, the minister had bitten off more than he thought he could chew. Not only did the well-organised bankers succeed in shutting down all the district's bank branches the next day, but got their powerful association—the All India Bank Officer's Confederation (AIBOC)—to condemn the attempts to use banks for political purposes. The AIBOC also demanded a policy statement on the norms for distress loans to prevent political misuse.

Bank officials say Ghani Khan Chowdhury roughed them up when they tried to explain the reason for the delays but, denying this, the minister charges them with being indifferent to the poor.

Denying that he had used any physical force, Ghani Khan insists there was nothing political about the whole affair. Says he: "The banks are supposed to give distress loans and when they don't do their work, they make all kinds of allegations. The banks themselves had evolved objective criteria for disbursing loans. The only problem was that some were working and others were not." To prove his point, he says that while the SBI had disbursed only a handful of loans, other banks, particularly the United Bank of India and the Malda Gour Gramin Bank, had forked out over Rs 10 lakh by the first week of August. The Union minister feels that his fight is on broader principles: "The banks have been nationalised but their culture has not changed. They are still geared to serve the rich."

Malda's bankers, however, contest the minister's assertions. Says Malda District AIBOC President Nipati Bhattacharya: "It is not an issue between the rich and the poor. The issue is about banking norms and whether they can be flouted just to satisfy a powerful minister. The hail-storm excuse was just a cock-and-bull story. The entire district was not affected yet we were ordered to clear 53,000 applications for distress loans in just three months." It was also discovered that gram panchayat members were recommending applications on a mass basis without even verifying the authenticity of the claimants. Several recommendations did not even have the signature of the applicant.

Besides, argue the bankers, the performance of nationalised banks in Malda has been among the best in the country. According to information with the district's leading bank, the United Bank's Malda branches have consistently achieved or overshot their targets in respect to the annual action plans, the IRDP and other government programmes. The credit-deposit ratio in Malda district is also astonishingly high—80 per cent, compared to the state's average of 30-40 per cent. But loan recovery is alarmingly low—below 20 per cent.

At any rate, for the moment it is Ghani Khan who has won the day. Immediately after the incident, the SBI rushed four extra officers to Shujapur and instructed its Malda branches to clear the loan applications. By last fortnight, even the Shujapur branch had started handing out the loans. And the common peasant in Malda is obviously overjoyed at the snooty bankers being prodded into action by the Union minister's persuasive tactics.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

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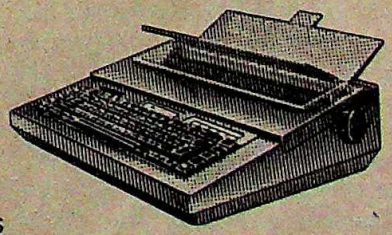

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20 POINT PROGRAMME

Rural Thrust

CARTOONIST Abu Abraham portrayed it as a box of detergent—"power-packed, economy-size, with a fresh new perfume". A Doordarshan commentator called it the Mark 3 version of the older programme, and some editorial writers simply dismissed it as a rehash job.

The sense of *deja vu* may have been understandable, but as officials pointed out, it was a rehash job with a purpose: the new 20 Point Programme did not range from minimum wages to exercise books; instead, it was a reasonably focused attack on rural poverty.

The first hint of it came in the prime minister's Independence Day speech. Sure enough, five days later (on Rajiv's birthday), it was unveiled in Parliament by Minister for Programme Implementation A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdhury. And it was soon obvious that some thought had gone into its drafting. While both the earlier programmes were primarily political gestures—the first to provide a talking point other than the imposition of the Emergency in 1975, the second to try and gain some mileage when Mrs Gandhi seemed to be losing ground politically, in early 1982; the latest 20 points, seemed to flow from genuine concern on the prime minister's part for frontally tackling poverty.

Thirteen of the latest 20 points relate directly to rural development, and many of the others indirectly. Pointing this out, Wajahat Habibullah, director in the prime minister's office and the man responsible for keeping track of the programme, said that several points in the old programme, like augmenting power generation, curbing black money and streamlining industrial policy, had been dropped because, though important in themselves, they did not directly relate to the alleviation of rural poverty.

The new thrust, Habibullah said, had been decided after evaluating the achievements of the two earlier programmes. This monitoring uncovered weaknesses—like bank and block-level delays in sanctioning assistance, poor follow-up action and faulty distribution of aid under the Integrated Rural Development Programme—but also dispelled several prevailing misconceptions:

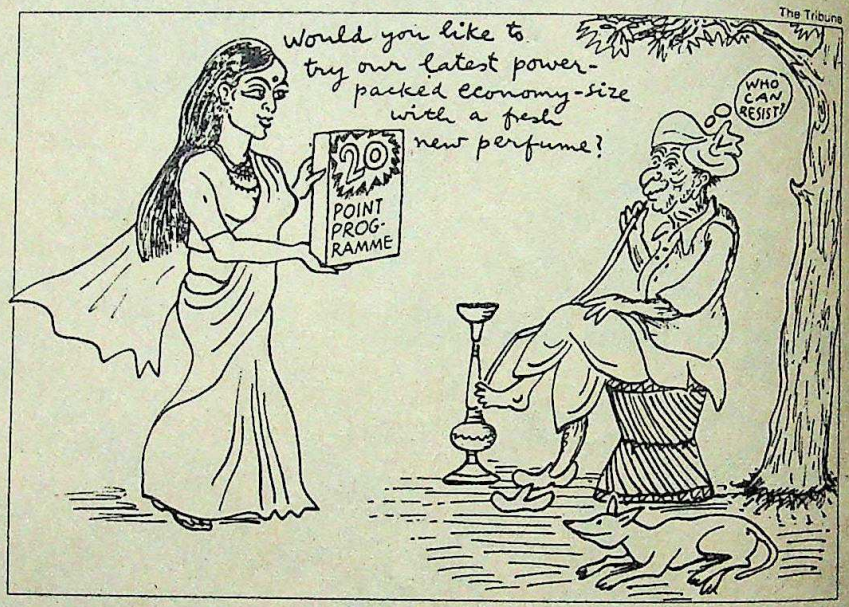
- that beneficiaries were selected due to political pressure. In fact, 60 per cent were chosen by the *gram sabhas;*
- that most of the money allocated for buying assets was getting diverted into officials' pockets. In 95 per cent of the cases there was no defalcation of funds, except in Manipur where malfeasance was found in 70 per cent of the cases;
- that there was no real rise in the income of poor villagers. In 78 per cent cases, income had noticeably increased.

In view of the shortcomings that have surfaced the new programme emphasises the need for involving voluntary agencies, panchayats, cooperatives and local bodies. "This means that the attack on rural poverty cannot be the sole responsibility of the bureaucracy," said D. Bandopadhyay, secretary in the Department of Rural Development.

But, as senior officials admit, it will be difficult to change the bureaucracy's entrenched attitudes. Evolving monitoring systems from block to national levels will be an "enormous job" requiring a lot of training and re-orientation if the planned decentralisation is to go hand in hand with accountability.

Won't all this be a tall order? Yes, says Habibullah, but the last programme's target, of providing drinking water to 2.31 lakh problem villages, looked ambitious but was exceeded. Water pumps were installed in 2.44 lakh villages. And assistance under the programme raised 43 per cent of the people over the poverty line. "This time", he said, "there is a heavy reliance on technology in these programmes." The quest for self-reliance in edible oils, provision of safe drinking water in all villages and of low cost housing for the poor, depend on technological breakthroughs. Besides, objectives like eradication of scavenging and ensuring that all sections of society in a village (including the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) can make use of the village water, will involve a degree of social engineering that has not been tried as yet. The new programme also talks of the two-child norm, and the Government intends to introduce incentives to encourage people to have only two children.

Subtle nuances have been introduced, like the reference to the "supply of electricity for productive use in the villages". So, just extension of an electricity line to the village outskirts will not do: unless villagers actually use it, the village will not be considered electrified.



The concerned ministries have been instructed to finalise targets and action plans in the next two months. The Ministry of Programme Implementation, which has over the last nine months perfected computerised procedures to measure the parameters of the nation's economic health, sends a monthly report to the prime minister on production and productivity in the key industrial sectors, and monitors 264 vital ongoing projects costing Rs 64,448 crore. The new 20 Point Programme will come in for similar scrutiny, said Ministry Secretary P.K. Basu.

In the final analysis, if the programme does get implemented effectively, it will help blunt the criticism that the Government is pro-rich and indifferent to the poor. To that extent, the latest 20 Point Programme, like its predecessors, also has a political objective.

—RAMINDAR SINGH

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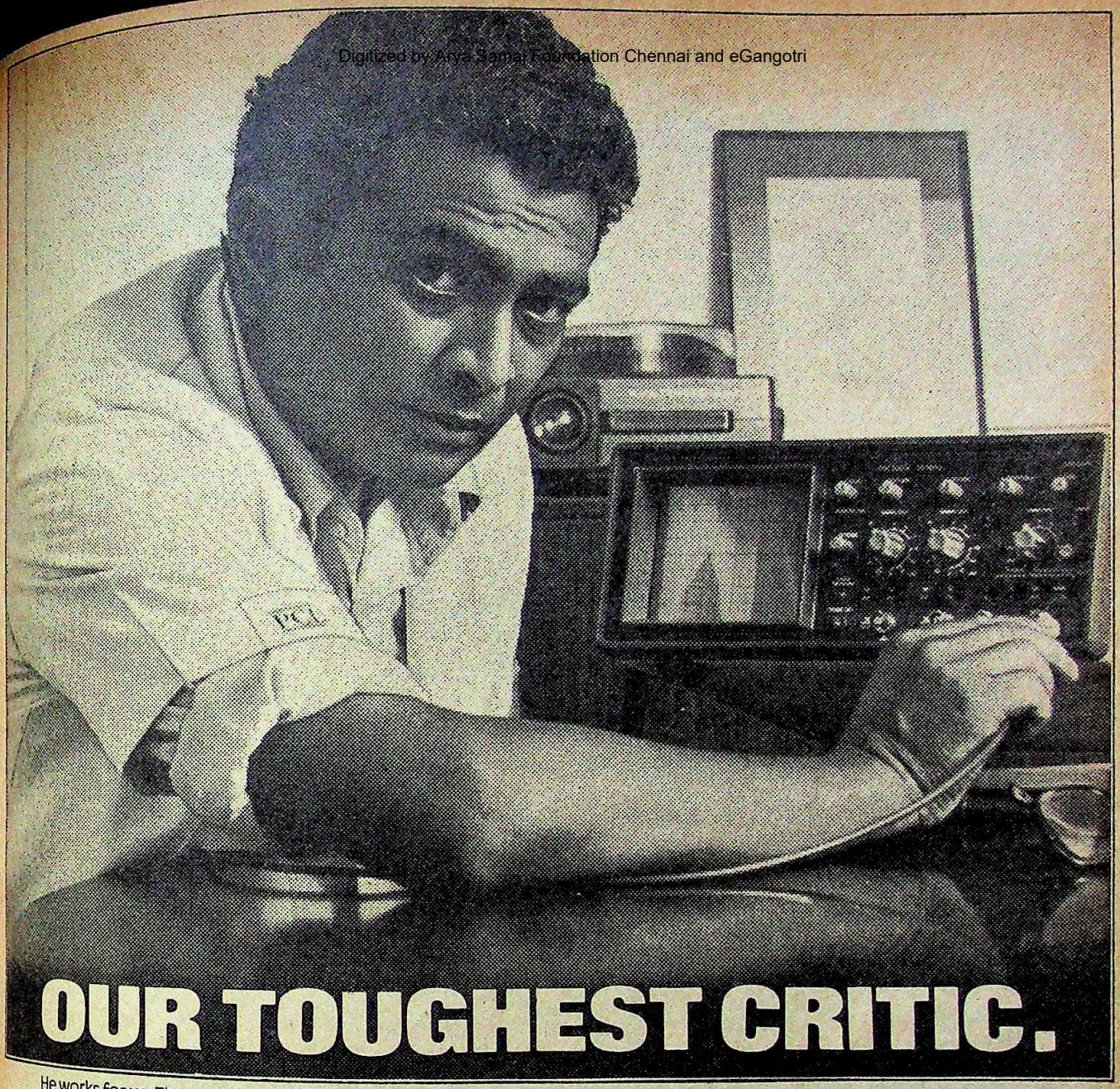

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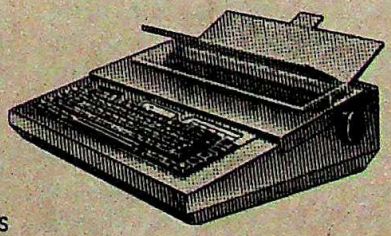

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PUNJAB

Startling Confessions

HE SPEAKS with no trace of remorse as he narrates his murderous exploits. Sturdy, and bushy-bearded, Manbir Singh, 25, alias 'General Hari Singh' of the 'Khalistan Commando Force' even smiles at the grim-faced Punjab Police officials surrounding him. For the last year and a half they have been at the receiving end—ten members of their force were lost at Manbir's orders—and now sitting at an interrogation centre in Jalandhar, they can barely conceal their elation. "It did not take long to break him, barely three hours," admits a police official.

The confessions of Manbir and Tarsem Singh Kohar, the self-styled chief of the 'Khalistan Liberation Army' also captured last month, has not only blown the lid off several recent acts of terrorist violence, including the Muktsar bus massacre and the raid on the district courts in Jalandhar in which six policemen were killed, but also confirmed police suspicions that the brains trust behind the terrorist violence is the five-member Panthic Committee, all of whom are absconding. Though the Punjab Police have arrested or killed 14 of the 38 top-ranking terrorists, Manbir and Kohar are the first leaders of the killer squads who have confessed.

With the confessions, not only has the chain of command among the terrorists now become clearer, details of their zones of operations, their armoury, their sympathisers and harbourers have also been extracted. And if their confessions are to be believed, then the declaration of Khalistan was made at the instance of Pakistan. The two, but mainly Manbir, have revealed so much information that the Punjab Police were still conducting follow-up raids and arresting several wanted accomplices of Kohar and Manbir till late in the fortnight.

Born in a small peasants' family in Chaheru, near Phagwara, Manbir's life took a fateful turn in 1982, when a tiff with the police over a motorcycle led to his joining the camp of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale to take revenge. "Sant gave me a new name Iqbal Singh. I was in the inner ring of his security. I slipped out of the Guru Nanak Nivas on June 1, 1984 before Operation Blue-Star," he confesses. After roaming around for a few months in Jalandhar, he escaped to Bombay to join Bhai Mokham Singh, a Damdami Taksal leader.

With Manbir's confession, not only has the chain of command amongst the terrorists now become clearer, details of their zones of operations, their armoury, their sympathisers and harbourers have also been extracted and also the fact that the declaration of Khalistan was made at the instance of Pakistan.

After returning from Bombay, he went to Chowk Mehta, the Taksal's headquarters, and later to the Golden Temple complex. "Initially we were demoralised but the rumour that Bhindranwale is alive kept us going. Soon we had enough arms, money and vehicles," he admits. It was then that the ranks of the terrorists were organised under the guidance of Damdami Taksal leaders Wassan Singh, Gurbachan Singh Manochahal and Dhanna Singh. While Manbir Singh was appointed 'general' of the 'Khalistan Commando Force', Tarsem Singh Kohar was chosen to head the 'Khalistan Liberation Army' which would operate in Amritsar and Gurdaspur and Sukhdev Singh Sakhira along with Gurdev Singh and Gurjit Singh, a relative of Bhindranwale, were asked to function under Manochahal's direction in Amritsar and Ferozepore.

Later, Kohar was assigned Ferozepore and Faridkot, while Manbir himself remained in the Doaba—the prosperous territory spanning three districts between rivers Beas and Sutlej—using two jeeps, one truck, two Premier cars, one red Maruti, scooters and cyles. "There was a steady flow of arms and money from Pakistan via the Gurdaspur and Ferozepore border. Our contacts and sympathisers from Canada, England and America were regularly sending us money and some travel agents and politicians were used as conduits," he says as he reels out their names.

In all, Manbir masterminded a dozen-odd major incidents but participated only in the April 5 Jalandhar court incident in which six policemen were shot dead in the courts in a successful attempt to free top-ranking terrorist Sukhdev Singh Sukha and three others. "I used to meet Sukha in jail and was keen to free him. So after some weeks of planning, I, along with Balbir Singh, Ajitpal Singh, (both killed in Jalandhar later), Jarnail Singh Halwara (killer of Sant Longowal) and Rashpal Singh, went to the courts armed with a Sten gun and four revolvers. When policemen were escorting the detained terrorists on foot, we began shooting. Since Gurinder Singh Bhola and Swaran Singh had also learnt about our plan, they also got in our jeep. We drove upto Suchi village and then took a Maruti and went to a village in Hoshiarpur," he relates. Bhola later went to Bombay and Punjab Police believe him to be one of the killers of General Vaidya.

Other crimes confessed by Manbir Singh include the killing of eight people

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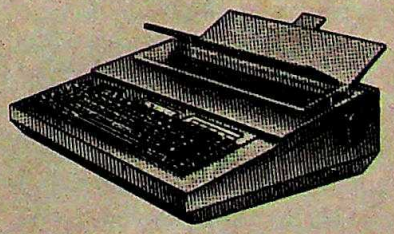

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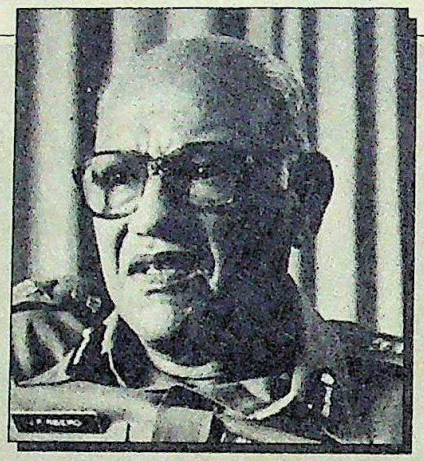
in the Kapurthala shoot-out in March, another seven near Nakodar, a bank dacoity in Jalandhar, attacks on the houses of Inspector Jaskirat Singh and United Akali Dal leader Inderjit Singh Sekhon and freeing of three hard-core terrorists from Kapurthala jail.

Manbir who had been given a hit list of eight Akali leaders, besides seven police officials including Punjab police chief Julio F. Ribeiro, had a large force to command. As many as 38 of his gang members have been arrested but 10 including Sukha, Bhola and Swaranjit are absconding. Last fortnight police raided 30 of his hide-outs spread all over Punjab. Says Ribeiro: "We expect to get the other 10 hard-core terrorists very soon. The revelations are startling as some well-to-do people have been providing shelter, money and arms." Two senior retired army officers, one landlord, an advocate and a doctor are already in police custody.

THE interrogation, which the state CID is now trying to investigate, tells an interesting tale about the April 29 declaration of Khalistan. "Since 1985 the Taksal leadership had been trying to convince the Babbar Khalsa and Bhai Kanwar Singh and Harinder Singh Kahlon of the AISSF to support the declaration. Kanwar Singh, who is now in Pakistan, agreed with the idea but did not see eye to eye with Dhanna Singh and Manochahal. Gurjit Singh, a relative of Bhindranwale who had come back from Pakistan, announced that Pakistan has stopped sending arms as we were not declaring Khalistan but would support us more openly if we carried out the declaration. His argument was that after the declaration our goal will be clear and Sikhs dying for it will be considered proud martyrs. My opinion was that the police would enter Darbar Sahib after the declaration and destroy our major hide-out. I argued that we should wait for six or seven months more but when Gurjit and Balbir insisted, I pleaded with them to postpone it to June 4—the anniversary of Operation Blue Star. No one agreed, and just half an hour before the declaration, I slipped out of the Golden Temple. Gurjit had asked me to keep the declaration secret from the AISSF leadership."

However, the Punjab police has not been as lucky with stocky Tarsem Singh Kohar, 28. Kohar has confessed to organising the Muktsar killings but his account is nowhere near as revealing as Manbir Singh's. Admitted a police officer associated with Kohar's interrogation: "It has been an exhausting affair." Unlike Manbir, Kohar himself led most of the killing squads. "We gave two Sten guns, three revolvers, one .455 bore revolver and one pistol along with ammunition to Waryam Singh and planned the Muktsar bus killings. Others were Raman Singh and Gurjant Singh from Faridkot district and Baljit Singh and Harjinder Singh Jinda from Dhariwal," admits Kohar.



"We expect to get the other 10 hard core terrorists very soon. The revelations are startling as some well-to-do people have been providing shelter, money and arms to the terrorists.

JULIO F. RIBEIRO
director general, Punjab Police

The arrest of these two dreaded commanders of the terrorists has revealed so much that 183 places, including four major gurudwaras in Amritsar and Ludhiana have been raided and 44 terrorists who figure in Ribeiro's 'B' list and 70 other suspects have been rounded up. An impressive arms cache has been seized—including two LMG's, 8 Sten guns, 14 pistols, 29 revolvers, six magazines and 1062 cartridges. Interestingly, many of the arms bear marks of Indian ordnance factories.

But another set of confessions—of 160 Sikh youths who have returned from Pakistan and surrendered in the last two months—have the Punjab police completely baffled. On the face of it, their story is simple. During Operation Woodrose, the post Bluestar clean-up, a large number of Sikh youth fearing atrocities, and some actually tortured, fled to Pakistan. Some 500 of them crossed over, were taken to Faisalabad jail where Bhai Kanwar Singh, Amrik Singh, Atinderpal Singh and Ajaib Singh of Jatha Bhindran asked them to get ready to avenge the attack on the Golden Temple. They were trained in sabotage and while the good trainees were rewarded the majority were branded as useless. Many were tortured and beaten up. On November 22, 1985 they attempted a jail-break in which one of them died. Starting mid-May the Pakistanis started pushing them back after telling them that they will be contacted at the right time.

Even after hundreds of hours of questioning, police officials, state CID interrogators and specialists from RAW have no answer to several questions: Why did Pakistan suddenly start pushing them into India ? Since they have no cases against them and cannot be arrested, will Pakistan assign them their jobs after they have melted into the countryside? Why did they surrender even though they were promised money and arms ? Should they be believed when they say that they want to lead a normal life now?

Most of these boys have been doing the rounds of Chandigarh, seeking jobs or government loans. Last fortnight, over two dozen of them knocked on the doors of Barnala and some even reached Longowal village on the Sant's death anniversary to plead their case. Argues Gurdaspur district police chief J.P. Birdi, who has been pleading their case with Barnala: "We must settle them soon as they have already started receiving feelers from terrorists' leaders." Says Barnala: "I am very keen to help them," but a final decision is still awaited.

GOBIND THUKRAL in Jalandhar.

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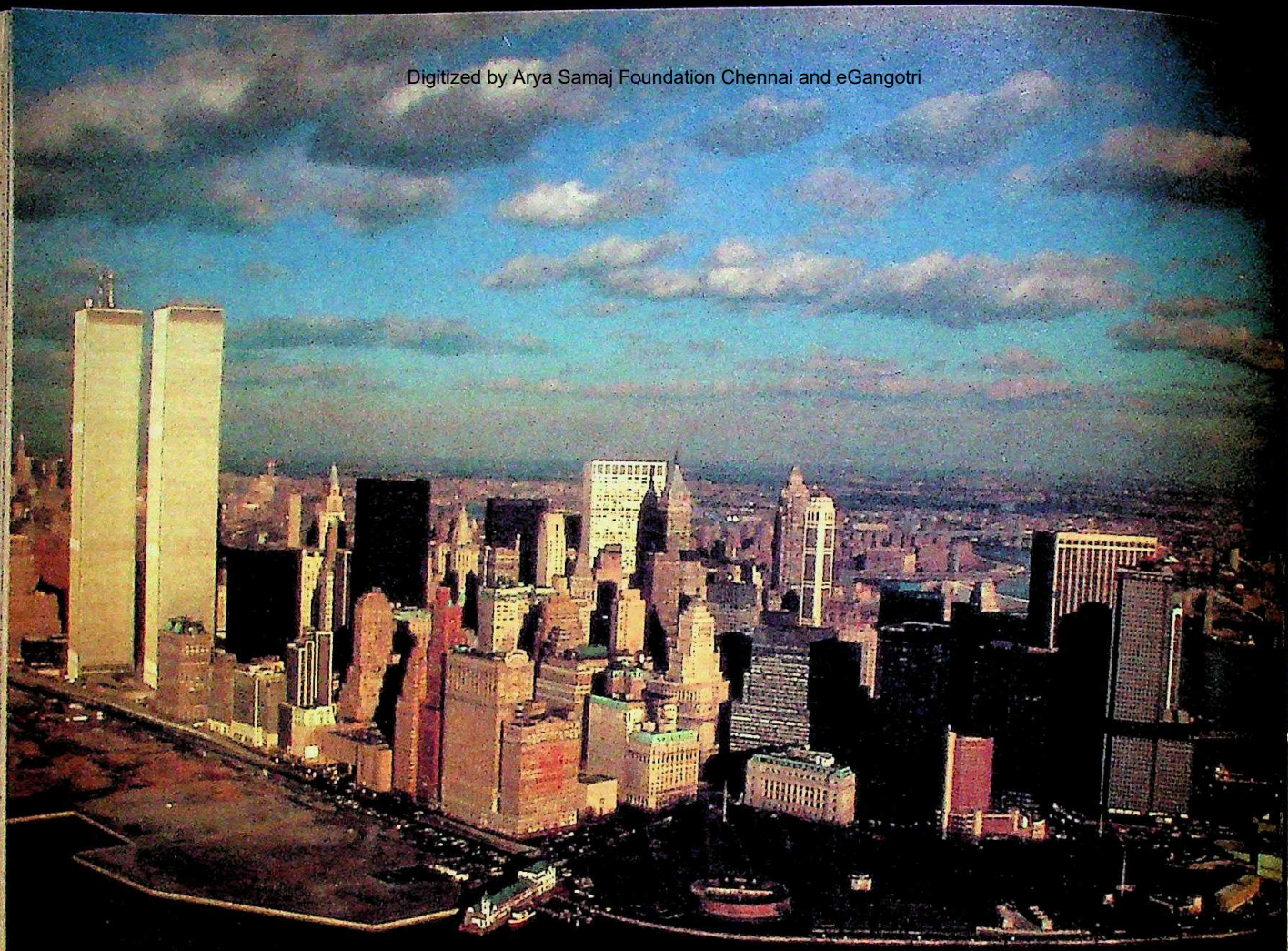

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ARTICLE 249

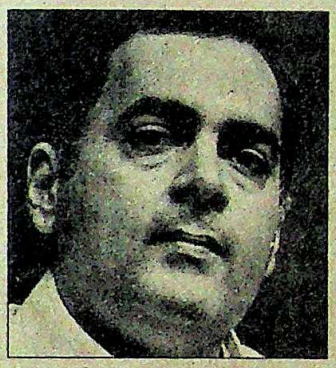
A Legislative Gaffe

EVEN FOR a government with a growing record of flip-flops on vital measures, this was something special. In an attempt to cut off terrorists' links with Pakistan, the Centre went through a convoluted month-long exercise, to give itself special powers, which ended last fortnight where it should have begun: in consultations with the concerned chief ministers. The thoughtless handling of the move pointlessly embarrassed the prime minister (who must share some of the blame), pushed Punjab's Chief Minister Surjit Singh Barnala into a corner where he had no option but to oppose it and alienated an opposition which had started off by showing the way to the Government.

It was never very clear what the Centre wanted to do. Parliament's monsoon session had barely opened in July when the Government called the opposition leaders to discuss its proposal to amend the Constitution to give itself special powers to take over the administration in the border districts of Punjab. Madhu Dandavate, Janata Party leader, pointed out to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi that no amendment was necessary, and that the Government already had the power under Article 249 to make laws on state subjects. Rajiv Gandhi accepted the suggestion.

But nobody—neither Rajiv Gandhi nor the Opposition—had reckoned with the storm that the move would raise in Punjab. After six members of Barnala's Cabinet threatened to resign if the move was pushed through, the Punjab Cabinet passed a resolution unanimously opposing it. Charged Agriculture Minister Harbhajan Singh Sandhu: "Buta Singh wants to rule Punjab by proxy." Barnala's opposition was more reasoned. For him, the application of Article 249 to Punjab would not only erode the state's autonomy, an issue dear to the Akalis, but was bound to be counter-productive as it would create a very confusing situation in the security belt.

Barnala also dashed off a letter to Rajiv Gandhi, pointing out the success of the sectors scheme, which the state has implemented under Director-General of Police J.F.Ribeiro—under which scores of hard core terrorists have been caught in the three terrorist-affected districts of Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Kapurthala. Reiterating his demand for 60 more companies of paramilitary forces, Barnala added: "When we have done so much, the invocation of special powers under Article 249 surely amounts to lack of confidence in the state Government's handling of the situation. Ribeiro and his men will feel demoralised."



The thoughtless handling of the controversy pointlessly embarrassed the prime minister and pushed Barnala into a corner.

The Centre now realised that singling out Punjab would be politically unwise so the proposal was floated that the measure should extend to all the four border states. But the Government was still undecided, and so the resolution introduced in Parliament did not specify the areas of the proposed security belt. The Opposition, suspicious that the Government was trying to infringe upon the autonomy of the states, opposed the move but the resolution was passed with the required two-thirds majority in the Rajya Sabha, thanks to the support of the BJP—which has been demanding army rule in Punjab. And Parliament's session was extended so that the bill could be passed.

But confusion still prevailed as it was now pointed out that the Government should consult the border states as several issues needed sorting out. How would the Centre control a vast belt of even 5 km along 2,097 km of the western border? Will the security forces assume civil and police powers of the state and deal with revenue, taxes, and all related issues?

Meanwhile, it became clear that the Government was not even clear about Punjab. Confidentially, it was telling opposition leaders that there is virtually no administration in the border areas, that judges are scared to hear cases, that Barnala's ministers keep interfering—in other words that the Centre has no option but to assume charge. On the other hand, Rajiv Gandhi told his partymen that the terrorists are on the run. Then, again, the Centre did not seem to realise that pushing through the Bill would bring Punjab back to the pre-accord situation: Barnala would resign—as he indeed threatened to do—and President's rule would have to be imposed.

It was only when Ribeiro lent his support to Barnala's objections that the Government decided to stay its hand. Said Ribeiro: "We need to take strong measures to check infiltration from Pakistan but the area need not be centrally administered; there are other ways and means." The Centre, according to informed sources, has all but abandoned its earlier plan; the attempt now is to provide more teeth to the Border Security Force (BSF). The BSF already has the power to search, seize and arrest in a 15-km belt along the Punjab border with Pakistan. Now, it will also be given the power to prosecute, with the CBI doing the investigation. What should have been a basically administrative exercise had become a political issue with the Union Government at loggerheads with Barnala and the Opposition. Rarely has there been a more avoidable controversy.

—GOBIND THUKRAL with AJAY KUMAR

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CHARLES SOBHRAJ

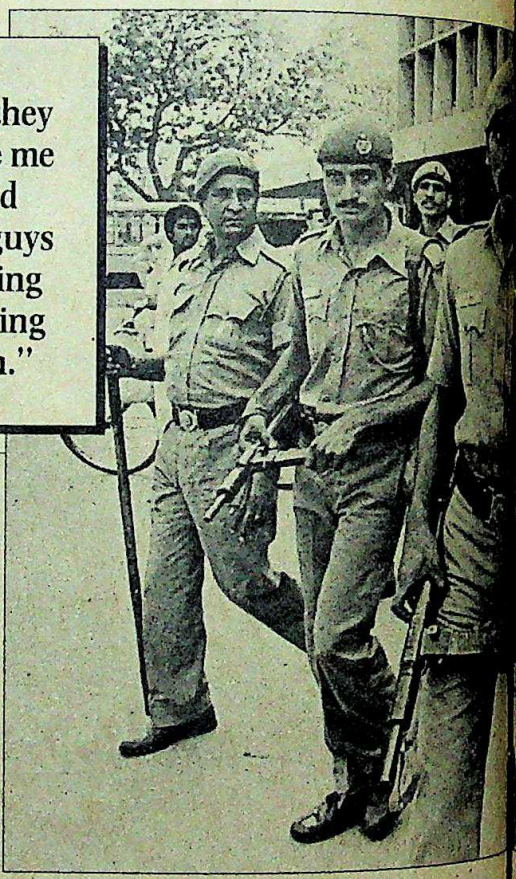
A Cool Customer

FOR THE media, Charles Sobhraj is currently off-limits. Security at Tihar Jail is tight and the proceedings of the jail escape case, hearings for which are held intermittently at the capital's Tis Hazari Courts, are virtually in-camera. Nominally, the hearings are open to the public but the security arrangements effectively rule out the entry of all but judicial officials, policemen and lawyers. INDIA TODAY*'s Senior Correspondent* TANIA MIDHA *managed to slip into one such hearing last fortnight. Her report:*

HE IS leaner than his photographs suggest, he has a bald patch on his head and his complexion is the anemic white of a man who hasn't seen sunlight for weeks. But his hawklike eyes watch every movement in the courtroom. Noticing an alien presence in the room, his eyes cloud with suspicion. But he relaxes immediately as he is told of the identity of the stranger and a smile replaces the frown. Clad in fashionable baggy jeans and a steel-grey shirt with matching sports shoes on surprisingly small feet, Charles Sobhraj is perfectly at ease in the stiffly formal legal surroundings and acknowledges the "*namaste sahib*" of court workers with the air of a man who commands respect.

He obviously wants to prolong his stay in court—in jail he has to wear fetters all the time. After the main arguments are over, he interjects with three requests calculated to prolong the proceedings. With the confidence born of experience, he seeks the permission of the court to have food in judicial custody, an interview with his counsel Sneh Sengar and permission to inspect the files. Permissions obtained, he has ample time to socialise. Oozing his famous "bikini-killer" charm, he walks across the courtroom to kiss Rajendra Sethia's wife and sister, who have come to meet Sethia.

> "I escaped last time only because they wanted to extradite me to Thailand. I had already told a few guys in jail before escaping that I would be seeing them again soon."
> CHARLES SOBHRAJ



SNEH SENGAR

Letter Bomb

WHEN the authorities of Delhi's Tihar Jail recently intercepted a letter to Charles Sobhraj—disguised as a writ petition—from his lawyer-cum-confidante Sneh Sengar, the investigating officials could hardly believe their luck. The letter, which makes startling revelations and freely discloses the involvement of David Hall, Gordon Greenhall, Rajendra Sethia, his nephew Daljit Singh Bhalla ('HP') and Sengar herself, is by far the most vital piece of evidence in the Sobhraj case.

Sengar hotly denied having written it. "What letter?" she retorted. "It's the work of some crime branch officials trying to injure my reputation." But the Delhi Police are confident that the 26-page letter, though unsigned, is in Sengar's handwriting. Extracts:

"In the court of Shrimati Kanwal Inder, A.C.M.M. Tis Hazari Delhi.
State vs Charles Sobhraj, P.S. Janakpuri, FIR No. 139/86.

Madam,

The applicant most respectfully submits as under—

1. That...received your message—Mr Ohri came this morning (Sunday 6 July) and gave me this letter... Guess what I got?! A boil in my right armpit—I sure do land up with the craziest things in the world!!

2. And you're right about the revenge decision. I took it while I was at Lalitpur—felt so bitter about everything, everyone and hated the whole goddamned world. Those days all I wanted was a Sten-gun and shoot everybody down—especially the S.P. Lalitpur and Kartar Singh, Delhi—but then thought that shooting down would be no revenge—just get their back-bones and cripple them for lives.

My imagination really used to run wild those days—me going around with a Sten-gun—shooting the bastards and for each corpse/injured there would be a slip saying—Sneh's nemesis, or something like that.

... And you must, please, tell me how to deal with the cops—next time anything happens I'll know how to take them for a ride—I have already learned a lot-a LOT-but still need to know more.

...Went househunting for HP today. I still feel guilty—and want to do something for him and Raj. Please tell them that they can ask for anything—anything that I can do for them would enlighten *(sic)* the burden of my guilt.

...I was doing fine till this 24,000/- came up ...I was thinking I would tell them that I gave the money to Gordon to buy me clothes and a camera from London.

...There was one (officer) in particular who was specially nice—Surjeet

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After exchanging pleasantries, Sobhraj turns his attention to the chicken biryani brought for him in a polythene bag while an angry Sneh Sengar argues heatedly with him. Calmly, Sobhraj pacifies Sengar with a few words while absent-mindedly toying with the neck of the chicken. As a constable gruffly reminds him of the forgotten food he shoos him away. Another man hovering around is sent off for a Limca.

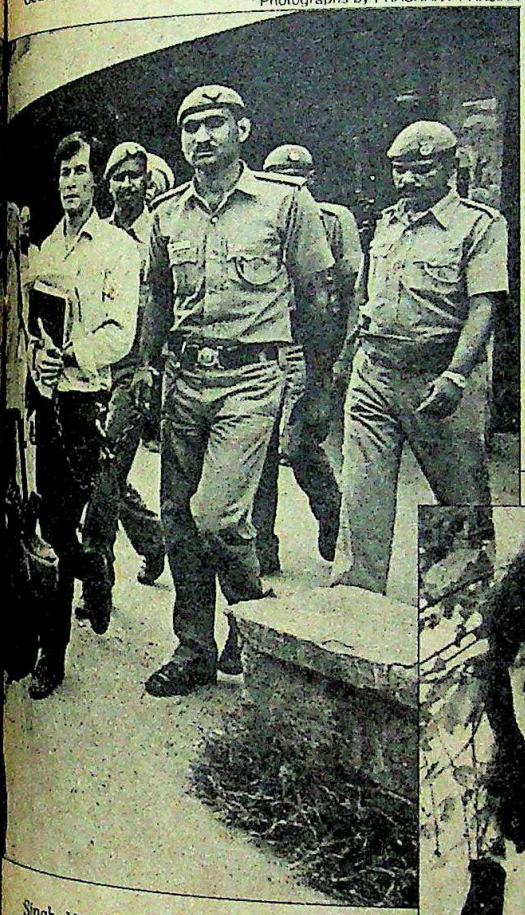
Clearly, Sobhraj's escape from Tihar jail earlier this year and his re-arrest in Goa have done nothing to dampen his spirits. Last fortnight, the interception of a 26-page letter *(see box)* addressed to Sobhraj by friend and legal adviser Sneh Sengar made it amply clear that Sobhraj was back to the essential business of winning over officials. The letter was confiscated when R.K. Sharma, another of Sobhraj's lawyers, was trying to sneak it into the jail. The lawyer had first tried to contact Mahabir Singh, assistant jail superintendent, believed to be sympathetic to Sobhraj, to take the letter in. Not finding Singh at home, he decided to take the risk himself and was caught by Deputy Jail Superintendent U.K.S. Chauhan. Sharma has since been disallowed from meeting his client in jail, and Singh has been transferred to another section of the jail.

Significantly, this episode followed the confiscation of a coded letter from David Hall, Sobhraj's accomplice in the escape, to his wife in London asking her to get in touch with the international gunrunner and narcotics dealer, Gordon Greenhall, who is known to have helped Sobhraj and Hall in their jailbreak. Only days earlier, a slip had been found in the pocket of one of Sobhraj's lawyers with a cryptic one-line message: "Gordon is in Malta". And to add to the insomnia of investigating officials, several maps and sketches of Tihar jail were recovered from Hall's cell.

Asked about these developments and the police claims that they had busted a second escape attempt, an unfazed and grinning Sobhraj said to INDIA TODAY: "It's all bullshit. I escaped last time only because they wanted to expatriate (extradite) me to Thailand. They can't do that if they have a case against me here. I had already told a few guys in jail before escaping that I would be seeing them again soon."

In the meantime, the jailbreak case charts its own lackadaisical course. While his lawyers are still arguing heatedly against their being denied the prosecution files by the police, for Sobhraj these hearings are a welcome break from the rigours of Tihar Jail. Since his re-arrest, Sobhraj and David Hall have been made to wear prominent red clothes in prison (in accor-

Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR



Sobhraj being brought to Tis Hazari courts: confident

Sengar: caught in the act?

Singh. You know when they searched my room (I was under arrest) there was a knife in my room which actually David and Gordon used to carry with them...when Surjeet Singh saw it he quickly put it under some paper and clothes without anyone having noticed it—otherwise I would have been in for the Arms Act too.

I wanted to ring up Dibang and ask who all had been interrogated and what all they said so that there wouldn't be any contradiction...

About K.C.—what she did ammounted to a breach of trust...I never thought of her as a nice person.

...8 pm: Have bought 8 Milkmaids, coffee and yesterday had bought two shirts, 4 sardines and 4 tuna. Sorry—no jeans. Looked into many shops, couldn't find a decent one—even the shirts are not very good—that shop which sells imported shirts and jeans is near the university.

...I donno who all the cops had been interrogating but they know quite a lot—Raghubir Singh during my interrogation said that ..."I know that he's going to contact you and call you abroad, that's why he got a passport for you and he must have left money also with you or with somebody for you. And I know that you'll go join him wherever he is ..." And I replied "...if there's any such contact I'll let you know and you can arrest him." (Had to say that—there was no option.) How did they know so much? Did you leave any letters of Carole or Vaishali about me—her letters were seized from Hyderabad. Maybe that's what gave them so much.

... So happy to know you're getting all the food and feeling better. Will get more tomorrow and send through Sharma. Please keep eating....You think there's any risk involved—what I was thinking that each time I'd buy the stuff from different shops and not the ones which I go to regularly—they all know me so well, their favourite customer (because I buy so much).

...Please keep destroying my letters. I always destroy yours, take down the important things and destroy—you must also destroy them—okay.

...And don't give your real signature at the back of the envelope—use your Chinese one and don't (please) address me as Mr S. Sengar."

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"My bank? Catholic Syrian!"

Now the pride in your voice adds strength to our numbers

Performance 1985

Deposits : Rs.225 crores
Advances : Rs.130 crores

1985 It's been another good year. Catholic Syrian Bank has topped 1984 results as the growth momentum continues.

The bank started functioning from its new corporate headquarters in Trichur.

Deposits have moved upto Rs. 225 crores. Advances have moved upto Rs. 130 crores.

The 1985 Business Standard study has revealed interesting features.

The performance of Catholic Syrian Bank in the area of social priority registered high growth. Catholic Syrian ranked first among private sector banks in social priority.

Numbers however are not the only way to measure performance. "My bank? Catholic Syrian!" said with a hint of pride is as good a measure.

Catholic Syrian Bank

The Catholic Syrian Bank Limited
H.O. : St. Mary's College Road
P.B. No. 502. Trichur 680 020.

OBM 9541 R

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dance with the jail manual) and kept in solitary confinement with minimal movement outside. Officially, he cannot bring in food and clothes from private sources, but going by Sengar's letter he is obviously getting both food and clothes.

Sobhraj is contesting each of the jail's restrictions in court, meticulously writing each petition in his own hand, quoting from innumerable earlier court judgements to show that the treatment meted out to him is against the jail rules and far worse than the treatment given to the others who had escaped with him.

Besides Hall and the seven others who escaped with Sobhraj, also implicated in the conspiracy are Rajendra Sethia and his nephew, Daljeet Singh Bhalla, better known as Happy. Sethia has been accused of making an advance payment of $ 20,000 to Gordon Greenhall through Charles Sobhraj for eliminating Swami Satsangi, former assistant manager in Punjab National Bank in London and one of the key witnesses in the Sethia case. With the recovery of a photograph of a slip of paper from the negatives of David Hall's camera saying: "Please pay to the bearer of the letter $ 20,000, many thanks, Raj", the police are confident of proving Sethia's involvement in the controversy. If convicted in this case, Sethia could be jailed for up to seven years as co-conspirator, far more than the maximum of two years under his original case of defrauding the banks.

The Sobhraj case, which involves not just the jailbreak but also offences under the Arms Act and the Narcotics Act, could take years before completion. Unless the Government decides to withdraw the case altogether, his extradition to Thailand, where five murder cases are hanging over his head, will have to wait. And if the wily Sobhraj is again up to his old tricks, the authorities cannot afford to let him gain the upper hand again.

DELHI HIGH COURT

Legal Storm

THE APPOINTMENT of Justice T.P.S. Chawla to the office of the chief justice of the Delhi High Court should have been a formality. The Government's guidelines say that the senior-most judge of a high court will be elevated to the high office should he have less than a year to go, which held true for Justice Chawla. Rajinder Sachar and Dalip Kapur, the two previous chief justices, had stints in office on the same counts.

But when, last fortnight, the Law Ministry merely appointed Chawla as "acting" chief justice, lawyers of the 1,200-strong Delhi High Court Bar Association went on an indefinite strike. They were joined for a day by lawyers of all other courts in Delhi, making it the first time when work stopped in all the capital's courts.

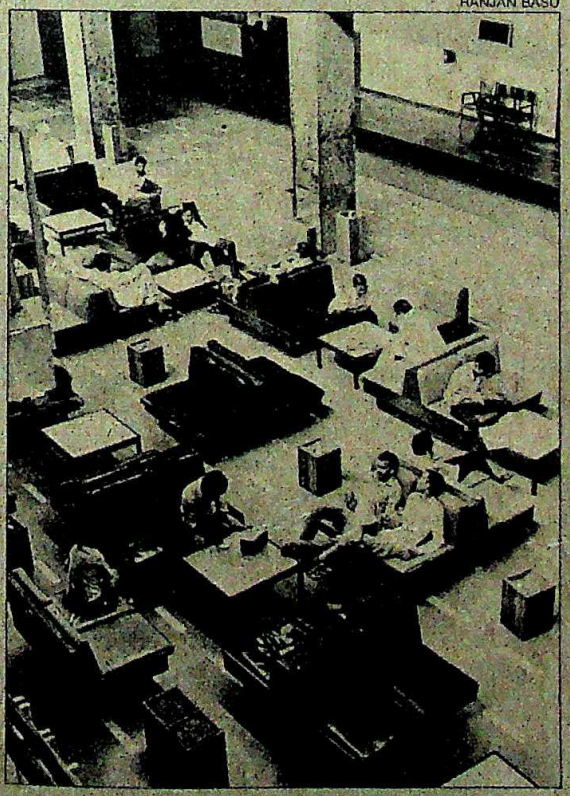
The Government's move drew condemnation all-round. The meeting of the Supreme Court Bar Association, which agreed to join the strike, was presided over by Congress(I) MP Murli C. Bhandare, who said later: "I cannot shut my eyes to the strong resentment on this issue." Added R.S. Narula, former chief justice of Punjab: "There can be no legal or moral justification of the decision."

But Union Law Minister Asoke Sen cited the case of four high courts where acting chief justices had functioned for up to 11 months and maintained: "There is no policy that the Government must appoint a chief justice the day the previous one retires. The strike is an attempt to browbeat the Government about a sensitive appointment."

The confrontation had been brewing. Earlier last month, when sessions judge Mahesh Chandra, who decided the Indira Gandhi assassination case in favour of the Government, was appointed a judge of the Delhi High Court superseding two others, lawyers at the sessions courts had gone on strike. Even the high court strike, lawyers say, was forced upon them when they realised that factors other than merit were at work. Chief Justice P.N. Bhagwati, Asoke Sen and his deputy, H.R. Bharadwaj, they say, told them that they had opined that Justice Chawla should be appointed the chief justice. Sen refused to confirm or deny the assertion, saying: "Only Parliament can question the Government's prerogative in such matters."

Deserted premises of the Delhi High Court: condemnation

RANJAN BASU



The lawyers think that the real reason for the move is the apprehensions in the camp of a senior cabinet minister, known to be in the inner circle of Rajiv Gandhi's advisers, whose son has reportedly been named in an ongoing inquiry into a shady land deal with a former registrar of the high court. With such a sensitive matter likely to come up before the chief justice for framing of charges, the Government, say the lawyers, does not want to take a chance with an upright judge like Chawla. Ironically enough, it was Justice Chawla who had quashed the Shah Commission's proceedings against Mrs Gandhi.

Justice Chawla registered his protest in his own dignified way: declining to take oath, refusing to sit in Court Number 1, declining security and the use of the chief justice's car. With the storm showing no sign of abating, it almost seemed that the Government wanted a return to the 1980-81 days of confrontation between itself and the legal profession.

—AJAY KUMAR

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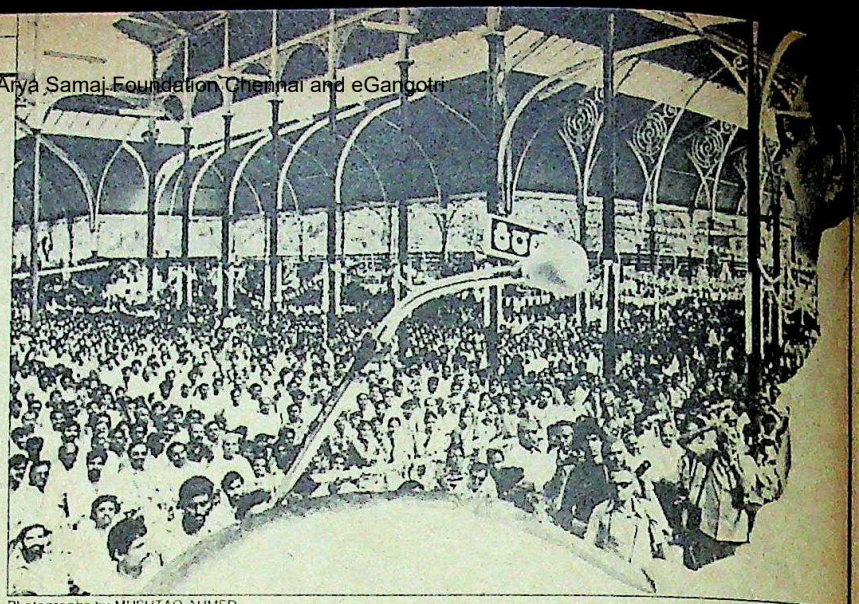
CONGRESS (INDIRA GANDHI)

Rebel Rousing



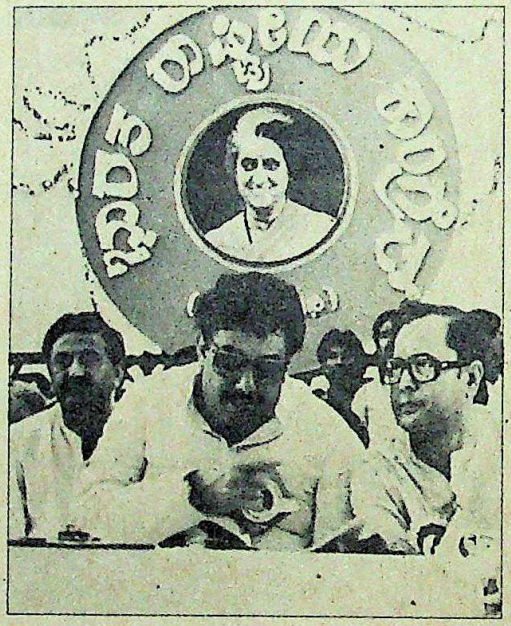
Photographs by MUSHTAQ AHMED

BANGALORE's famous 'glass house' in the middle of the 240-acre Lal Bagh is usually reserved for horticultural shows. Last fortnight, there was quite a variety of colourful foliage on view, except that it had nothing to do with horticulture. The culture on display was what the conveners claim is the 'real' Congress culture, symbolised by the launching of a new political party by former Karnataka chief minister Ramarao Gundu Rao.

In fact, the venue—where the historic split in the Congress took place in 1969—was so important for the expelled Congress(I) leader that he postponed his convention by two weeks because of a pre-scheduled horticultural show. Ever the consummate showman, Gundu Rao performed to expectations. Amid invocations from the Vedas, the Koran and the Bible, whistles and catcalls and deafening oratory, Gundu Rao launched the Indian National Congress (Indira Gandhi) from a heavily flower-bedecked dais to the cheers of a crowd of 12,000, nearly twice the rated capacity of the glass-ceilinged building.

In fact, if the number of people present and their show of enthusiasm are any indication of popular support, Gundu Rao and his comrade in exile, Pranab Mukherjee, have much to crow about. Ten days before Rao's *tamasha*, Mukherjee held his own state-level convention of supporters at Calcutta's impressive Netaji Indoor Stadium at which Rao was a star invitee just like Mukherjee was in Bangalore. The Netaji Stadium was jampacked with over 12,000 youthful and wildly enthusiastic supporters who gave Mukherjee a standing ovation as he declared: "They can expel me from the party but nobody can snatch the Congress flag from me."

Even in Bangalore, the refrain was the same—they will prove to the people that they, and not Rajiv Gandhi's Congress(I), are the "real" Congress. In his hour-long harangue, Gundu Rao not only asked President Zail Singh to sack the Rajiv Gandhi Government for destroying the country, he also called on all "real" Congressmen to defeat the *nakli* (fake) Congress in the coming local body elections in the state. Declared Rao dramatically: "Indira's soul is stirring in the grave at what is happening. She is our leader, dead or alive." He had to cut his speech short because of a stampede created by the late arrival of Mukherjee who was delayed at a lunch he was having, significantly enough, with Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde.



Rao announcing the party (above); with Mukherjee and other rebels: buoyant in defiance

Mukherjee and Rao have yet to spell out their strategy but it is clear that they plan to build up their support from the grassroots level, realising that there is little chance of Congress(I) leaders of any note crossing over to them. Conventions, like the one held at Calcutta, are intended not only to demonstrate their growing support but also to build an organisational framework to lean on. In the meanwhile, they will continue to hobnob with their erstwhile detractors. Significantly, Rao said nothing against the Janata Party when not too long ago he was lashing out at Hegde.

Of the two, Mukherjee seems to be going about his task more methodically. He has addressed over 150 public meetings in the last three months, criticising Rajiv and the faction-ridden state unit, and claims to have won over at least half of West Bengal's Congress(I) supporters. Before the next Assembly elections, scheduled for February, he hopes to win over as much as 80 per cent of Congress(I) workers. On the other hand, while Rao is keen on sabotaging the Congress(I)'s chances in the coming elections to the zilla parishads and mandal panchayats, how he will find nearly 57,000 candidates is not clear.

Congress(I) leaders, on their part, claim not to be one bit worried. Asked to comment, Vice-President Arjun Singh said acidly: "They need no comment because they are political nonentities." Undeniably, however, the party units in both states are in turmoil. While 13 out of 19 office-bearers of the West Bengal PCC(I) have resigned *en masse*, the Karnataka PCC(I) executive committee is yet to be formed and a replacement to be found for S. Bangarappa as the leader of the opposition in the Assembly. Party leader M. Veerappa Moily, however, predicted: "What Gundu Rao has launched is a ship without a rudder and it can only sink." For the moment, however, the ship seems to be forging defiantly ahead at full steam even though it may be headed for an unknown port.

—SRINIVASA PRASAD and INDRANIL BANERJIE

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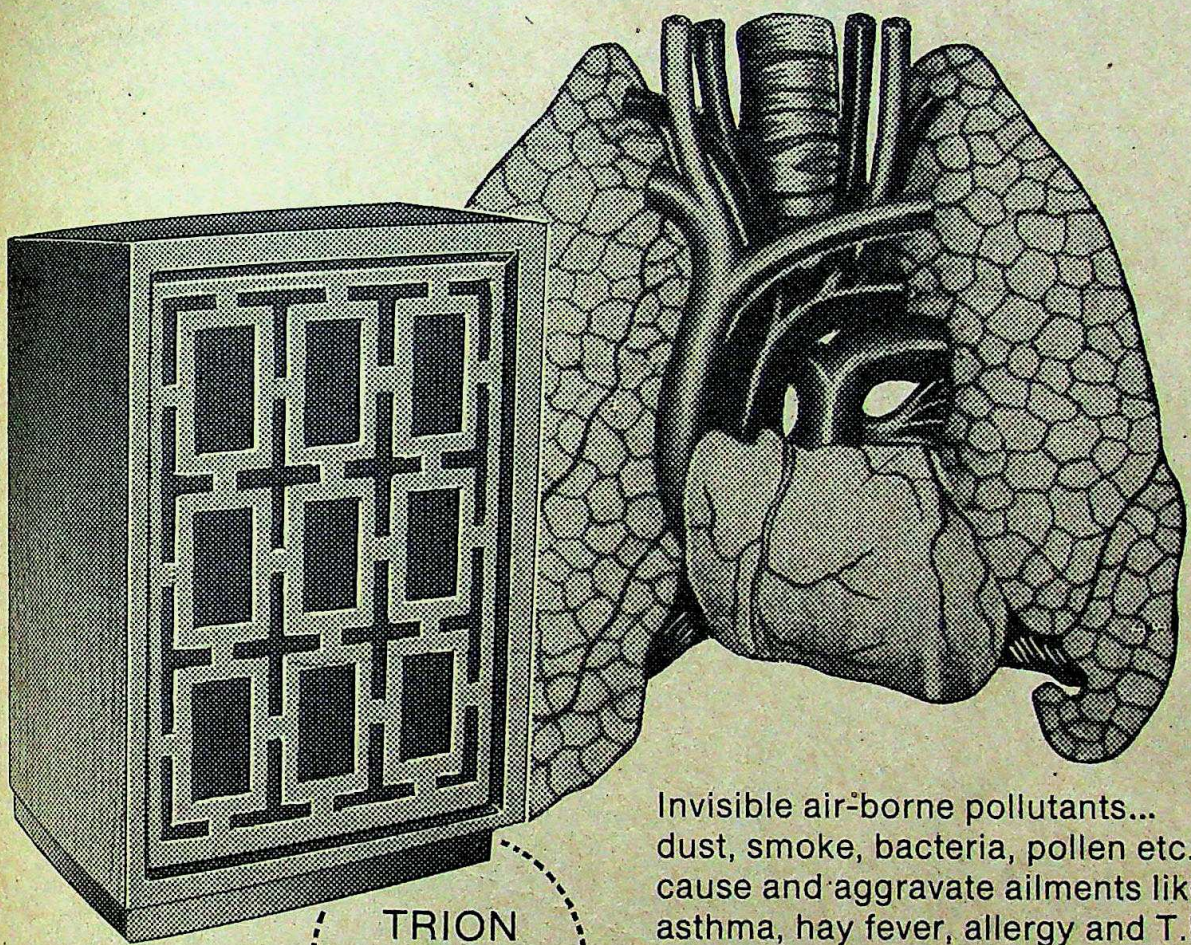

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MIZORAM

The Other War

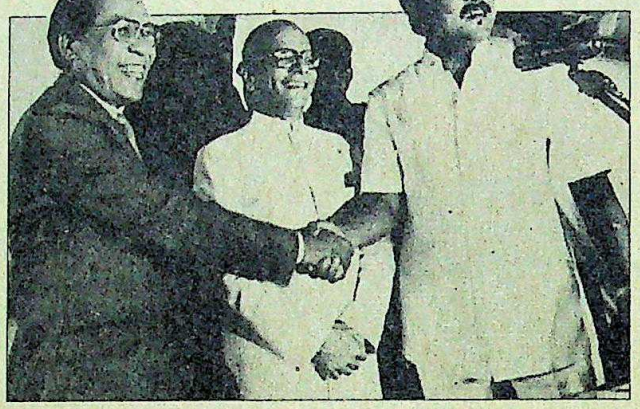
MIZORAM'S political wheel came full circle last fortnight with former underground rebel leader Laldenga taking over as the chief minister. But the significance of the change-over extends beyond that formality. When, standing solemnly at attention, flanked by three ministerial colleagues, Laldenga swore to abide by the Indian Constitution and uphold the unity and integrity of the country, it marked the beginning of a new and turbulent era in Mizoram politics. And nobody knows this better than the chief minister.

Later, addressing the 500-odd Mizo National Front (MNF) returnees bivouacked at the Remna camp on the outskirts of Aizawl, Laldenga explained: "You are no longer soldiers. Now you are political workers facing a task that is as demanding as fighting." Laldenga's allusion was clear: the MNF has a formidable political battle on hand against the Congress(I) and Brigadier T. Sailo's People's Conference (PC)—both contenders for the power that Laldenga now wields. Said Deputy Chief Minister, Lalthanhawla, chief minister in the earlier Congress(I) ministry: "I stepped down to bring peace and not because I consider Laldenga to be the sole leader of the Mizos. In the next elections we intend to fight and defeat him."

The political accord between the Congress(I) high command and the MNF has only promised Laldenga chief ministership in an interim coalition ministry for six months. These six months could prove to be his Waterloo. Five of the nine ministers are from the Congress(I) and, given their antagonism, they could easily make Laldenga ineffective. State Congress(I) leaders are bent on getting even with Laldenga who, they believe, has humiliated them in the worst possible way. Recalled a Congress(I) minister: "The very first time Laldenga came to Mizoram after the accord he insulted us by claiming that we were like Aaron of the Old Testament who ruled with false gods while the true leader Moses was away.

However, Laldenga continues to ride the crest of the euphoria caused by the returning guerrillas, and is attracting fringe political parties and their leaders. Last fortnight, the Mizo Peace Forum and the Mizo Convention, two parties that have no representatives in the 30-member Mizoram Assembly, elected to join the MNF. Two MLA's, Rochunga Ralte of the Mizo National Union Party and Lalwawia, an independent, also crossed over to become the first MNF legislators in the state Assembly. "I hope this is only the beginning," said Laldenga, aware that euphoria is no substitute for organised support.

Laldenga (left) with Lalthanhawla



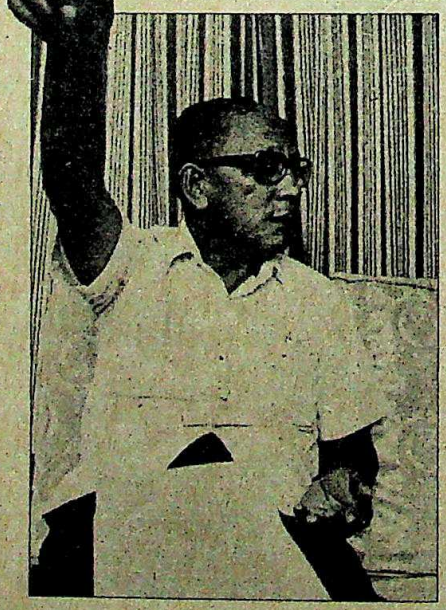
In fact, Laldenga's popularity is far from universal. A large chunk of the 1,500-odd former MNF men who came overground before the accord because of differences with Laldenga remain opposed to him. Says Bualranga, one of the 'Blue Group' who wanted to come to terms with the Centre after the creation of Bangladesh and who now runs a book shop in Aizawl: "The Mizo accord is proof that Laldenga's principal motivation in leading the insurgency was personal ambition." Others, like Vanlalaya, whose father was one of the 160-odd Mizos killed by the MNF, have more personal reasons for hating him. When Laldenga's MNF guerrillas brought along coffins of their dead comrades to July's surrender, Vanlalaya had asked bitterly: "Who will bring back my poor father's bones?"

The MNF has a battle on hand against the Congress(I) and Sailo's People's Conference—both contenders for the power that Laldenga now wields.

Laldenga's other formidable challenge comes from Sailo, who had broken the MNF's back by engineering a major surrender in 1979. In an attempt to cash in on the prevailing sentiment in favour of regionalism, the PC—which has eight MLA's in the present Assembly—has taken up Laldenga's original demand for Greater Mizoram. Sailo says by signing the Mizo accord Laldenga has formally given up the demand though Laldenga maintains that it has only been kept in abeyance, not abandoned.

Lalthanhawla expects that it will be the Congress(I) that emerges the winner in the next elections on the nationalist vote while the PC and the MNF fight over the regionalist vote. But whatever the outcome of the political battles launched by the implementation of the accord, it is certain that Laldenga will never return to the politics of insurgency. Says he: "If I ever take to arms again it will only be to defend the integrity and unity of the nation." The wheel has indeed come full circle and Laldenga's response to the political challenges that confront him will be crucial for the immediate future of Mizoram.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE in Aizawl



Sailo: formidable challenger

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'When I think of the good things in life, there's one I just cannot leave out.'

'When I look back and think about things life has give me, I feel really grateful. A happy childhood, the best possible education, fame on the cricket field, an understanding wife, lovely children...

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M. A. K. PATAUDI

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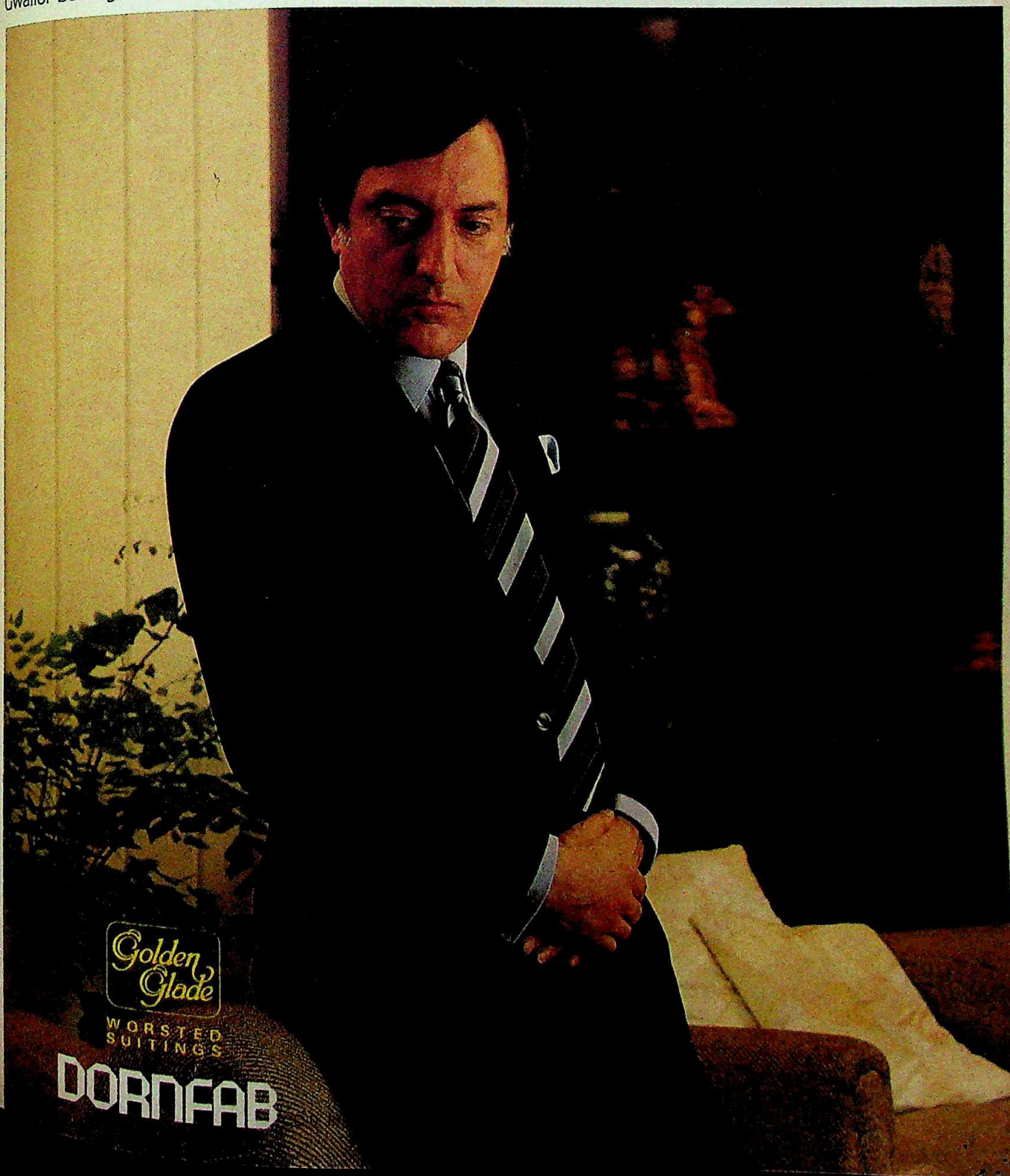

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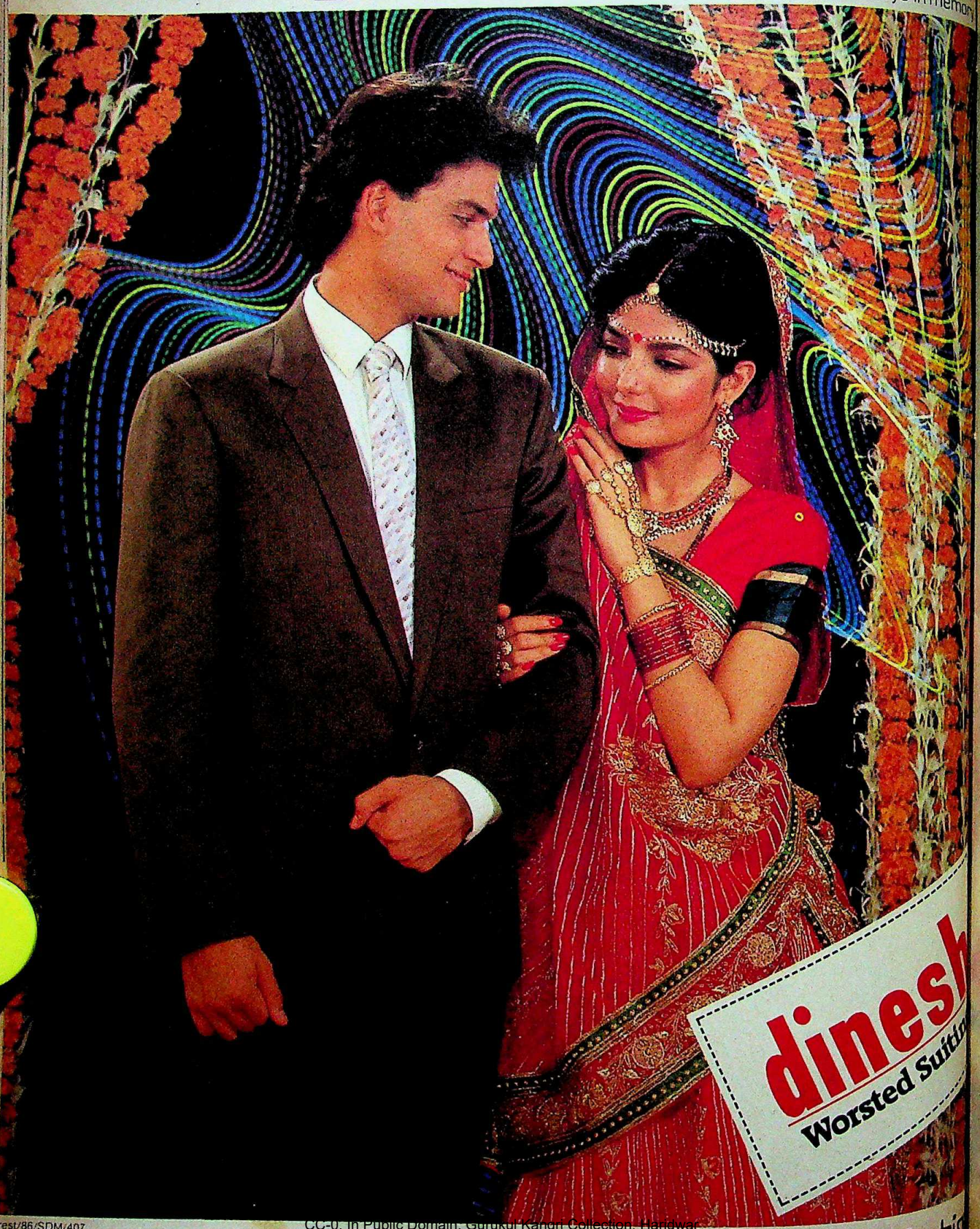

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BIHAR

Panic Ban

THE ARWAL massacre in April this year returned to haunt Bihar's Chief Minister Bindeshwari Dubey last fortnight, compelling him to take measures which turned Patna into a police fortress, antagonised several organisations with mass support among the landless and the poor and drew criticism from a powerful section of his partymen.

Dubey's action in banning the Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti (MKSS)—whose activities in the Arwal area had resulted in the gunning down of 22 villagers there—on the eve of a gherao of the legislature by the Arwal Jansanhar Virodhi Sangarsh Morcha (anti-Arwal massacre front) was followed by a ban on landlords' armies who have long been ranged against the MKSS. The decisions, both panic responses, antagonised political opinion and raised doubts about Dubey's grip on Bihar.

As people moved into Patna to participate in the August 21 gherao, 12 companies of the Bihar police along with three companies of the CRPF sent by the Centre, were deployed to forcibly prevent people from entering Patna. A 70,000 strong morcha was stopped, but Home Commissioner B.K. Singh put the figure at 17,000. The ailing former Naxalite leader Nagabhushan Patnaik, now chairman of Morcha-constituent Indian Peoples' Front (IPF), managed to slip through and lead a group of 300 supporters towards the secretariat but was lathi-charged and arrested. Said Dubey : "I congratulate the people for ignoring such an anti-democratic call." But leader of the Opposition Karpoori Thakur charged: "The Dubey Government has proved that it can go to any length to suppress the voice of the poor."

The Bihar Government has been taking a tough stand on the Arwal massacre but the emergence of the morcha which contains many militant groups, panicked the state Government. Apart from the MKSS and the IPF, there are 12 other organisations which comprise the morcha. The Government took a sudden decision to ban the MKSS four days ahead of the gherao, hoping to demoralise them. The ban drew immediate criticism. Said former chief minister Jagannath Mishra: "It does not seem a well-considered political decision."

The MKSS, which has been fighting to get rights for the landless promised by the Government in various poverty-alleviation programmes, has long been the target of the police and the senas. After the Arwal massacre the Bihar Government had described the MKSS as "an extremist faction" and attributed nearly 200 murders, a series of dacoities in the south-central region of the state to it and its Lal Sena. But Dr Vinayan, who launched the MKSS in 1981 with the slogan of '*Jote boye kate dhan, khet ka malik wahi kisan*' (the peasant who sows, tills and harvests the land is its real owner), dismissed all the charges as "totally fabricated". "The MKSS has no squads. It is an open, peaceful organisation creating a sense of self-confidence and awareness among the poor," he asserted.

As its influence spread from Jehanabad to the districts of Gaya, Patna, Rohtas, Beguserai, Palamau and Aurangabad, the landlords responded with a host of senas, the most aggressive being the Lorik Sena, Bramharshi Sena and Bhoomi Sena. At least one sena had the support of a powerful minister in Dubey's cabinet, as a CID report stated and Dubey later confirmed to the Centre. The area has since become a veritable battle ground.

With both sides to blame, Dubey was pressurised to ban the senas as well. Initially he disagreed, claiming that the senas were not organised associations, but fearing trouble in the legislature, he finally ordered the ban on four —the Bhoomi Sena, Lorik Sena, Bramharshi Sena and Hari Sena, and Lal Sena of the Naxalites.

But it was soon clear that Dubey's action had pleased nobody. Opposition leaders, Congress(I) dissidents and Dr Vinayan agreed that the ban order on the landlords' senas was an eyewash. Said the CPI(ML) MLA Umadhar Singh: "Had the Government been sincere and honest it would have immediately arrested the known leaders of these senas." The move also upset the 'Jehanabad lobby' of nine MLA's who have supported Dubey in the CLP(I) because he has been soft on the senas.

Nor has the ban broken the spirit of the MKSS, which intends to challenge the ban in court. Says Vinayan: "The whole purpose of the Government move is to force us to go underground but we are not prepared to oblige the Government." With the Opposition and mass organisations regrouping against the Dubey Government, public sentiment ranged against him and party dissidents pressing for a change in leadership, Dubey's position was more precarious than at any time in his 17-month-long stewardship of the state.

—FARZAND AHMED

Dubey's decision to ban the MKSS and the landlords' armies raised fresh doubts about his grip on the state.

Photographs by KRISHNA MURARI KISHAN

Arwal massacre demonstrators in Patna: burning issue

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ANDHRA FLOODS

A Devastating Deluge

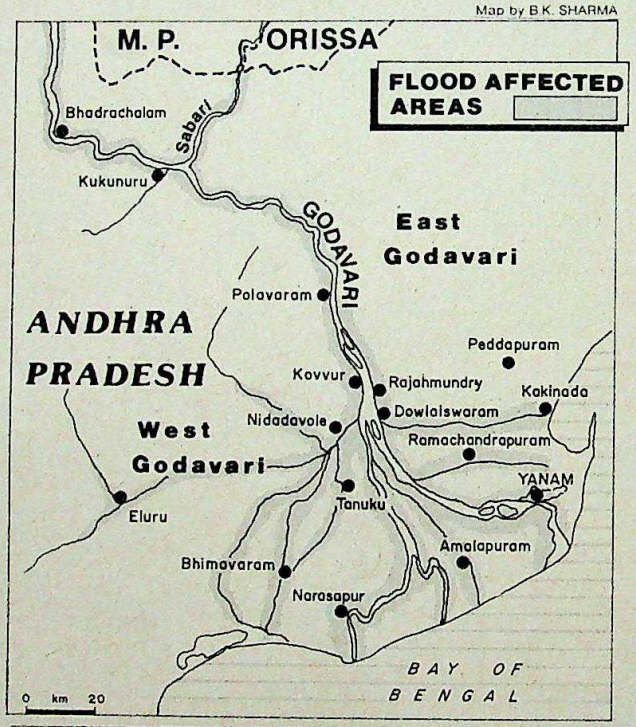
THE DEVASTATING deluge came after three years of distressing drought. And in its wake, the waters of the Godavari, glorified as placid and benign in Telugu literature, unleashed unprecedented havoc on their way to the Bay of Bengal. The death toll of 250-odd people in the freak floods that crippled Andhra Pradesh last fortnight does not convey the full nature of the catastrophe. The sudden rush of water through the Godavari and its distributaries discharged more than 10 times the designed flow through the 5,226 km of canals in the delta, damaged or destroyed 28 lakh acres of cropland, brought down 1.6 lakh houses and displaced over 10 lakh people. The coastal areas of Andhra Pradesh are no stranger to natural disasters—the 1977 cyclone took over 10,000 lives—but the sheer scale of devastation has not been matched by any calamity in this century.

Though Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao rashly put the total loss at Rs 880 crore, the fact is that the exact figure is still being totalled and will be available only in the first week of this month. But that the damage has been extensive was conceded even by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who sanctioned Rs 30 crore for relief measures at the end of a day's survey.

More than anything else, Andhra Pradesh was a victim of its topography. Seventy-six per cent of the Godavari's catchment area is in Maharasthra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa and, though the river flows for 1,465 km, its three principal tributaries—Pranahita, Indravati and Sabari—empty into it over its last 473 km, all in Andhra Pradesh. The floods were largely caused by unprecedented heavy rainfall in the catchment area of the Godavari and its tributaries. And there is no way of holding back the water in this stretch of the river; the only dam is at Sriramsagar, 302 km upstream of the Godavari's confluence with the Pranahita.

Matters were made worse by unusually heavy rain in the Godavari delta itself: in three days ending August 13, the rainfall was over 30 cm against the normal average of 19 cm for the whole month in the west Godavari district and 38 cm against the monthly average of 17 cm in the east Godavari district. The net result was that the Godavari rose to an unprecedented 55.65 ft at Bhadrachalam, the highest in 133 years of recorded flows and 6.9 ft. above the danger level. The Dowlaiswaram barrage on the Godavari near Rajahmundry, for example, was designed to hold a flow of 32.3 lakh cusecs; instead it held over 35 lakh cusecs on August 16. As a result, the Vijjeswaram canal, which leads off downstream and was designed to carry 3,000 cusecs, was suddenly filled with 50,000 to 60,000 cusecs of water, leading to the flooding of Nidadavolu, Tanuku and Bhimavaram towns. Rajahmundry, the most populous town in the Godavari delta (pop: 2 lakh), was saved by an upriver breach at Polavaram, 40 km from the town, which let out water into the nearby fields. But residents of over 2000 villages in the delta were not so lucky; 758 of them were marooned for as many as 10 days.

Map by B.K. SHARMA



With 2000 villages inundated, 28 lakh acres of cropland destroyed and one million people rendered homeless, the damage in the Andhra floods has been unmatched in this century.

Predictably, the state Government was totally unprepared to deal with the calamity. Irrigation Minister K.E. Krishnamurthy threw up his hands and asked: "When the flow is unpredictable how can one expect the old canal bunds and lock chambers to remain intact?" But the administration did perform creditably in giving timely flood warnings, which helped to arrange evacuation in time and reducing the loss of human lives. In fact, the people of east Godavari district did not need any warning; they knew that danger was approaching when the old Dowlaiswaram barrage was breached in July. Their worst fears were confirmed when, on August 16, the statue of Sir Arthur Cotton which graces the new Dowlaiswaram barrage, situated 40 metres upstream from the old one, was washed away. Admitted District Collector M.V.P.C. Sastry: "When this news spread, people thought it was all over." Sir Arthur, who designed the delta's canal system, is almost revered in the region and his photograph can be found in the houses of most farmers in the area.

Relief operations were mounted quickly enough with the armed forces and volunteers distinguishing themselves. Navy and air force helicopters operated from dawn to dusk from three make-shift helipads at Eluru, Kothagudem and Rajahmundry. Batches of 250 prisoners in the sprawling Central Jail in Rajahmundry cooked and packed *pulihora* (a tamarind and rice mix) through the night so that the helicopters could drop the food packets the next day. Said lifer Raja Reddy: "We cannot describe the satisfaction that it gives us to help the hungry from inside a jail." Batches of three ham radio operators stationed themselves in the secretariat in Hyderabad, in district collectorates and in tiny towns to keep communication lines alive.

But the Government's relief effort

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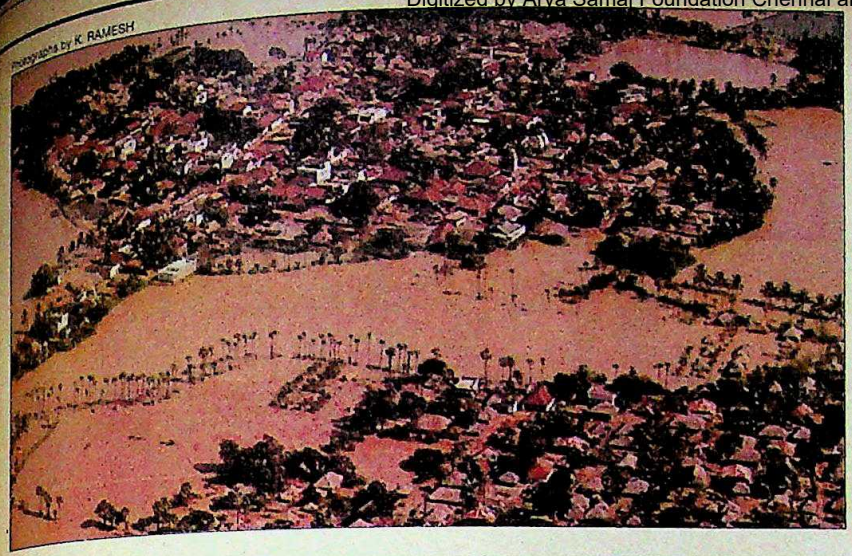

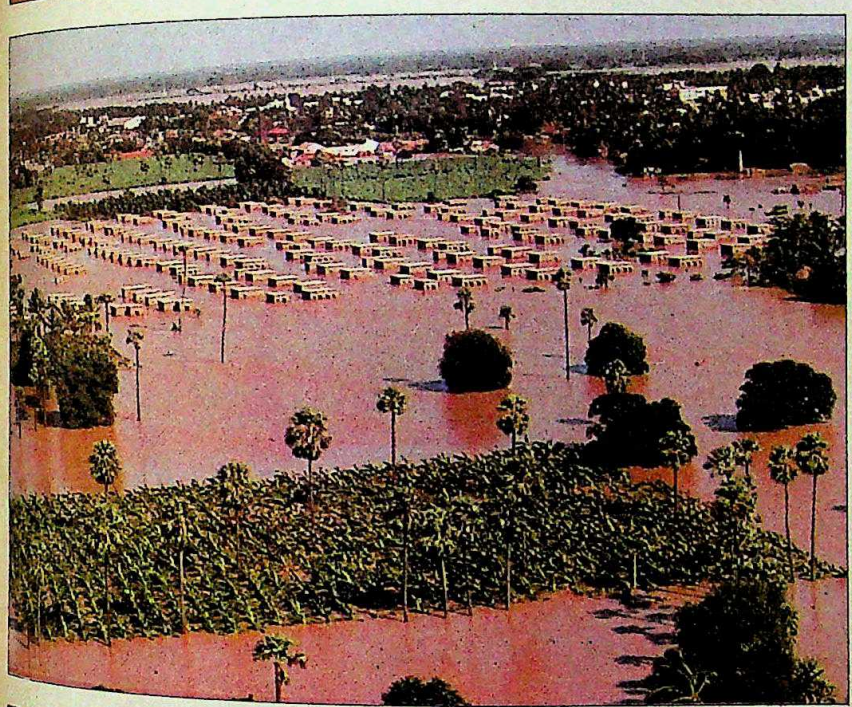

Photographs by K. RAMESH

Scenes of devastation in the Godavari delta: freak floods

lacked proper planning, direction or co-ordination. The revenue administration assigned the task of relief to mandal revenue officers but with staffs of less than 10 people the mandals naturally could not cope with the task. Outside the office of the mandal revenue officer in Bhimavaram stood an angry crowd chanting: "We want food. We want water." Said a distraught MP from Narsapur, Vijay Kumar Raju, who was stranded at Bhimavaram: "Nobody is willing to take responsibility. I spent a whole night looking for police constables because I heard that some villagers would try to breach canal bunds which would have forced water into all parts of Bhimavaram."

Even intrepid villagers who set out to organise relief were disappointed with the official response. Said A. Ramakrishna Raju, a fish farmer of Korukullu, a marooned village near Bhimavaram: "I had to wait for six hours to get the stock of anti-cholera vaccine though a doctor in the village was willing to give the shots if I could fetch it from the mandal office." And pastor Srinivasa Rao of Vissakoderu village said wryly: "Even in such a tragic situation we are asked to run from pillar to post. There is no help reaching our village and when I went to Bhimavaram I was asked to go to my mandal headquarters Palakoderu, which is further away and under water. Can help in times of distress be made a routine official exercise?"

The Government is bound to face more flak from the farmers in the coming weeks about the poor maintenance of the canals and the delay in the modernisation plans of the delta system. A worried Rama Rao has already asked ex-chief secretary A. Krishnaswamy to draw up a plan to repair the canals so that water for irrigation can be reached to all areas in time for the second crop, sowing for which starts next month.

But for the moment, Rama Rao's concern is to mollify the powerful lobby of the delta's farmers. The Godavari delta accounts for about half the 25 lakh tonnes of paddy procured for the public distribution system and the chief minister's successful scheme of supplying rice at Rs 2 a kg to the poor. Unless he can restore confidence in them by making sure that repairs to the irrigation system area are carried out quickly, Andhra Pradesh's food output and Rama Rao's populist programme of distributing rice are both in for a severe setback.

—AMARNATH K. MENON in Rajahmundry

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PAKISTAN

A War of Nerves

FOR FOUR months her steel grey Mitsubishi Pajero jeep had become a symbol of her ruthless march to power or martyrdom, a shining new political bandwagon on which millions battled for a foothold as she traversed the country delivering just one relentless slogan in her shrill voice: *"General Zia jawe, jawe, jawe."* (Zia should go). But last fortnight, the band was on the run, chased by an armada of police vehicles as the Government opted to crack down on Benazir Bhutto who upped the stakes by choosing the path of direct confrontation on August 14, Pakistan Independence Day.

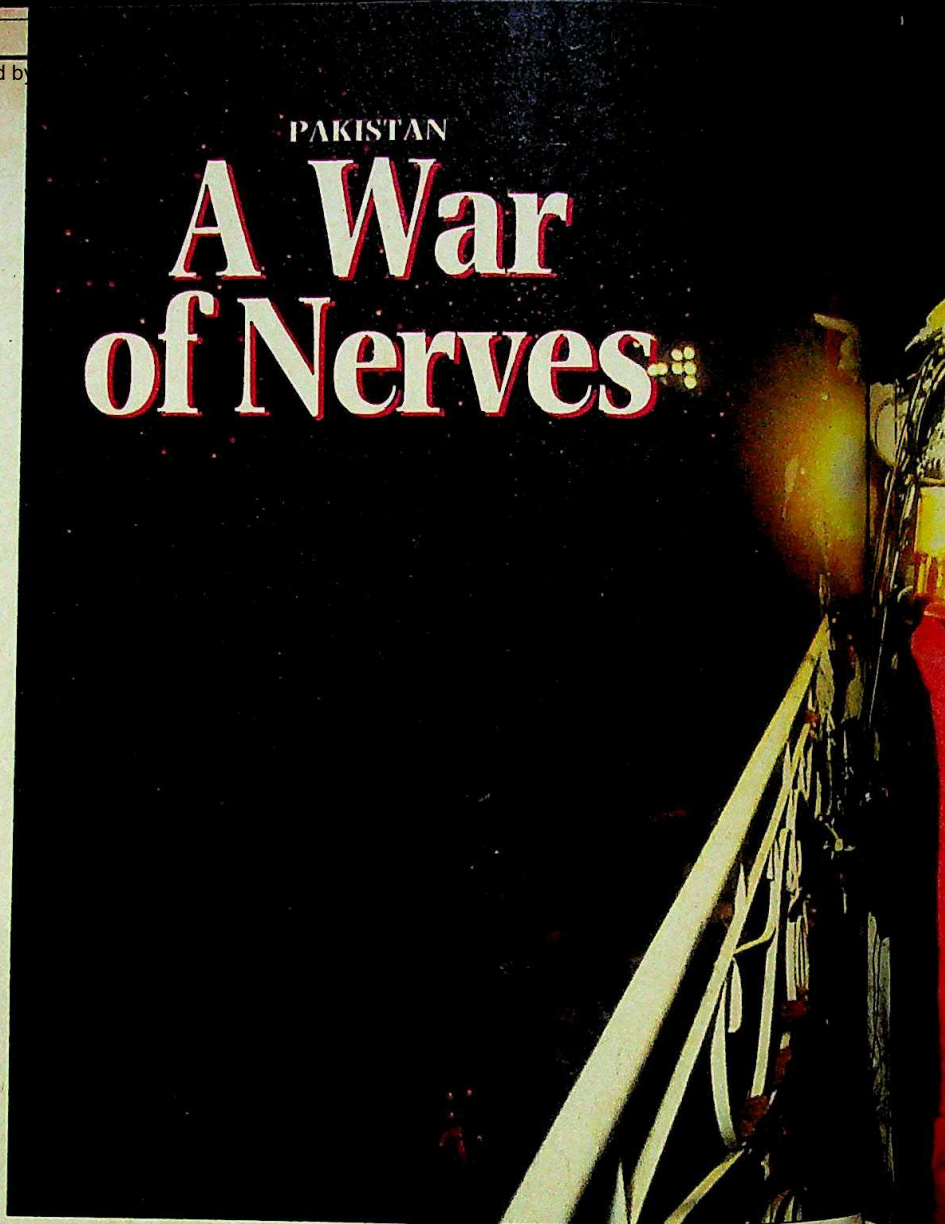
For three hours, their modest Suzukis had failed to catch up with her as she played hide-and-seek with the pursuing police. And she could hardly have found a better hide-out than her traditional stronghold of Lyari, the sprawling Karachi ghetto notorious for the volatile tempers of its inhabitants who had, since the previous night, been fighting pitched battles with the police. The throng of 20,000 was not about to give her up to the police so easily. And as tear-gas and lathi charge failed to break the surging crowd's resolve, Benazir triumphantly drove back home to be arrested at the place and time of her choosing: during a press conference at 70, Clifton, the Bhutto family's retreat in Karachi's exclusive beach side locality.

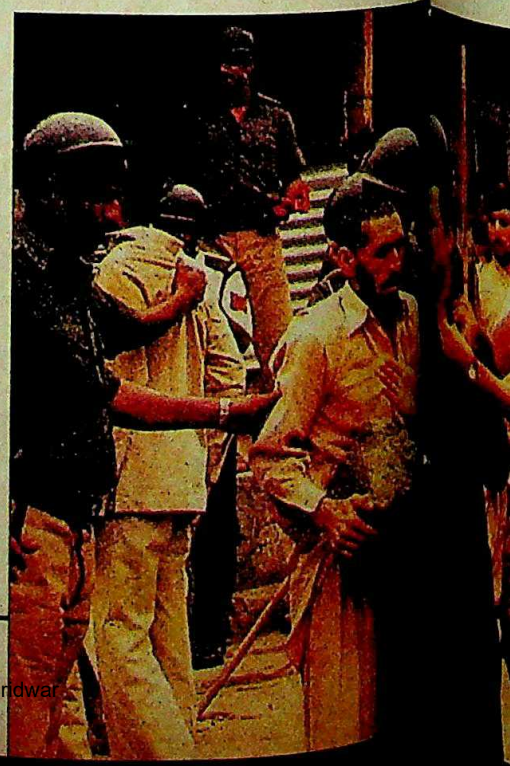
Using every bit of the penchant for the theatrical that she has inherited from her father—former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who was executed on Zia's orders in 1979—she declared, before boarding the police car on way to the Landhi jail outside Karachi which is meant for juvenile delinquents: "To go to jail is a matter of pride for me. This has exposed to the world the kind of democracy that prevails in Pakistan." The arrest was just the spark needed to ignite pent up frustrations in large parts of the country, leading to rioting in both Karachi and Lahore and then, as the army moved in, resulting in persistent violence in Sind, the stronghold of the Bhutto family.

In April, shortly after Benazir had returned from exile to a tumultuous welcome by millions, Zia had sarcastically remarked: "This is nothing serious, just a small spillover because we've taken the lid off the boiling pot" (by lifting martial law). The spillover was now threatening to become Zia's greatest challenge since he began to liberalise the political system in the country a couple of years ago.

As it often does in Pakistan, the violence began at Lyari where mobs attacked the police and soon the narrow, congested streets were littered with burnt-out shells of vehicles, debris of property destroyed in rioting and at least five bodies. Many of the rioters shouted *"Wazir-e-azam* (prime minister) *Benazir Zindabad"*, as they threw brickbats at the police.

If Lyari was a microcosm of the swelling wave of resentment all over the country, Lahore, the nucleus of all power in Punjabi-dominated Pakistan politics, threatened at one stage to return to the kind of pyromania that saw the back of Bhutto a decade ago. The historic walled city, which has seen many political battles, was the scene of the worst rioting that day. For over four hours the police and





Benazir on her anti-Zia campaign; and (right) demonstrators being arrested

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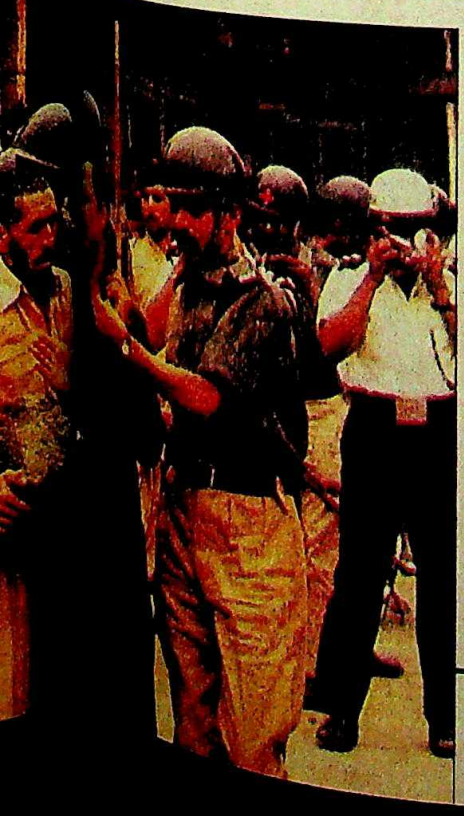
Photographs by JAY ULLAL



supporters of the opposition alliance, the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD), fought it out, leaving seven dead and many injured. It was the worst incidence of violence in the Punjab since the imposition of Martial Law in 1977.

But as often happens in Pakistan, the trouble soon shifted to Sind where long-standing ethnic frustrations and regionalistic aspirations came to the fore as thousands battled with the police and the army even in small towns. In the small town of Tando Adam, 200 km from Karachi, masked, hidden snipers even fired at police patrols killing at least two policemen. Consternation in Islamabad was immediate as a company of the Baluch Regiment moved in. Slowly but surely, Junejo's Government was collecting the courage to call out the army in strength to keep law and order, an action which quickly put paid to the agitators' hopes that the army would turn against Zia when the final crunch came.

As the violence abated in the Punjab however, Zia's supporters insisted that the agitation was bound to be a short-lived one. But Sind was a different matter altogether. Armed men stalked the highways at night, disrupting traffic and attacked government installations even by day. Also, rather significantly, in Sind the trouble spread from the towns to the villages. Says Fazal Rahu, senior vice-president of the newly-formed Awami National Party: "Undeclared curfew is in force in most of rural Sind. People are arrested when they go out of their houses. The law enforcing agencies are behaving as if they are in an alien territory."

The administration which had treaded fairly softly in the Punjab (apart from the first day of killings in Lahore), struck with a vengeance in Sind. Demonstrators were not only indiscriminately fired upon, but also humiliated. Women and children were arrested and tortured. There were also reports of pregnant women being dragged on to the roads.

IN SIND the wounds of the 1983 movement which was brutally crushed by the military government (killing over a thousand people) are still fresh. Besides, the hanging of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and economic deprivation have all combined to make the situation politically volatile. The 1983 movement left a deep scar on the minds of younger Sindhis who, short of jobs, money and social opportunity, easily take to militancy.

The renewed repression in Sind also revived the chronic alienation. "The very fact that the army has been stationed throughout the province is proof that Sind is being treated on a different level. Law enforcing agencies have unleashed a reign of terror on the people of Sind," says Moulana Shah Mohammed Amroti, the acting convenor of the MRD, the multi-party anti-Zia political group spearheaded by Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP).

The showdown began to build in right earnest on August 12 when Prime Minister Mohammed Khan Junejo, who is also president of the official Muslim League, cancelled his party meeting scheduled for Independence Day and also banned all public gatherings planned for August 14. But with the opposition unrelenting he decided to strike. The midnight knock woke up most of the mainline leaders of the MRD who were unceremoniously bundled off to prison. Over the next two days,

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the Government made more preventive detentions in Punjab and Sind than had ever been done before.

Blank detention orders were issued to local officials and arrests were made even without warrants. The short period of a democratic facade seems to have come to an end. The crackdown brought immediate protest from even Amnesty International which sent a cable to Junejo expressing concern at the detentions and the reversal of the liberalisation process which had begun in the country after the lifting of martial law.

For the Junejo Government, which came into power as a result of the partyless elections of February 1985, it was the moment of truth. Tauntingly, even Benazir had remarked: "General Zia has left for Haj along with his family, leaving the rest to be done by Mr Junejo, but there is no stopping the popular storm."

While the police and the army battled with the obdurate protest in Sind, Zia, who returned home last fortnight, could seek satisfaction in the fact that the immediate trouble had seemingly blown over. "The present situation is regrettable but not serious," he told a Saudi newspaper and added: "Miss Bhutto wants power and is in a hurry. But she has to play according to the rules of the political game which includes general elections in 1990."

IF ZIA felt smug and secure it is because in Pakistani power projections whatever happens in Sind, Baluchistan or the North-West Frontier Province, the power remains in the hands of whoever controls Punjab. "It is the same old story again," says veteran Pakistan-watcher Kuldip Nayar, adding: "Punjab has again let her down."

The fundamental contradictions which arise partly from the PPP's befuddled ideology and partly from the quixotic traits in the Bhutto way of functioning play a crucial role in Punjab. The upper class Punjabi does not want change. The economy seems to be flush, the shops are full of goodies and despite high prices he has more money than he can spend. The PPP's rhetoric is left-of-centre and makes the prosperous Punjabi elite apprehensive. "There are two faces of Punjab—the ugly face of the intolerant soldiers of the status quo, and the serene face of the mass that has accepted the rationale for change," says I.A. Rahman, a prominent intellectual.

Conversely, the poorer masses are for change and support the PPP but they have no leader to orchestrate their voice. The lack of an able deputy in Punjab is Benazir's major problem. With the departure of the "uncles"—Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi and Ghulam Mustafa Khar from her party—she has no back-up.

Benazir at her Clifton house before being arrested

Another problem is that nine years of martial law has emasculated the whole democratic process in the country. Such long abstinence from political activity has rendered each political party a victim of muscle-waste and atrophy. Even the PPP, despite its popularity, has no organisation worth the name. "The problem," a PPP leader admits, is that "the populism of a leader can win you elections by itself but to run a movement you need an organisation."

This lack has been evident even in the course of the latest conflagration. The large-scale arrests have totally paralysed the party. If processions are still being taken out in Lahore it is because some of the top leaders of the Punjab Peoples Party have managed to escape arrest and have gone underground.

Though it would be premature to believe that Benazir's campaign has lost momentum, there is no doubt that she made a few miscalculations. Says a Lahore lawyer: "To begin with she moved too early, even before she was able to reorganise her own party and then in her arrogance she alienated everybody else who mattered." This indeed was a surprising error for one who should have been wiser by experience. Shortly after her return from exile she had told INDIA TODAY: "My father was let down by the party. He did so much for his partymen but when he went to the gallows no one did anything, not a dog barked." In the same, bitter, determined vein she had asserted that this would not be repeated were she to be arrested. But, outside Sind, history more or less repeated itself.

She is also paying the price for her arrogance, so typically a Bhutto trait. At scores of public meetings millions of her supporters had kept up the chant of "Bhutto family, hero, hero, *baaki saare* zero-zero", much to the chagrin of the older, more senior leaders of the various other constituents of the MRD who may not count very much at the national level but have their own loyal support bases in their constituencies. This could have come handy in this confrontation when the PPP lacked a grassroots organisation. For example, if Khan Wali Khan of the Awami National Party has support in the NWFP, retired Air Marshal Asghar Khan's Tehrik-e-Istiqlal party has its own limited voice. So does Ghous Bux Bizenjo in Baluchistan, and though Meraj Mohammed Khan and Iqbla Haider of Quami Mahaz-e-Azadi do not count for much nationally, their vociferous support among the large labour class in Karachi is vital to the success of any agitation. Benazir did not try to take these leaders with her. This, when as prominent lawyer and political activist Aitzaz Ahsan says: "She was the only one on Pakistan's political scene who could afford to be generous."

She was indeed gifted with a situation where the political parties, beaten in the great phase of state terrorism in 1983, were looking for a bit of charisma

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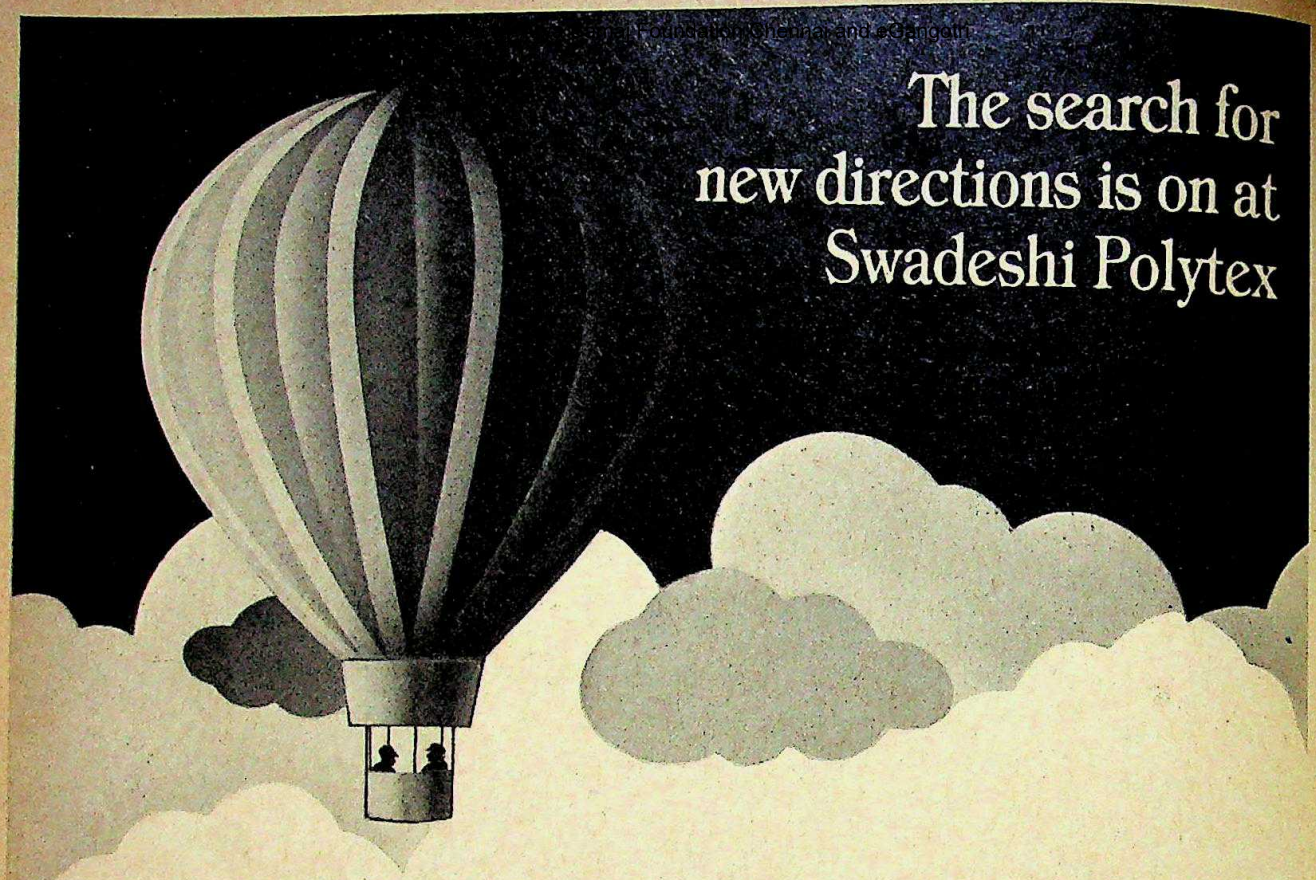

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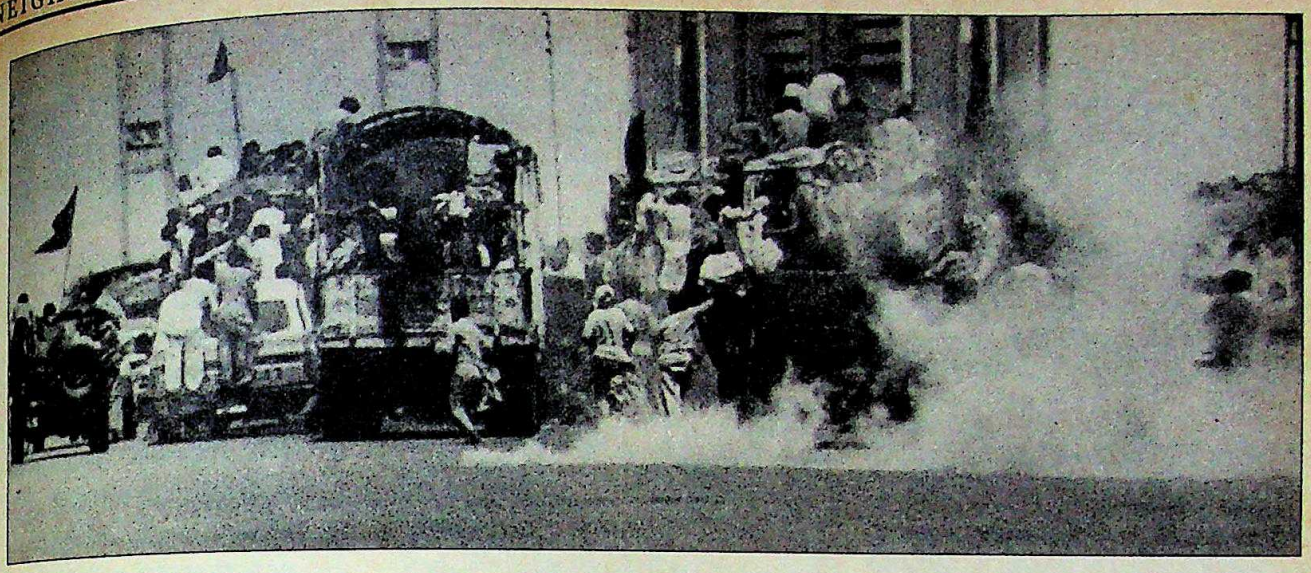


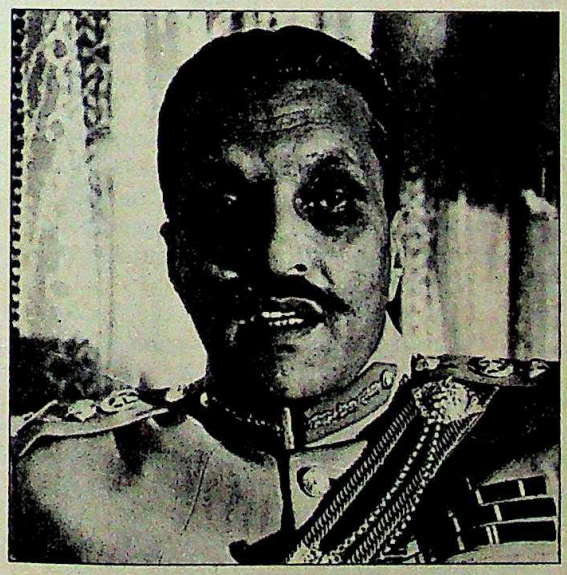
Pakistan Peoples Party supporters being teargassed in Karachi

and leadership. Instead of filling that vital gap she only stressed on the irrelevance of these parties. She never made any effort to remove the distrust haunting the various constituents of MRD.

WALI KHAN and Asghar Khan have kept themselves totally out of the movement. "We want democracy but there is no need for us to get caught in all this when we are unprepared", says Wali Khan. Asghar Khan's party's distrust of Benazir is deeper. Says Lahore-based lawyer and Tehrik leader Khurshid Kasuri: "You can't just alight from an aircraft and take over the leadership. We won't accept that." By not consolidating these anti-Zia forces, Benazir gave the Government a chance of trying to isolate her from the rest of the MRD.

But while she has paid dearly for her impetuousness, the Government has also suffered some jarring knocks. The trouble in Sind has made it clear that alienation still persists there. In Punjab, the masses have shown their anger even if it did not last long. Most of all, the Government has paid a price for its indiscriminate repression.

It was basically under American pressure that Zia lifted the martial law and restored a semblance of democracy. The latest crack-down, is hardly the kind of thing that pleases public opinion in the US, so vital to the Zia regime. "In Pakistan the army decides who rules and this is a surrogate army of the Americans," says Aitzaz Ahsan underlining the fact that the Americans could, indeed pull the plug in a Philippines-like fashion though Zia's insurance lies in the great stakes in Afghanistan. But the US State Department has had to criticise Benazir's arrest, ironically making common cause with Muammar Gadafi, one of the first foreign leaders to speak out in her favour.



Zia has proved a master strategist. By absenting himself from the country, he has succeeded in pitting the Opposition against Junejo. If the situation worsens Junejo will become a convenient scapegoat.

The reaction in the US thus would always figure in Zia's calculations as he now sets about deciding what he should do with Benazir after he has put her in jail. Already the Government has decided not to proceed with the sedition case initially registered against her.

Sooner or later Zia will have to release Benazir, thus adding to her image of a living political martyr. But once again, he has shown that he is a master strategist. By absenting himself from the country during the agitation, he has succeeded in pitting the opposition against Junejo. If the situation gets out of control, it is Junejo who will be the convenient scapegoat. Says Mushahid Hussain, the articulate young editor of *The Muslim*: "Both sides have lost out in the confrontation," adding: "The PPP was caught with its pants down but the biggest casualty is Junejo who had come to symbolise the democratisation in post-martial law Pakistan. His claims of tolerance of political dissent received some hard knocks in the streets of Lahore and Karachi."

In the first round thus, the honours were even though both sides took a nasty beating, and also have plenty to brood about. But with the die cast now, Benazir and the other opposition parties have no choice but to intensify the ongoing war of attrition. That could bring Zia out in a more direct control of the Government and put the clock back, to some degree, on his much-publicised ploy of civilianisation.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA with ZAHID HUSSAIN in Pakistan

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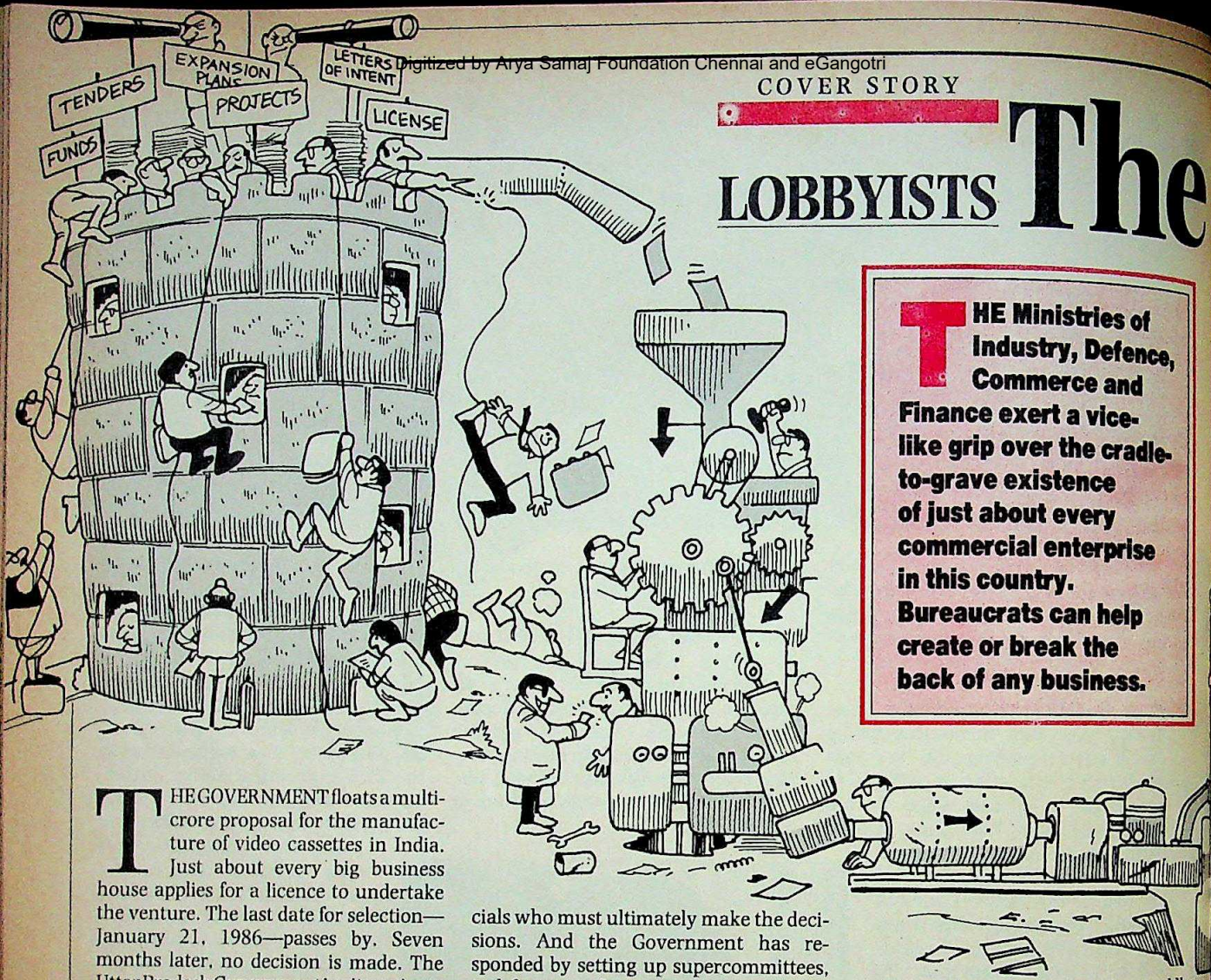
The LOBBYISTS



THE Ministries of Industry, Defence, Commerce and Finance exert a vice-like grip over the cradle-to-grave existence of just about every commercial enterprise in this country. Bureaucrats can help create or break the back of any business.

THE GOVERNMENT floats a multi-crore proposal for the manufacture of video cassettes in India. Just about every big business house applies for a licence to undertake the venture. The last date for selection—January 21, 1986—passes by. Seven months later, no decision is made. The Uttar Pradesh Government invites private companies to collaborate in a Rs 700-crore joint sector undertaking for an aromatics plant in Salempur. Over half-a-dozen groups apply and three of them—the Singhanias, Reliance, and the Birlas—are short-listed for final selection. Two years have passed but the state Cabinet has still not made a choice. A new Maruti dealership was to be opened in Faridabad near Delhi last month. Bidders came in droves. But the company's board, in a seemingly inexplicable move, decided to postpone the dealership.

These are examples—not of bureaucratic sloth or buck-passing but of decisions involving massive amounts of money that have been deliberately deferred in the course of the high-stakes game of lobbying that has become an integral part of the everyday affairs of this country. In each of these cases, lobbyists and influence peddlers on various sides have been battling behind the scenes and bringing to bear their weight—through politicians or bureaucrats—on the officials who must ultimately make the decisions. And the Government has responded by setting up supercommittees, task forces, and expert committees which have stymied all action while the bidders pull their weight at various ministerial levels in an attempt to out-muscle one another.

Lobbying—the art of winning politicians and influencing Government decisions—is orchestrated by industrial houses, trade groups and associations as well as individual businesses in a concerted effort to bag a contract, to destroy a competitor through political pressure, win an industrial licence, or help shape official policy in the interest of their own clients. The more visible lobbies—Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Association of Indian Engineering Industry (AIEI), Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), the Apparel Export Promotion Council—are highly organised and well-financed groups that use a mixture of seminars, formal representations and personal persuasion to wrest trade concessions in the marketplace from a Government which controls not only the commanding heights of the economy but also straddles trade and commerce in the form of a bureaucratic colossus. Within these lobbying organisations themselves, there is fierce competition for the top posts by the industrialists who, by virtue of occupying these positions, stand to gain access to Government officials and ministers to seek favours for their personal businesses.

Ultimately, it is the Government's control over expenditures that is one of the key reasons for the existence of the lobbies. More than Rs 40,000 crore are spent annually by government agencies on the purchase of items ranging from a sophisticated fighter plane to letter writing paper. The ministries of industry, electronics, communications, commerce, defence, and finance have a vice-like grip over the cradle-to-grave existence of just about any commercial enterprise in this country. The Department of Industrial Development alone clears more than 2,000 applications for new projects each year. The Commerce Ministry—through a system of clearances, permits, and con-

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Hidden Persuaders

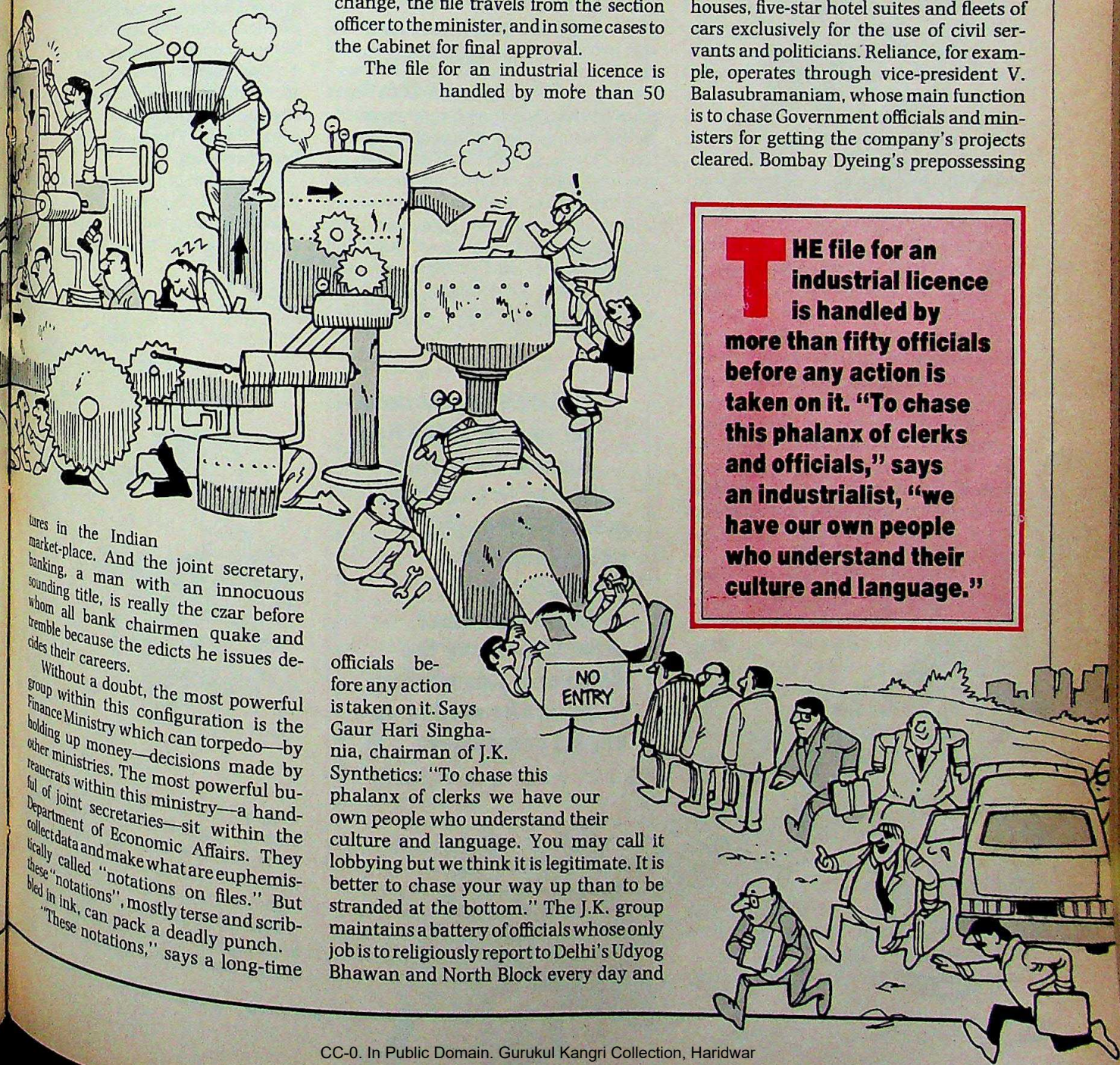
cessions—oversees more than Rs 28,000 crore in trade annually. Bureaucrats in the various departments of these ministries can help give birth to a new enterprise, break the back of an existing one, or delay the functioning of a nascent one. The Controller of Capital Issues, a joint secretary in the Finance Ministry, is solely responsible for multi-crore decisions involving the issuance of shares and debentures in the Indian market-place. And the joint secretary, banking, a man with an innocuous sounding title, is really the czar before whom all bank chairmen quake and tremble because the edicts he issues decides their careers.

Without a doubt, the most powerful group within this configuration is the Finance Ministry which can torpedo—by holding up money—decisions made by other ministries. The most powerful bureaucrats within this ministry—a handful of joint secretaries—sit within the Department of Economic Affairs. They collect data and make what are euphemistically called "notations on files." But these "notations", mostly terse and scribbled in ink, can pack a deadly punch.

"These notations," says a long-time FICCI member, "can make or break a file. They can be very subtle, very brief, but the effect can be felt in hundreds of crores. A little weight given to one project, a little criticism directed at another can decide the fate of the entire industry." Each proposal to the Government is processed by over half-a-dozen officials within a ministry plus another set of officials in another ministry if the matter is relevant to both. If the proposal involves any policy change, the file travels from the section officer to the minister, and in some cases to the Cabinet for final approval.

The file for an industrial licence is handled by more than 50 officials before any action is taken on it. Says Gaur Hari Singhania, chairman of J.K. Synthetics: "To chase this phalanx of clerks we have our own people who understand their culture and language. You may call it lobbying but we think it is legitimate. It is better to chase your way up than to be stranded at the bottom." The J.K. group maintains a battery of officials whose only job is to religiously report to Delhi's Udyog Bhawan and North Block every day and file a status report for their bosses. Other groups like the Tatas and Birlas, as well as multinationals like Hindustan Lever and Siemens, maintain "follow-up" departments headed by senior officials with the rank of a regional director or vice-president.

The multinationals sometimes call their officials 'development officers'. They enjoy virtually unlimited expense accounts and maintain luxury guest-houses, five-star hotel suites and fleets of cars exclusively for the use of civil servants and politicians. Reliance, for example, operates through vice-president V. Balasubramaniam, whose main function is to chase Government officials and ministers for getting the company's projects cleared. Bombay Dyeing's prepossessing



THE file for an industrial licence is handled by more than fifty officials before any action is taken on it. "To chase this phalanx of clerks and officials," says an industrialist, "we have our own people who understand their culture and language."

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Chairman Nusli Wadia handles these jobs by himself, with the help of both ruling as well as opposition MP's. The Tatas are represented by the polished and aggressive Delhi-based Surjit Gupta, while Aditya Birla has an able representative in the safari-suited B.N. Saxena. R.P. Goenka who once had a hot-line to the Government via R.K. Dhawan and Pranab Mukherjee during Mrs Gandhi's heyday, now uses his crucial position as FICCI president to establish rapport with the most important Government functionaries.

With the recent spurt in foreign deals, there have come to the fore several influential people not usually associated with business. For example, cricketer Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi's company initiated the process whereby a Gulf-based industrialist obtained the contract for the giant Jagdishpur fertiliser plant. And last year, the portly and affable Ranjit Jayratnam, son of a former Union minister, used his super-salesmanship on behalf of Airbus Industrie, which eventually bagged an order for Airbuses worth Rs 1,600-crore from the country's domestic airline, Indian Airlines. In this case the Government reversed an earlier decision to buy the aircraft from Boeing.

Some of the capital's exclusive bungalows in South Delhi are the venues for lavish parties thrown by powerful Indian and foreign lobbyists. Their mansions serve as the rendezvous for bureaucrats, businessmen, civil servants, journalists and politicians. Some of the regular party-givers are enterprising MP's like Suresh Kalmadi, the former air force officer-turned-politician, and Murli Deora, the Bombay-based man for all seasons. In Friends Colony, Ottavio Quattrochhi, who has very successfully represented the Italian company Snamprogetti in India for about two decades, is known for his closeness to the Gandhi family as well as for the excellent rapport he enjoys with senior Government officials. Another lobbyist, sought after by the large hotel chains as well as by the Tatas, is the politically active lawyer Lalit Bhasin, who is well-connected with the bigwigs of the ruling party.

THE BUREAUCRAT most courted by lobbyists in all the ministries is the joint secretary. As a general rule, he is the most powerful figure in the world of delegated policy-making. Above him, the officials are often too busy to be accessible. Below him, policy decisions don't usually get taken. The joint secretary sits on the boards of public sector companies, sanctions foreign exchange for every conceivable purpose, runs the industrial licensing secretariat, sits on the small committee that takes oil import decisions, and is responsible for vetting every proposal for a contract. "The joint secretary's notations on any file," says a lobbyist for the export industry, "are key to the movement of any project and even more important than what his secretary does." A secretary will rarely overrule a joint secretary on paper.

A key office for company lobbyists is the Directorate General of Technical Development (DGTD), within which relatively junior development officers are assigned responsibility for the various industries. These officers can sometimes be more important than almost anyone else, for before any licence is issued, the DGTD makes an extensive evaluation of the proposal in order to determine its "viability", the demand for the product, the estimated lag in supplies, how many licences should be issued, and whether foreign components should even be allowed into the country. A small display of disapproval for even a miniscule portion of a project under consideration can sound its death-knell.

In one case recently, the Government said that the minimum economic size for units in the chemical industry should be 60,000 tonnes. Earlier, the technical recommendation had been 50,000 tonnes. Some company lobbyist who wanted to expand capacity had obviously been at work. When an objection was raised, the change was explained away as a typing error. But the "typing error" has still not been corrected.

The office of the Director General of Supply and Disposal (DGSD) is another important hang-out for the influence peddlers. As part of the Ministry of Supply, this department approves the rates at which the Government will buy items like steel, water-pipes, clothes, and consumer and office items. The DGSD's stamp of approval for the rates charged by a company enables it to sell to Government agencies without going through formal tender requirements. Since these

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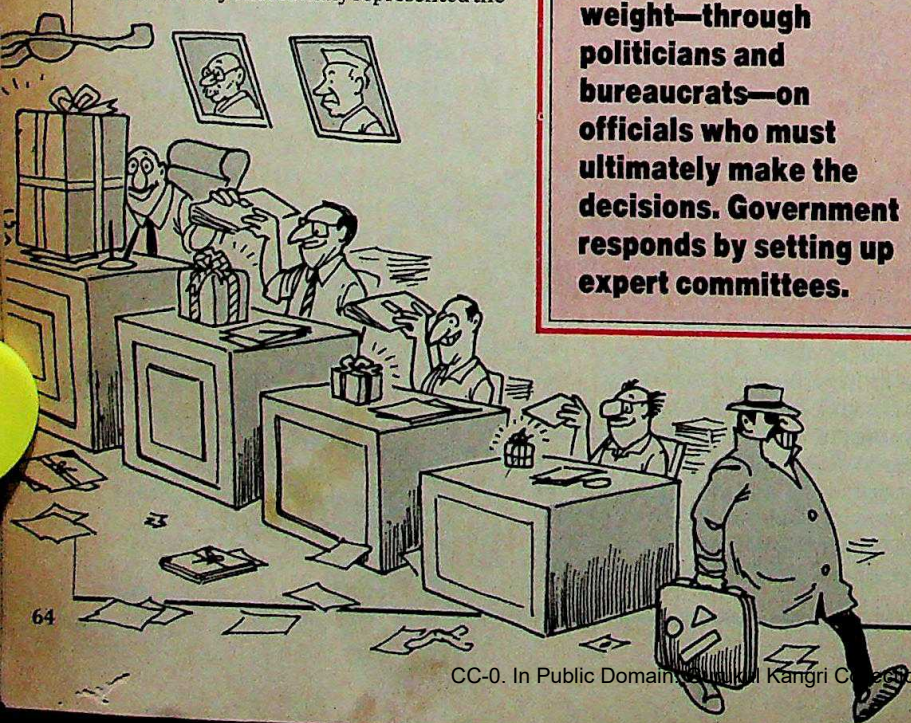

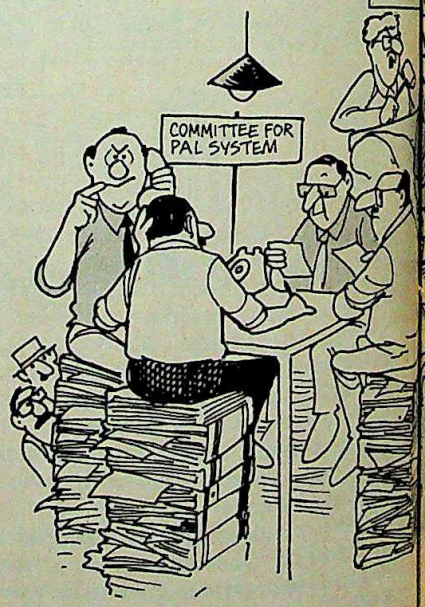

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agencies buy Rs 3,000 crore worth of goods at DGSD rates, lobbyists work day and night to get their own rates approved. And often the lobbying is aimed at profiteering through this mechanism. When V.P. Singh was commerce minister, he ordered an inquiry into why the DGSD had approved rates that were higher than those prevailing in the market—for the sale of Rs 50 crore worth of water-pipes.

A new entrepreneur functioning without the aid of a lobbyist is like a babe in the bureaucratic woods. Consider what he has to go through to start a project: he must first submit a detailed preliminary project report that usually runs into a score of pages, not counting the supporting affidavits and supplementary forms which must be appended to it. The applicant must obtain a "letter of intent" issued by the ministry, by filling out more forms spelling out the scope of the project, the raw material and components to be used and the capitalisation plans, which are evaluated by several technical wings within the pertinent ministries.

In this continuing process, which can take years, the application goes to the licensing committee within the Secretariat of Industrial Approvals (SIA). A committee within the SIA will meet in order to determine whether approval should be given for the letter of intent. Several steps later, the letter of intent will be converted to an industrial licence. The entrepreneur must also begin a new round of negotiations with Government-owned financial institutions—Industrial Finance Corporation of India, Industrial Development Bank of India, Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India—each with its own rules and regulations—to arrange for loans, and with state governments to arrange for land.

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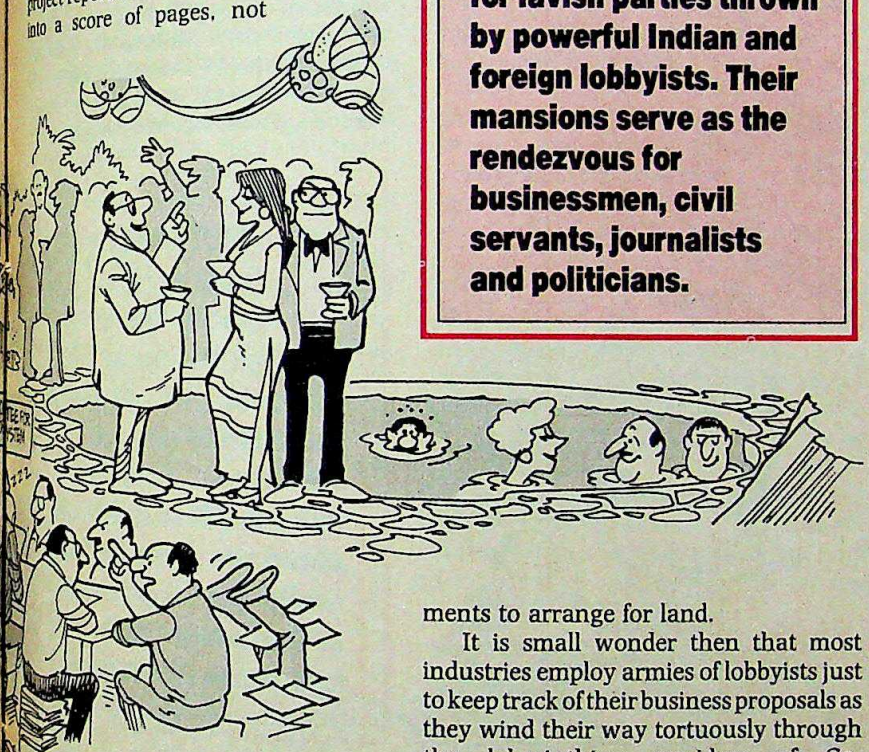

It is small wonder then that most industries employ armies of lobbyists just to keep track of their business proposals as they wind their way tortuously through the labyrinthine corridors of Government. The Apparel Export Promotion Council, the lobbying arm of India's nearly 8,000 garment exporters consists of three directors from the Government and 27 directors from the industry and has compiled a war chest—from membership donations—of Rs 20 crore to be spent on promotional activities.

BUT ULTIMATELY, tricky decisions on trade, commerce and industry, particularly those with a potential political fall-out, are usually handled by officials close to the prime minister. In Mrs Gandhi's time, a cabal in her office including Yashpal Kapur and R.K. Dhawan dispensed favours freely to chosen industrialists by short-circuiting or strongarming the bureaucracy. In more recent times, the battle royal between the London-based businessman Swraj Paul and H.P. Nanda of Escorts—the battle between the NRI lobby and FICCI—was informally arbitrated in the Prime Minister's Secretariat.

Because of this over-centralisation of decision-making, interest groups failing to influence Government decisions through the traditional methods of public relations and liaison work resort to opening up new fronts—pressure points—at the political level in order to reverse decisions already made. For example, after interminable haggling between highly-connected French and Italian lobbies in this country, the Government decided to award the Rs 722-crore contract for the HBJ pipeline deal to an international consortium led by the French company Spie Capag. This created conflicting camps even within the Prime Minister's Secretariat. One powerful lobby, backing the Italian competitor, Snamprogetti, wasn't about to give up without a fight. There is no way to revise a Government decision except at the Cabinet level. But in this case, a committee headed by the then cabinet secretary, P.K. Kaul, was assigned to take another hard look at the contract. This committee did not reverse the initial decision. And, before Kaul could complete his term as cabinet secretary, he was sent to Washington as ambassador. Two other powerful men who were dealing with the pipeline decision—Minister of State for Petroleum Nawal Kishore Sharma and Gas Authority of India Chairman B.S. Cheema—also lost their jobs.

But Government decisions—under pressure from powerful political lobbies—

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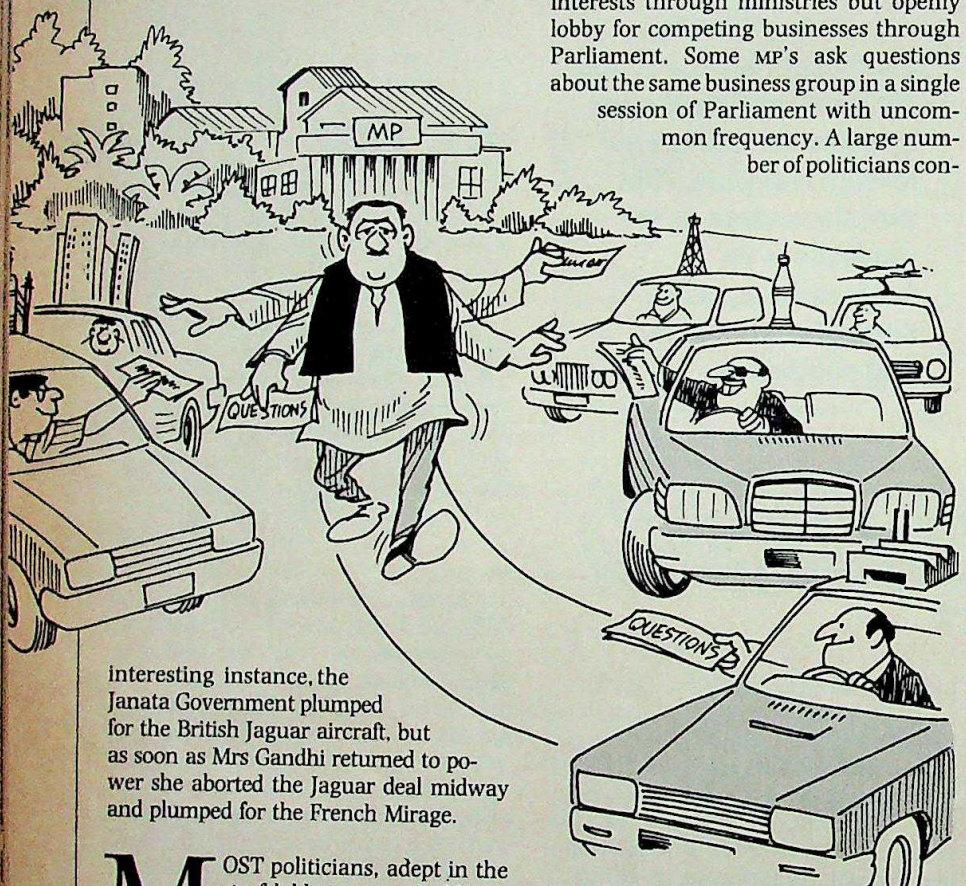
have been reversed in the past. The most notable example of this was the reversal of the decision, in 1981, to award a large fertiliser technology contract—partly funded by the World Bank—to the California firm of C.F. Braun. Ignoring the Government committee's endorsement of the scheme, Mrs Gandhi appointed yet another special cabinet committee which recommended that the project be awarded to Haldor Topsoe, a Danish subsidiary of Snamprogetti. In another interesting instance, the Janata Government plumped for the British Jaguar aircraft, but as soon as Mrs Gandhi returned to power she aborted the Jaguar deal midway and plumped for the French Mirage.



MOST politicians, adept in the art of lobbying, rarely like to leave behind a paper trail leading to the favour-seeker. A minister will usually fire his gun from the shoulder of a joint secretary or secretary. If the bureaucrat doesn't agree to play along, he will be shunted off to a do-nothing job. The traditional role of the bureaucrat was to protect the Government or his minister from embarrassment or from being publicly compromised.

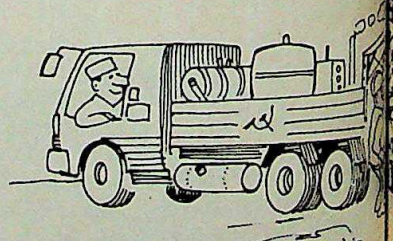
But with the advent of big bucks, big deals and big lobbyists, these distinctions have become hazy. Ministers want their dirty work done, but they are averse to over-ruling their secretaries in writing. And, increasingly, bureaucrats do not write dissenting opinions. "Today, what makes a successful bureaucrat," says an official in the Prime Minister's Secretariat, "is his ability to manipulate a politician and keep his mouth shut. They now emulate the skills of a politician, knowing that there will be prize jobs waiting for them at the end of it all." Indeed, while old Government files had reasoned arguments going back and forth, most today have brief notings that say "Please speak" or "As discussed". So no record is left of what really went on.

Politicians not only work for special interests through ministries but openly lobby for competing businesses through Parliament. Some MP's ask questions about the same business group in a single session of Parliament with uncommon frequency. A large number of politicians continue to hold the same jobs they had with companies prior to their becoming MP's or MLA's. During the last Parliamentary session, the domestic soft drinks lobby was clearly on the attack in order to embarrass the Government over its proposed deal to allow Pepsi Cola to manufacture its product in India. Earlier this domestic lobby had been at loggerheads as both the Campa Cola and Parle groups attempted to use Parliament to raise embarrassing questions about each other.

Interestingly, between 1979 and 1982 about 15 MP's asked 86 questions against the Parle group of companies. Fifty-six of these questions were posed by three MP's—K. Lakkappa, Dharam Das Shastri, and J.K. Jain. Later, Parle responded in kind. Till recently, a Rajya Sabha member with financial connections to a drug company in Bombay specialised in asking embarrassing questions about market rivals Glaxo and Pfizer. And another seemed to have interest in little other than the affairs of tobacco giant ITC.

Industrial houses will often seek to influence an MP or MLA during an election campaign. During the last elections, for example, the Khoday group favoured the victory of Janardhan Poojari from Karnataka. Poojari won and went on to become minister of state for finance. In a neighbouring district, a rival of the Khoday group—Vijay Mallya of United Breweries—was backing S.M. Krishna, who lost. Mallya, who has been a subject of investigation, has alluded that he is a victim of his rivals' political connections. Mallya himself, however, attempted to use another political connection to his advantage. Last August, when he was in trouble with the authorities over the Shaw Wallace take-over controversy, an MP from Madhya Pradesh, Shivendra Bahadur Singh, wrote a personal letter to Rajiv Gandhi pleading Mallya's case. Singh, a Doon School mate of Rajiv, wrote that the charges against Mallya appeared to be false and were instigated "by an industrial lobby of the Poddars and Goenkas". In that letter, Singh pointed

POLITICIANS not only work for special interests through ministries but also lobby for competing businesses through Parliament. Some MP's ask repetitive questions about the same business group in a single session of Parliament with uncommon frequency.



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out: "Vijay and his group...have contributed to the party (and) he is also helping the promotion of the Indian public school cause...and also establishing a scholarship for Doon School..."

A classic case of an industrialist currying favour with a political candidate and chalking up a big IOU in return is that of a Bombay businessman who supplied fuel for Mrs Gandhi's aircraft and helicopter travels during the 1980 elections that brought Mrs Gandhi back to power. The Petroleum Ministry then had put a strict ban on the supply of aviation kerosene because of its short supply, and had turned down several requests from Mrs Gandhi's aide, Yashpal Kapoor, for supplying it. The Bombay businessman managed to locate and buy the fuel privately in the Gulf and have it shipped to Mrs Gandhi's campaign helicopter. He went on to prosper more than anyone else once Mrs Gandhi was in power.

One of the most common uses of powerful lobbies is to chalk out niches in the market-place, to ensure monopoly contracts, or destroy competitors through political manipulation. For example, India buys about 25 million tonnes of coking coal a year at Rs 42 per tonne for the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL). For the past several years, a company supplied coal from Australia. The arrangement was considered reliable. This year, under pressure from lobbyists for a new company, the testing of the old company's coal supplies was delayed for four months and then rejected at one testing ground even though the same coal had been approved at another testing ground. When the old company filed an appeal, the SAIL authorities asked its officers to negotiate a deal under new contract terms. But even though bidding was to occur under new terms the coal from the new company—supplied under the old terms—was accepted. In the war of the coal lobbies, the old company lost out.

THERE is also the case of India's insurance companies, which for the last 32 years have been conducting their reinsurance business in the Lloyds market in London through three exclusive brokers. So powerful is this link—backed by politicians and high officials—between the Indian companies and the three brokers that no other broker has been allowed to bid for business in 32 years. Due to this set pattern, the London market offers skyrocketing premiums to the Indian market because the business can only be placed through the three brokerage houses which have divided the business among themselves.

In order to prevent special interest favours, conscientious bureaucrats try and protect their ministerial bosses from the impact of organised lobbies by not allowing industry and trade representatives to meet them on a one-on-one basis. In Rail Bhawan, for example, there is a hard and fast rule that no foreign delegations or their representatives will be allowed to meet the minister of state for railways unless there is at least one joint secretary present. "But they can always find a way to get through, through a sister or a brother or an aunt," says a Government official who has worked for several ministries. "The relationship starts with small presents. But once a contact is established it continues. I am always amazed to see how easy it is to win over ministers with small presents. And soon, the lobbyist finds that a minister or a Government official is working for him, not as a lackey, but as a friend."

On Diwali and Christmas, the corridors of Government offices crawl with lobbyists bearing gifts—pens, designer glasses, calendars, brief-cases, diaries. But these are the smallest items at which this public relations effort begins. The diaries and pens get more expensive when they are meant for senior officials. Leather brief-cases, cut-glass ashtrays and table pen-sets are commonplace gifts for senior officials. Then, of course, there is the time-honoured custom of sending sweets and fresh fruit baskets to officials on Diwali and Holi: the higher-placed the recipient, the bigger the basket. And beneath the yellow cellophane-covered fruit are layers

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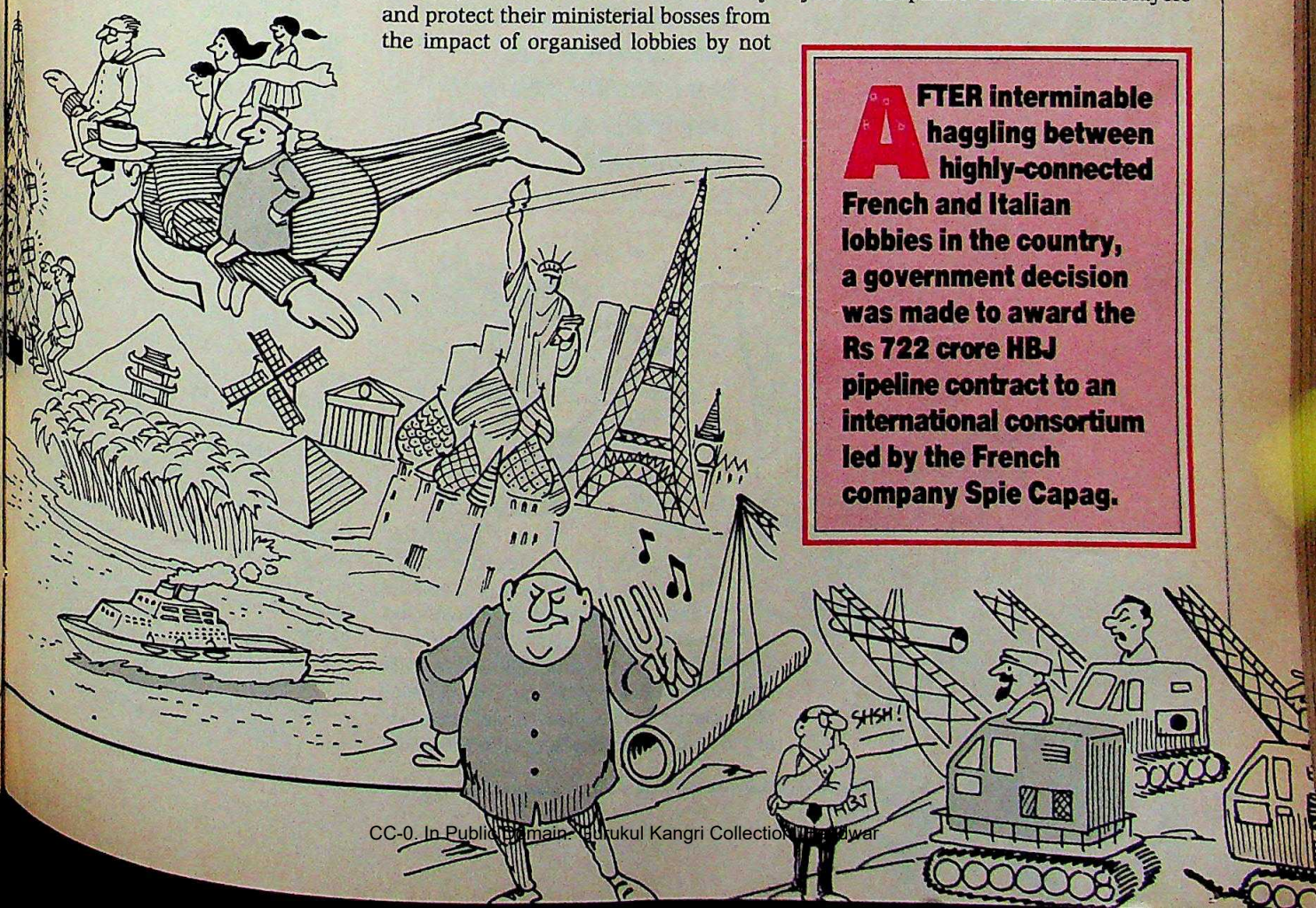

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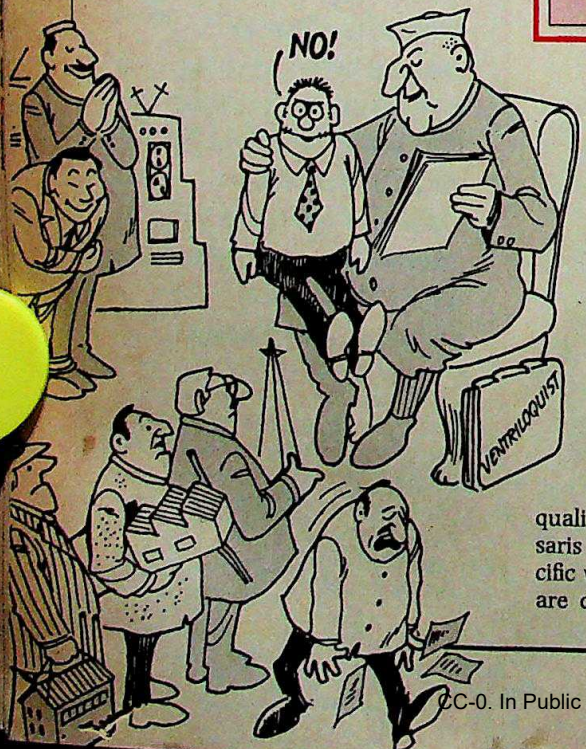
of dry fruits and bottles of Scotch whisky. Says a senior bureaucrat: "You can get more information out of a bureaucrat by serving him a bottle of Scotch whisky than by giving him Rs 1 lakh. The former makes him feel he is among friends and he blabs out the details wanted."

The other common method of getting bureaucrats beholden is to bear their and their family's holiday expenses. All bureaucrats are entitled to take their LTC once in two years, and when they do, they go to a holiday resort where they are generously looked after. The same thing happens on foreign trips too.

SOME of the biggest deals, naturally enough, are struck on the golf course. Money literally changes hands, but in a very legitimate way. The lobbyists who flock to the golf course have acquired a knack of losing to the senior officials they are trying to befriend. The technique is ingenious. They carefully note the habits and times that senior officials play, arrive at the same time, and lay large wagers with the officials. They play badly and intentionally lose to the officials. As a result, the officials are always winning money from these lobbyists, who become known more for their high wagers than for their golfing ability. Thus are born some of the strangest foursomes on the greens. And it is during these games and over the inevitable beer or whisky which follows that important nuggets of information are obtained.

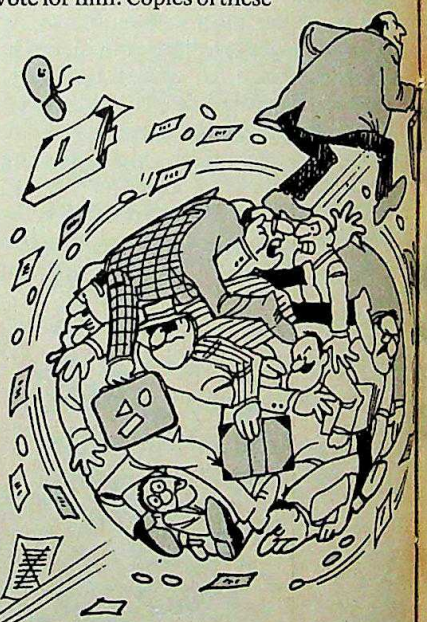
"Lobbyists keep extensive profiles and dossiers," a Finance Ministry official says. "There is rarely a false move. They know who takes money, who has greedy relatives, who dines with whom." A prominent Congress(I) politician—who made his fortune as a lobbyist for the electronics industry as well as for competing big business houses in both Delhi and Bombay—has perfected information-gathering to a fine art. His organisation keeps a special who's who directory of officials in Government departments and ministries who can always be counted on for a quick favour. Several servants in the Maharashtra state guest-house are on his pay-roll. They eavesdrop on guest-house telephones and keep a tab on visiting VIP's. They know—and report back on—who calls whom, who meets whom and who is who's relative. A Rajiv Gandhi intimate who stayed there recently was shocked to discover that a prominent lobbyist knew the names and financial and private businesses of every member of his family soon afterwards.

THE game is played out day in and day out—the hustle, the shuffle, the fix, the political twist, the con deal, the artful arm twist—in which the big fish eats the little fish in a scenario where only the jungle law operates.



That particular lobbyist has a permanent suite booked at a leading five-star hotel in Delhi. Every Diwali, he sends 2,000 packets of export-quality suit-lengths and 3,000 Banarasi saris to influential contacts. Brand-specific whisky bottles and Cartier watches are delivered to newspaper editors. In Bombay, he has organised some 25 ethnic associations of workers from different regions who live there to welcome—and influence—visiting politicians from those areas.

There is, for example, the Garhwal Association which recently welcomed Industry Minister N.D. Tiwari in Bombay—to his pleasant surprise—to the singing of Garhwali folk-songs. But such festivities have a purpose, for at the appropriate moment one person from the association—usually by prior arrangement—is chosen to approach the minister and ask him for a favour which will ultimately benefit the lobbyist's client. The minister never suspects that behind the "leader" of this ethnic group is a master hidden persuader at work. When H.N. Bahuguna was campaigning from Garhwal in 1982, the Garhwal Association sent 500 letters home to their families asking them not to vote for him. Copies of these letters were shown to Tiwari in order to impress him.



And so the game is played out, day in and day out—the hustle, the shuffle, the fix, the political twist, the con deal, the artful arm twist—in which the big fish eats the little fish. There are no other rules, for what is being acted out—in a world in which Big Government and Big Business hold each other captive in a symbiotic embrace—is an amoral morality play in which the only spiritual barometer is how much and how quickly the players can grab a chunk of the Indian economic pie. The only moral, ultimately is: You take your money. You run.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR with PRABHU CHAWLA and RAMINDAR SINGH

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DEFENCE Bucks and Bangs

THE MOST intense lobbying is done in the field of defence procurement—the Government's purchase of weapons systems, spares and add-ons. In the cut-throat atmosphere that surrounds this activity, the lobbying for defence contracts is hard core, brutal and uncompromising.

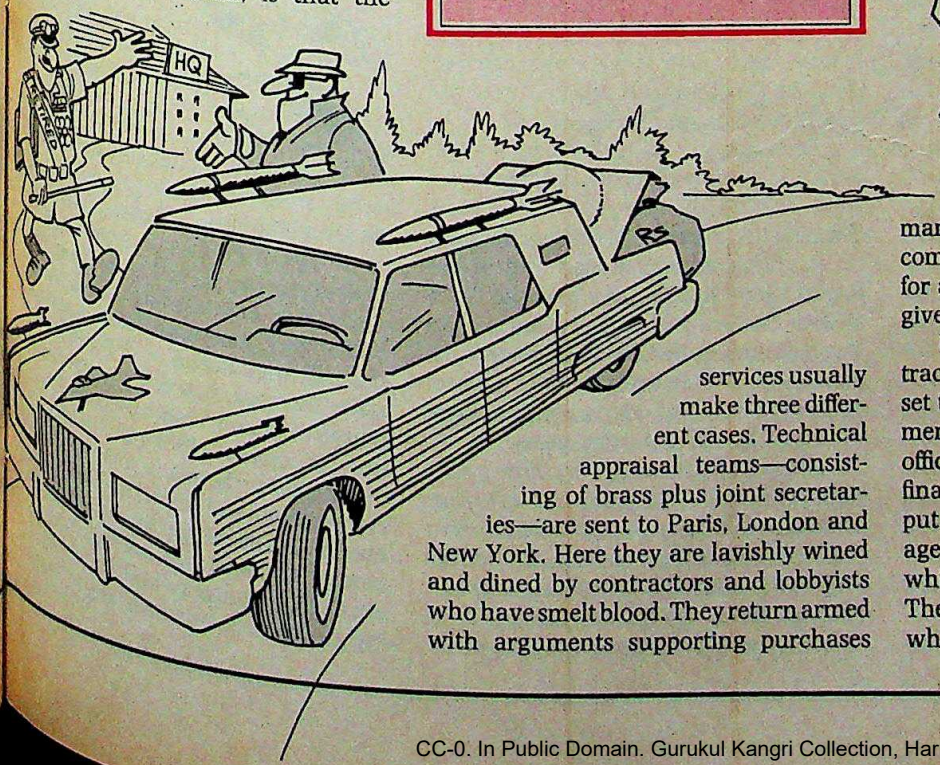
In its basic form the wining and dining and influence-peddling is not very different from what occurs in the civilian sectors. But there are several elements which render the defence arena unique: there is a clearly discernible revolving door through which retiring armed services officers march onto the pay-roll of lobbyists and contractors and then begin dealing with the Defence Ministry as "experts" on behalf of their organisations. Because so many of the purchases are high-tech, lobbyists are able to take advantage of the lack of technical knowledge within the Government to push through their arms packages. Often, foreign governments lend their entire weight to international arms deals and purchases, rendering them "politicised"—an instrument of foreign policy; and the Defence Ministry remains virtually unaccountable to Parliament, the Finance Ministry, or even to the Public Accounts Committee—cloaking all its actions under the blanket of "national security".

The end result, often, is that the country is saddled with weapons systems that are either too expensive, won't work, or won't serve a useful tactical purpose. The systems are often cocktail projects concocted, sold and delivered by the super-salesmen of the defence contracting lobby. The process usually works in the following way: Say the country is looking for a new helicopter. The three chiefs are asked by the Ministry of Defence to give their recommendations. As soon as word gets out, they begin receiving fancy advertisement packages and glossy representations from the middlemen. The three services usually make three different cases. Technical appraisal teams—consisting of brass plus joint secretaries—are sent to Paris, London and New York. Here they are lavishly wined and dined by contractors and lobbyists who have smelt blood. They return armed with arguments supporting purchases from the countries visited.

WHEN retired officers join big armaments manufacturers as their liaison men or consultants in Delhi, their job is to lobby former peers and juniors for foreign equipment manufacturers. This creates a dilemma for servicemen.

During the next stage, the research and development (R&D) teams begin studying the various reports. At this point, the lobbying is hot and heavy, not only from agents but also from the officers who have prepared the initial reports and been "worked on" by the agents. Finally, there is the testing and evaluation stage—during which weapons are field tested for performance. Senior ministry and defence officials agree that at this stage "a lot of money changes hands"—because the testing reports will decide whether a weapon is finally purchased. High-level civilian officials are usually excluded from participating in the field tests and have to rely only on reports. These reports, and even the tests which are sometimes conducted in foreign countries, can be rigged in order to exalt the performance of a weapon and enhance a company's chance of selling it. The "cut" for a favourable report is almost always given in foreign countries.

In the defence game of winning contracts and influencing officers, lobbyists set their sights on officers close to retirement, or the sons of former generals, or officers who have been compromised or in financial trouble. As one retired general put it: "They book them in advance as agents, or put them on their pay-rolls while they still have a few years of service. The idea is to get advance information on what they, the services, want to buy. The



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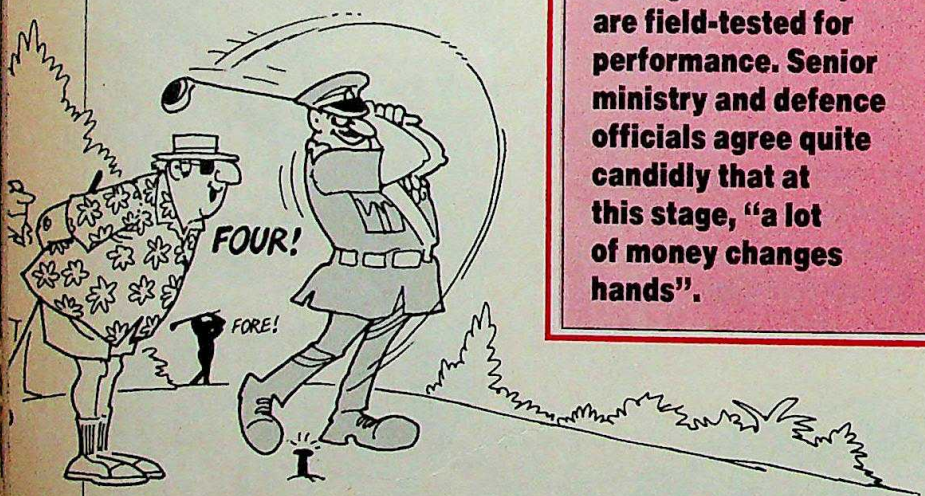
lobbyists then approach the firms and the dealing begins."

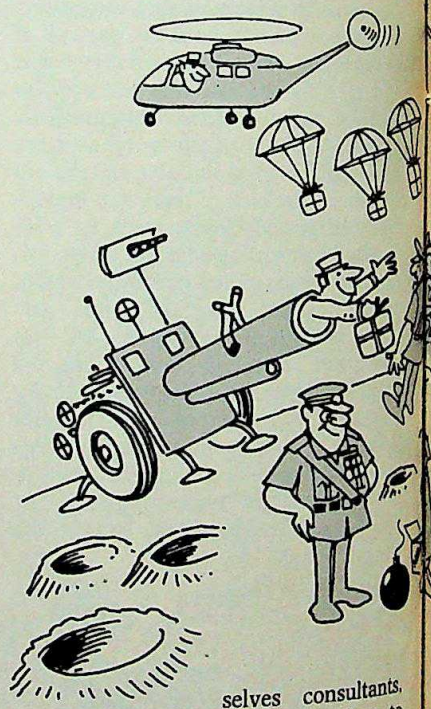
WHEN retired officers join big armaments manufacturers as their liaison men or consultants in Delhi, their job is to lobby with their former peers and juniors for foreign equipment manufacturers. This often creates an embarrassing situation for serving officials, who can neither turn their former bosses away nor agree to their proposals. But considerations of *esprit de corps* allow the retired officials to attend all service functions at which they get the information they want. And they throw lavish parties where free-flowing Scotch irrigates the desiccated throats of serving officials. Retired government officials seeking employment anywhere in the first two years after retirement have to take the Government's permission. But many of them bypass this rule by becoming consultants or advisers—which, strictly speaking, is not considered employment—or better still, by getting their wives employed by the foreign companies. Major agents brag about the number of retired major-generals, air marshals and admirals they have on their staff.



Former services luminaries who dabbled in or still are in the consultancy business include retired services chiefs like Air Chief Marshal H. Moolgavkar and Admiral S.M. Nanda. Moolgavkar is consultant to Ferranti and other French companies. Nanda joined his son Suresh to set up Globtech International after the admiral left the chairmanship of the Shipping Corporation of India. They have the agency of MTU engines which power many of India's merchant ships and are now bidding to supply the engine for the Army's main battle tank (MBT). Vice-Admiral Suraj Prakash, former director-general of the Coast Guard, represented companies manufacturing Japanese inshore vessels; Air Marshal T.N. Ghadiok, former head of the National Defence College, represented Challenger, a commuter aircraft manufactured by Canadair; Air Vice Marshal E. Dhatigara (former IAF vice-chief) represents the Lockheed C-130 Hercules, a transport plane Lockheed has been trying to sell to the air force for supply flights to the Indian base in Antartica. Air Marshal L.S. Grewal (former vice-chief who during his tenure passed orders that ex-service officers representing foreign equipment suppliers should, for security reasons, not be entertained in Air Headquarters) himself joined the ranks of the lobbyists and lobbied for the Transall aircraft; Lt-General M.N. Batra, former director of Military Intelligence, works for M.M. Bhagat and Company, a big name in the arms business. Commmodore Sanjana (IN) represents Britten Norman, an aircraft company which sold the Islander plane to the navy and the Coast Guard. Commander M.R.A. Rao (IN) for many years represented the Swedish Bofors. There is a liberal sprinkling of other generals, brigadiers, air commodores and lower ranks still in the business.

After Rajiv Gandhi became prime minister—and in the wake of the Larkins scandal—the Government made it clear that in major defence deals it would talk only to the manufacturers or their senior officials. This virtually banned the entry of agents and liaison men representing these companies in India from within the corridors of the defence and defence production ministries in South Block. This has now forced some manufacturers to open their own offices in India. Previously, agents used to get a 10 per cent commission of which between 2 and 5 per cent used to go to party funds and some more was spread around among people who had helped at various levels. Out of this, about 2 per cent remained with the agent. Some years ago, the Government laid down the norm that agents should get no more than 2 per cent and the money should be paid in Indian currency. But these steps have not eliminated the agents. Many of them have gone underground or operate behind the facade of overseas agencies run by NRI's who collect the commission abroad. Others stayed in the business by renaming themselves consultants, which enables them to pick up consultancy fees and expenses.

FINALLY, there is the testing and evaluation stage during which weapons are field-tested for performance. Senior ministry and defence officials agree quite candidly that at this stage, "a lot of money changes hands".



Some of the major defence agents/consultants include: Eureka, owned by Rajiv and Sanjiv Chowdhrie, both nephews of the former Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd chairman Baljit Kapur. Eureka represents Marconi, Sagem (naval-attack systems for Jaguar and Mirage), Sperry (flight data recorders), SNECMA (the French engine manufacturer) and, previously, Aerospatiale and Marcel Dassault; Roger Enterprises and Roger International (previously William Jacks) headed by Mahendra K. Jajodia and his brother, representing equipment manufacturers; Indian

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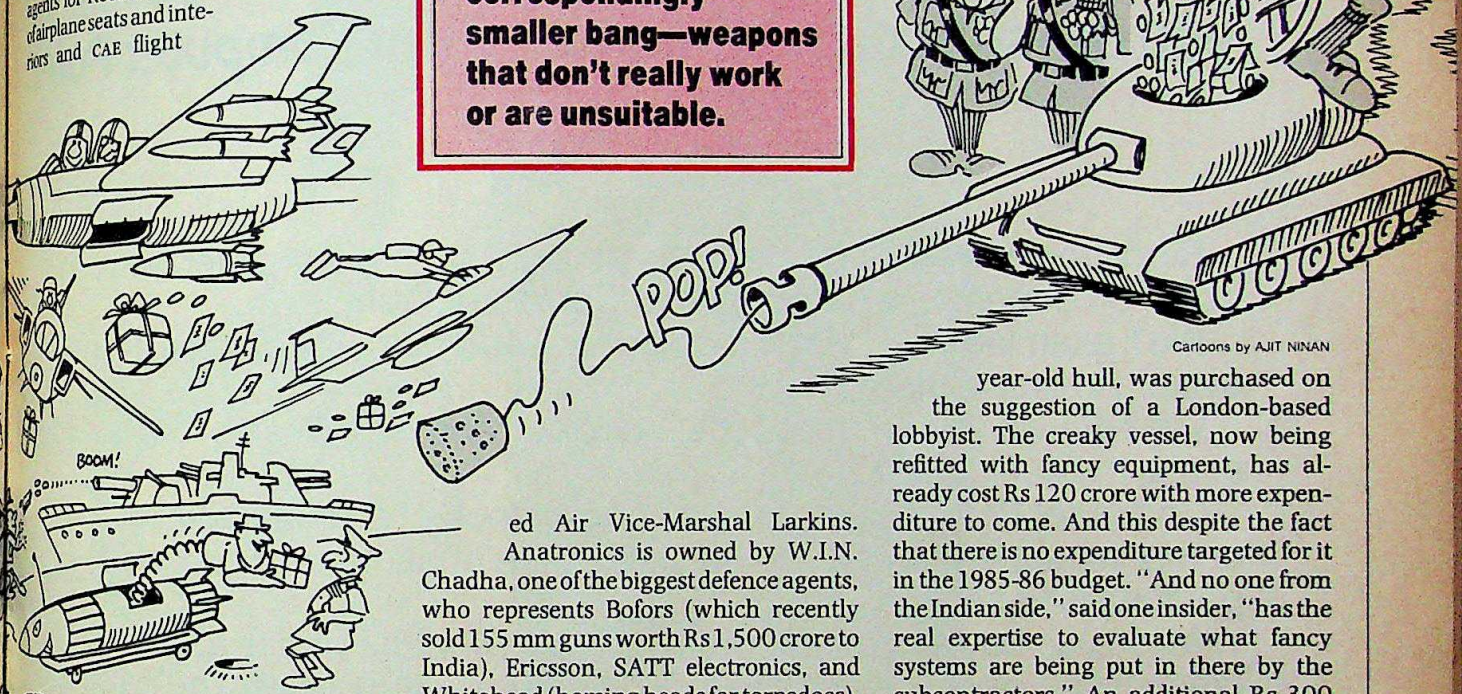
Avitronics, owned by Brij Mohan Gupta and his sons—Deb Mohan, Surinder Mohan and Harsh Mohan Gupta—a family of old Delhi cloth merchants who entered the business of aviation just after the Second World War. The Guptas are agents in India for Pratt and Whitney engines, which are fitted onto almost all the Air-India Boeing 707s and 747s, and Indian Airlines' 737s. Their company makes a commission on all engines and spares sold. They later became the Indian agents for Recaro, suppliers of airplane seats and interiors and CAE flight simulators. After this, they started picking up the agencies of various international companies and at their peak represented several hundred companies, many of them French, and also Westland Seaking helicopters.

Rotax is owned by Surrinder Gupta, representing the Tracor-manufactured Omega navigation systems which are being fitted onto all IAF transport planes and RCA Primus colour weather radar, Collins navigation systems and Thorn EMI electronic warfare pods; Concord International is run by Vinod Khanna who represents Saab Scania. His brother Lt-Colonel Vipin Khanna runs the Dynamic Sales Service Industries (DSSI) representing Hughes helicopters, Magnavox, and some Saab products. Usha Services and Consultants Pvt Ltd is owned by Kulwant Rai, brother-in-law of Swraj Paul. Their arms agency division was set up by Air Vice-Marshal K.N. Ram. They represent many equipment companies. The company had earlier employed Air Vice-Marshal Larkins.

THE ultimate effect of this pressure group scenario may be that even as the country spends bigger bucks on defence, it may be getting in return a correspondingly smaller bang—weapons that don't really work or are unsuitable.



Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

Anatronics is owned by W.I.N. Chadha, one of the biggest defence agents, who represents Bofors (which recently sold 155 mm guns worth Rs 1,500 crore to India), Ericsson, SATT electronics, and Whitehead (homing heads for torpedoes).

THE GROWTH and power of these companies reflects in part the massively growing defence demands of the country. In the Seventh Five Year Plan, the Defence Ministry's budget is more than Rs 60,000 crore. Of this, an estimated Rs 12,000 crore is to be spent on maintenance and procurement. This expenditure is a massive jump over the Rs 27,000 crore budgetted in the sixth plan. This year alone, because there has been such a flurry of acquisitions, the Defence Ministry has already overshot its procurement budget by about Rs 650 crore. It is now seeking a Rs 700-crore supplemental appropriation to meet the shortfall. But Finance Minister V.P. Singh has been privately insisting that the Defence Ministry provide a detailed accounting of purchases as well as cost over-runs on weapons systems which have been procured, in the interest of fiscal discipline.

There have been large cost over-runs. The aircraft-carrier Hermes, with its 40-year-old hull, was purchased on the suggestion of a London-based lobbyist. The creaky vessel, now being refitted with fancy equipment, has already cost Rs 120 crore with more expenditure to come. And this despite the fact that there is no expenditure targeted for it in the 1985-86 budget. "And no one from the Indian side," said one insider, "has the real expertise to evaluate what fancy systems are being put in there by the subcontractors." An additional Rs 300 crore will be spent on the project to buy eight Sea Harriers for the vessel.

The Bofors 155 mm gun project has also become controversial because senior government officials have begun to question its range of fire. Its ultimate cost—with transfer of technology for its manufacture here—is expected to be Rs 2,000 crore. Another project—Operation Skylark—for the installation of VHF transmission systems, is already in the red. And the Dornier aircraft is now being loaded with so many additional systems—fancy radars and missile systems—that some officials are beginning to wonder whether it will be able to give an optimum performance in the air because of its weight. "There is entirely too much ad hocism in these purchases," a senior official remarked. But the ultimate effect of this pressure group infested scenario may well be that even as India spends more bucks on defence it may be getting in return, a correspondingly smaller bang.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR
with RAMINDAR SINGH

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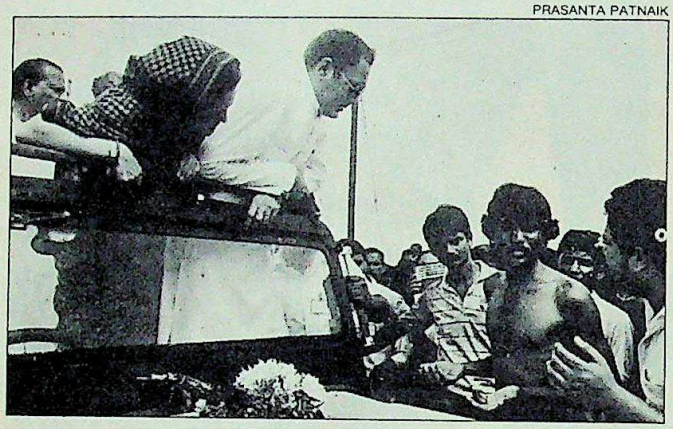
KALAHANDI

The Tribal Farce

IN JULY 1985, when it was announced that Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was scheduled to tour the tribal areas of Orissa, Principal Correspondent FARZAND AHMED visited the tribal area of Kalahandi in western Orissa to assess the situation and report on the shocking condition of the tribals, symbolised by the example of Phanas Punji, a tribal woman who had just sold her sister-in-law Banita, in bondage.

PRASANTA PATNAIK



In August, 1985, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited the tribal district of Kalahandi. During the tour, he was so moved by the plight of the tribals that he ordered the implementation of a crash welfare programme dubbed Operation Salvage.

In January, 1986, five months after Rajiv's visit, Farzand Ahmed toured the same area in western Orissa and reported (INDIA TODAY, January 31) that the state administration had done little to carry out the prime minister's directive even though state government officials claimed to have pumped about Rs 3 crore as developmental assistance in the area.

Five months after the article was published, the secretary to the Government of Orissa sent a detailed rebuttal of Ahmed's report to the Prime Minister's Secretariat claiming that massive improvements had taken place in Kalahandi. Ahmed went back to Kalahandi last fortnight to re-assess the situation. His conclusion, this time, was equally categorical. According to the evidence gathered during last fortnight's visit, the Orissa Government appears to have seriously misled the prime minister's office about the current state of affairs in the district of Kalahandi. The various employment schemes have not taken off. Rations of essential commodities have not been distributed. Villagers were selling their only crop, paddy, at distress prices. And, the life of Phanas Punji, who came to the prime minister's notice because she had sold her sister-in-law in bondage, has not improved. "The Orissa Government appears to have lied to the prime minister's office. In order to contradict our findings, they have tried to create a jungle of figures which are basically cooked-up," Ahmed writes.

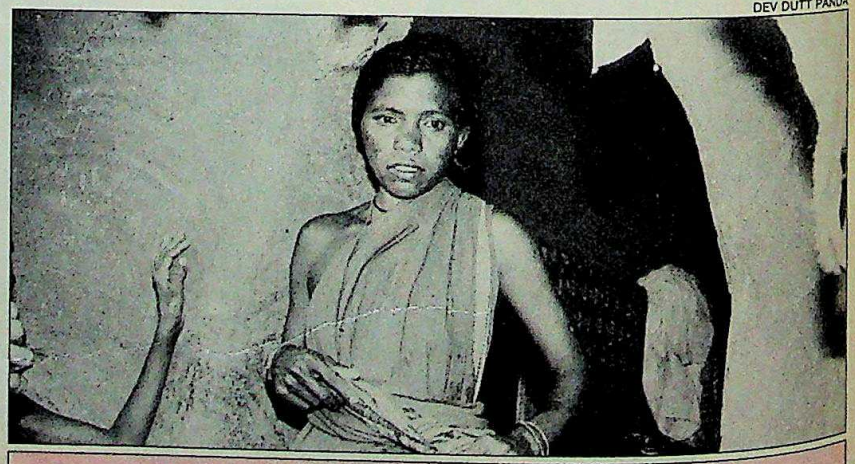
INDIA TODAY gives below the Orissa Government's version (titled 'Claim') as presented to the Prime Minister's Secretariat along with the real facts ('Findings'). The findings are backed up by documents and on-site interviews with tribals, officials and social workers.

Claim: *"Phanas Punji of Amalapalli did not sell her sister-in-law. She is a farmer, having five acres of land."*

Findings: A.R. Nanda, secretary to the chief minister, forwarded a report (DO No: 7293, dated 9.9.85) from the collector of Kalahandi (No:1 Emer, dated 4.8.85) to a joint secretary to the prime minister, confirming the sale of the young woman. This is backed by affidavits from Punji and her family. In addition, the collectorate has records clearly showing that Phanas' husband—not Punji—owned land, most of which is now mortgaged. And sister-in-law Banita, who has just returned home, has herself revealed that she was sold for Rs 40 as a domestic servant.

Claim: *In Nawapara subdivision alone, 2,276 fair price shops functioned during 1985-86 and 9,583 quintals of rice, 29,927 quintals of sugar, 10,19,510 litres of kerosene oil, and 6,563 tins of edible oil were distributed.*

DEV DUTT PANDA



The Orissa Government claims that Phanas Punji did not sell her sister-in-law.

A.R. Nanda, secretary to the chief minister, forwarded a report confirming the sale, backed by affidavits from Punji.

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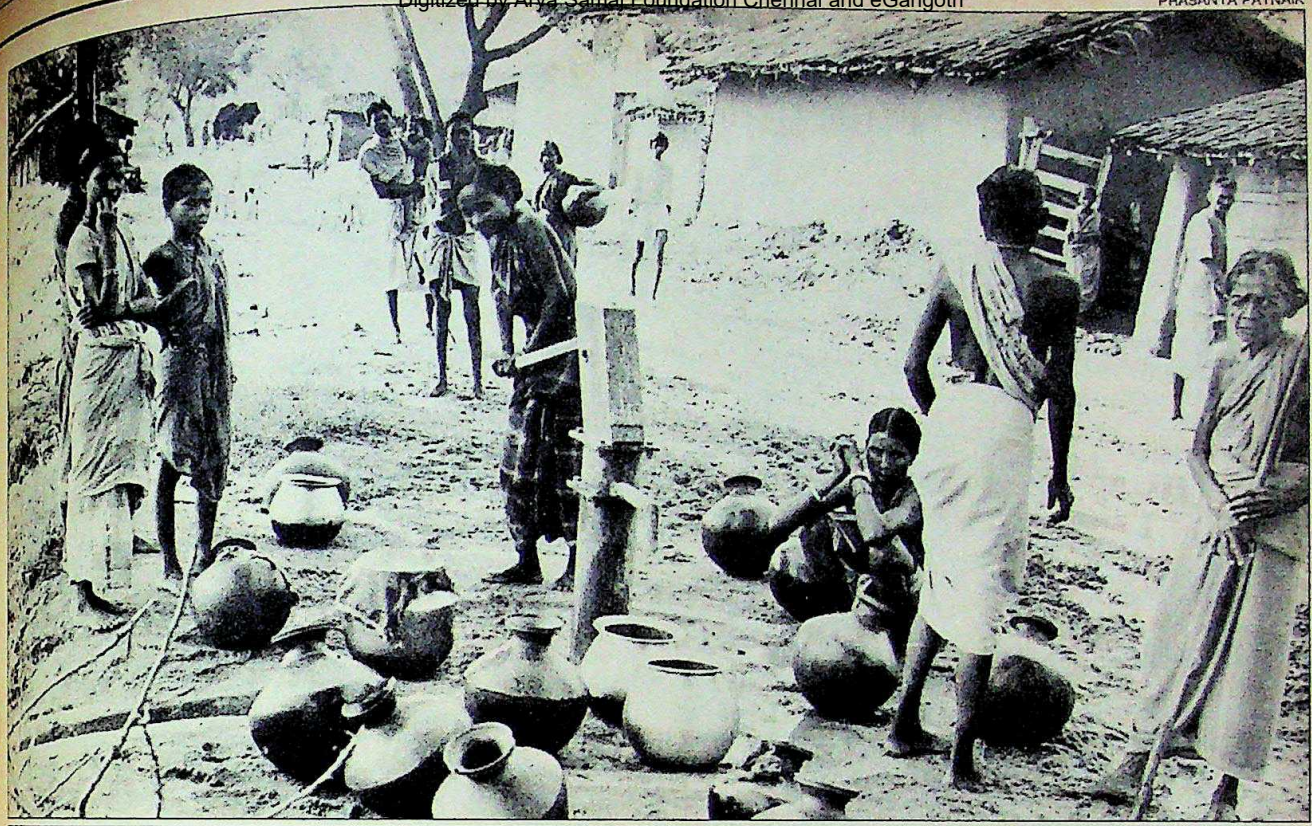
PRASANTA PATNAIK



According to the state Government about 100 tubewells have been sunk in the district.

In the entire Sardhapur panchayat there are only eight tubewells, three of which have stopped functioning.

Findings: According to Manohar Gahir, former sarpanch of Sardhapur panchayat in the subdivision, not a single fair price shop had been opened in the 10 villages in the panchayat. In the few fair price shops opened in adjacent areas only kerosene and sugar had been distributed once a week. One fair price shop located at a deserted roadside in Chalapara, Kharia block, consisted of nothing else except a signboard. The area's collector Chinmay Basu, admitted that essential commodities were not being distributed through fair price shops.

Claim: *About 100 tubewells have been installed in the district, "out of which 36 tubewells have been sunk in the Nawapara subdivision alone. There is not a single revenue village in this subdivision without a tubewell."*

Findings: In the entire Sardhapur panchayat within the Nawapara subdivision there are only eight tubewells, three of which have fallen into disuse. There is no governmental effort to rebuild them. In Birighat, Khariar block, there is only one tubewell, constructed four years ago, for a population of 4,000. According to Ghansham Bhitriya of the Jagrat Sharmik Sangathan, a group dedicated to tribal welfare, villages in the Khariar block with a population of 5,000 "do not have any source of drinking water."

Claim: *An expenditure of more than Rs 39 lakh had funded employment-generating schemes in the Nawapara subdivision involving the construction of houses, roads and trench fencing work.*

Findings: Under the relief work one tank was constructed at Budhipur village, in the Boden block. As of last fortnight the workers had not been paid. Social worker

DEV DUTT PANDA

The Government reports that in Nawapara sub-division, 2,276 fair price shops functioned in 1985-86.

No fair price shops were opened in Sardhapur in Nawapara sub-division. One, located in Chalapara, consisted only of a signboard.

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K.P. Tiwary, who was partly responsible for bringing the plight of Kalahandi to the prime minister's notice has now written a strong letter to the block development officer asking for the release of funds to pay the wages. In the vicinity of Khariar, Domjher and Temri, Government contractors have sprinkled *morum* (red soil) on the ground, passing them off as roads. Several hundred houses constructed during the past year—adivasi colonies—collapsed after the first monsoon showers.

Claim: *Allegations about the selling of paddy crops at throwaway prices are "unfounded. It is not a fact that a 75 kg bag of paddy was sold at Rs 50".*

Findings: A writ petition admitted by the Supreme Court from social workers in the area states that residents of the Nawapara sub-division "live in subhuman conditions and are compelled to sell their only product (paddy) at Rs 50 a bag of 75 kg". This was confirmed by interviews with villagers in the area. According to Bhagta Charan Das, a young Janata MLA who toured 250 villages in the area, the distress sales (during a good crop year) were made by farmers in order to pay off money-lender debts. This was largely due to the failure of the Government to pick up the rice at the minimum support price of Rs 142 per quintal.

Claim: *Allegations that the Government was unwilling to streamline the public distribution system "are not based on fact. Sale of essential commodities were streamlined".*

Findings: The prime minister despatched special emissaries, ex-Union minister of state K.P. Singh Deo and Lt-General K. Balram, to assess the situation in the area five months after his visit. They stated after the tour that the situation could only be salvaged if ex-servicemen were deployed to check the activities of middlemen and streamline the public distribution system. Singh Deo, who visited three roadside villages, was barraged by complaints from residents who said they had not received rations of sugar, rice, kerosene and edible oil for the last three months. At a meeting with district officials Singh Deo chastised them saying: "If this is the situation in roadside villages I can well imagine the plight of the people in the interior."

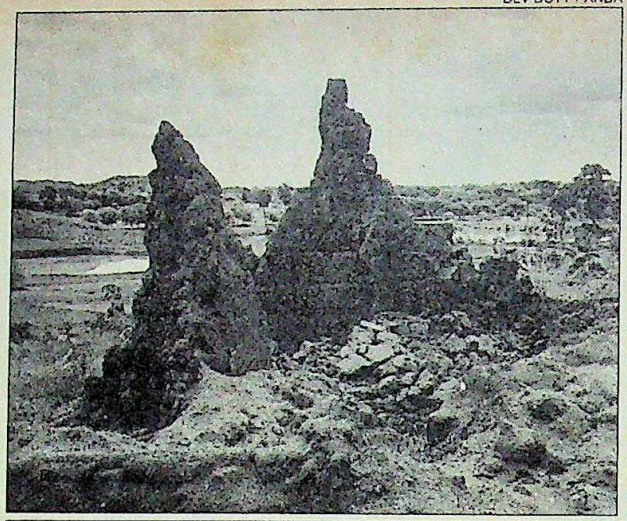
Claim: *Steps have been taken to help the common people through implementation of various anti-poverty programmes.*

Findings: In Amalapalli village the Government constructed one weaving training centre where 17 young people were given a crash course and promised loans for looms and yarn. For the past four months the youngsters have been visiting rural banks but have been unable to get loans. Chamar Bag, who took the brief weaving course, said that local officials and bankers were trying to force them to buy looms at the rate of Rs 1,500 when they were available for Rs 1,000 in neighbouring Bolangir.

Claim: *The allegation that people have little confidence in Government is not true. The allegations made in* INDIA TODAY *in its issue of January 31, 1986, are without basis and call for no action.*

Findings: In response to the social workers' writ petition to the Supreme Court on behalf of the villagers, the court had ordered the appointment of two special commissioners to visit the district and make an independent assessment last January. But the Orissa Government has managed to obtain a stay of this Supreme Court order. During the past few months Governor B.N. Pandey has frequently criticised the state Government for its failure to take concrete measures to tackle poverty in districts such as Kalahandi. Four months ago the Assembly Estimates Committee also presented a report on Kalahandi, stating that labourers are being exploited by contractors in league with state agencies by being denied the minimum wage: "It appears that the labour department is very callous and has not insisted on minimum wages." It also found "accumulations of huge unspent balances" of anti-poverty funds "and target projects are not being achieved in various blocks." The report also referred to a lack of any visible progress by departments responsible for implementing the prime minister's welfare programme, Operation Salvage.

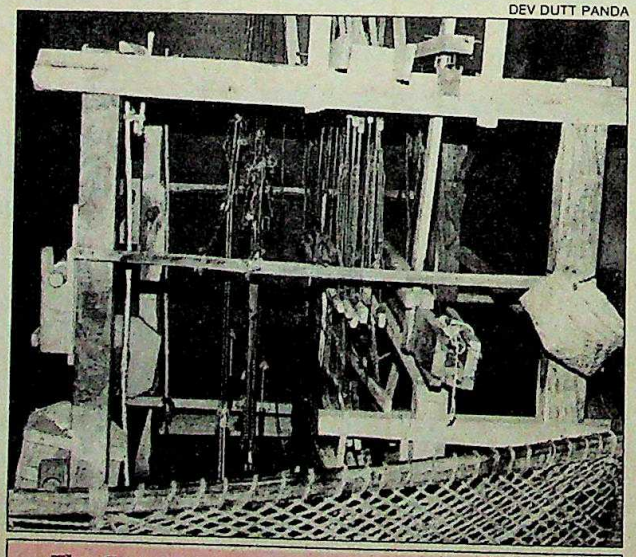
DEV DUTT PANDA



The Government says it spent Rs 39 lakh on building houses, roads and trench-fencing work.

Several hundred houses constructed in the district last year collapsed after the first monsoon showers.

DEV DUTT PANDA



The Government set up a weaving centre and promised loans for people to buy looms.

Officials were forcing them to buy looms for Rs 1,500 when they were available for Rs 1,000.

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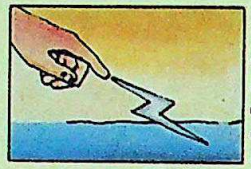
21 reasons why more and more people will

Aarlon combines the durability of synthetic yarns and the comfort of the natural. No wonder so many people the world over are using it. It's success story even covers countries with the same tropical climate like ours. Now introduced for the first time in India, Aarlon will soon be widely used in the manufacture of undergarments, sportswear, furnishing fabrics and for industrial use. Here's why.

1. Low Electro Static build up



Aarlon has the lowest static component of any man-made fibre. Due to this feature, dust, dirt and grime are less likely to be attracted. Aarlon yarns therefore are extremely suitable for next to skin wear.

2. Outstanding Thermal Insulation Power

Aarlon has the lowest thermal conductivity of all fibres, and therefore, the highest insulation power.

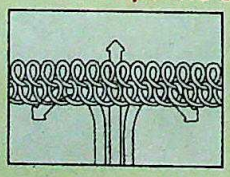
3. Non Allergic and Anti-Bacteria

Fabrics in Aarlon do not cause allergy or bacterial growth, making it exceptionally suitable for hosiery, children's wear clinical and hospital uses, office/hotel furnishings.

4. Odour Free

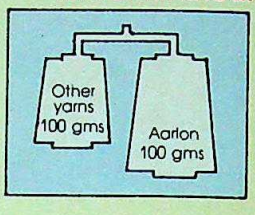
Apparel and undergarments whether woven or knitted in Aarlon are odour free.

5. Keeps the skin dry



Because of its unique wicking action Aarlon transfers moisture from the skin to the outer surface where it is either absorbed or it evaporates increasing wearing comfort. You can forget the 'sticky' feeling, for Aarlon keeps the skin dry.

6. Bulk without weight



More fabric per kg of yarn — the fabric in Aarlon at the same weight has greater covering power than those in other fibres or the fabric has more bulk with same weight.

7. Dimensional Stability

Knitted or woven fabrics in Aarlon keeps its dimension during use and during washing.

8. Crease Resistance

The fabric in Aarlon has good resistance to wrinkle and crease.

9. Setting and Pleating Permanence

The thermo plasticity of Aarlon, allows it to obtain permanent folds and pleats on fabrics.

10. Supremely Washable

Fabrics in Aarlon are washable in water or can be dry cleaned, as Trichloroethylene and parachloroethylene do not affect this yarn.

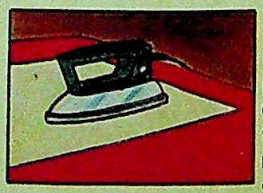
11. Stain Removal & Cleaning

One of the advantages of Aarlon is the ability to release stains. This makes the removal of most spots and stains a simple matter.

12. Quick Drying

Because Aarlon is moisture repellent, garments made from it will dry faster than any other fibre.

13. Ironing Behaviour



Like silk, wool and other synthetic fibres, the fabrics in Aarlon must be ironed with a wet cloth interposed between the fabric and the iron, or with an iron at controlled temperature 100°C

14. Chemical Inertness

Aarlon is not affected by solvents containing entire range of acids, alkalies oxidents and reducers.

MORE VALUE aarlon MORE COMFORT

For more information contact:

Rajasthan Petro Synthetics Limited

4, Community Centre,
East of Kailash, New Delhi-110065
Phone: 6431418.
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Please send me detailed information about Aarlon.

Name: _____

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Organisation: _____

Address: _____

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Phones: _____

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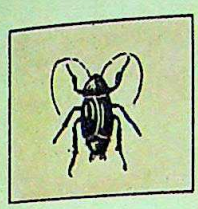
will now be using Aarlon

15. Resistance to Damage by Rot, Mildew, & Insects

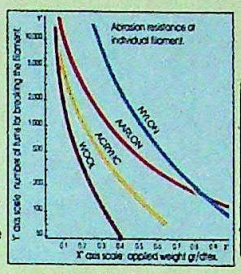
Aarlon neither supports the growth of Rot, Mildew & Insects nor is affected by them.



16. High Strength

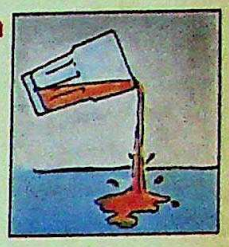
Whether in wet or dry conditions, the strength of Aarlon yarn is comparable to Nylon yarn.

17. Good Resistance to Abrasion : Tough & Hard Wearing



High abrasion resistance is of utmost importance not only for industrial applications, but also for furnishing and clothing fabrics to obtain longer life. Aarlon has superior abrasion resistance in wet as well as in dry conditions. Fabrics in Aarlon wear considerably longer than other synthetic or natural fibres.

18. Unique Soil & Stain Resistance



Aarlon is highly resistant to soiling due mainly to its resistance to static and chemical inertness. It does not attract as much dirt or dust as other man-made fibres.

19. Resistance to sun light

Spun dyed and U.V. Stabilized Aarlon offers remarkable resistance to sunlight fading and degradation.

20. Exceptionally High Colour Fastness

Pigment dyed Aarlon yarns in a vast range of bright shades attain a high level of colour fastness to water, perspiration, light and atmospheric weathering agents. It has superior colour fastness compared to most conventionally dyed yarns viz. wool, nylon, acrylic etc.

21. It's Soft with a rich spun yarn look

Aarlon has a soft feel and the look of spun yarns. Making it an ideal yarn for children's wear and under garments.

Aarlon — the versatile yarn

Aarlon multi filament yarn is available in 3 varieties covering an entire range of fabrics for various uses:

Crimped yarns — used in the manufacture of undergarments, sportswear, apparel, socks, children's wear, swimsuits etc.

Fancy yarns — for the manufacture of decorative furnishing fabrics, curtains, carpets, bedspreads, car seat covers etc.

Industrial yarns — for belting, ropes, fishnets, filter fabrics, rubber liner fabrics, sewing threads, decorative light weight luggage, tarpaulin, tents etc.

Yes! Soon more and more people in India will be using Aarlon — the new synthetic filament yarn that's going to change your world.

aarlon

POLYPROPYLENE

It's changing our world

Systems-334

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As I gazed at the snow-clad mountains of the Himalayas, the balance sheets in my mind began to fade.

As a businessman,
I was obsessed with
ascending graphs.

A stage came, when I began
to see nothing but lines.
Be it a ladder, or the string
of a flying kite, or even the
ascending side of a mountain.

Finally I got tired of it all.
And made a get-away.

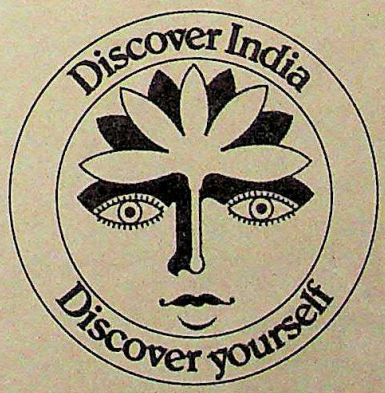
It was the second week
of November. And Manali was
beautiful amidst tall,
dark and brooding pine trees,
and the snow-clad
mountains towering above.

The very sight of pure
white snow wiped my mind clean.

But the crucial lesson came
when I was trekking
through the Rohtang Pass.

There I was, forty-five years of
sound common sense,
sliding down the snow on an
ice-sledge, with the uncontrolled
glee of a four-year-old.

It was then that I discovered
life is for living.



Department of Tourism
Government of India

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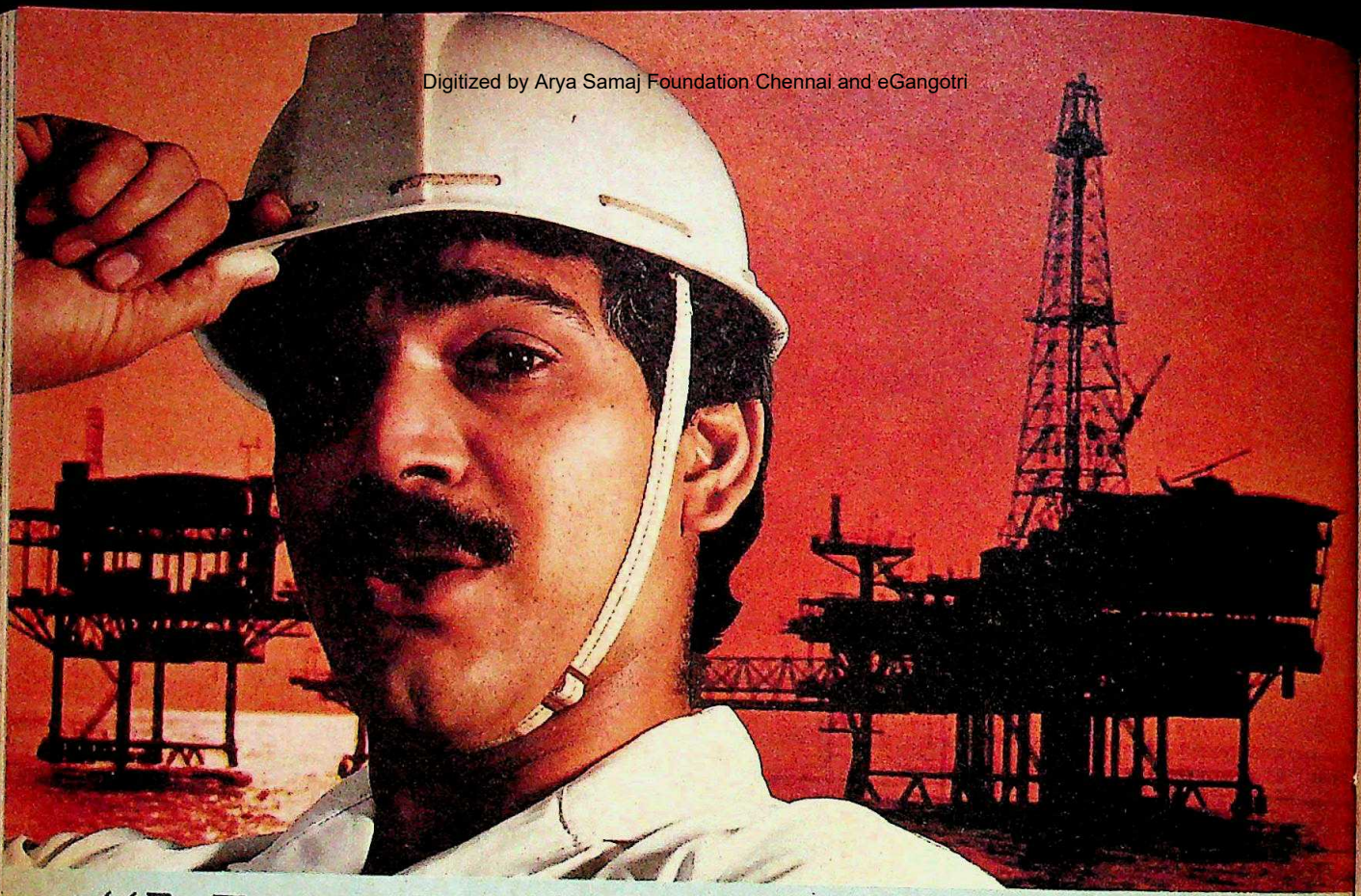

"New India Assurance? Of course."

"Frankly, I know all about oil rigs and very little about general insurance. But one thing I do know... if it wasn't for New India insuring rigs like this, and given the rising cost of fuel, we'd still be driving bullock carts. (And, I believe they insure those, too)."

And there's more, much more that New India insure. Such as oil wells, thermal power plants, steel plants, potteries, truck fleets and computers... Just some of the many innovative facets of the services offered by New India.

As leaders in General Insurance, New India provide the widest range of covers to meet any and every insurance need... whether urban or rural, business or personal — adding upto more than 74 different policies.

Over 700 offices in India and abroad ensure that New India is always at your service... to answer all your insurance problems. Assuring you the security you need and improving the quality of life.

NEW INDIA ASSURANCE
A subsidiary of the General Insurance Corpn. of India.

So much security. For so little.

The New India range of assurance covers:
Cancer Insurance, Personal Accident, Hospitalisation and Domiciliary Hospitalisation Policy, Domestic Package Policy, All Risks Insurance, Burglary and House Breaking, Fire Insurance, Combined Fire and Theft, Passenger Flight, Public Liability, Carrier's Liability, Horse Insurance, Engineering Insurance, Professional Indemnity, Workmen's Compensation, Multi Perils, Fidelity Guarantee, Plate Glass, Business Interruption, Cash in Transit, Marine, New Well Insurance, Bullock Cart, Pump Set, Pedal Cycle and many more.

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House Breaking

FOR ASLAM Sher Khan, enough is obviously not enough. The former hockey Olympian, who quit his job with Indian Airlines for a more lucrative career in politics, has taken to acquiring houses now instead of goals. Not satisfied with his two houses in Bhopal—one an ancestral mansion and the other a Housing Board villa gifted by the Madhya Pradesh Government in recognition of his contribution to sports—the Congress(I) MP from Betul last fortnight grabbed another house in Bhopal, this one a government bungalow allotted to state Minorities Commission Chairman Shamsuddin. The state Government, of course, did not take action as the airlines-employee-turned-politician is said to be close to another airlines-employee-turned-politician who happens to be at the helm of affairs.

Close Encounter

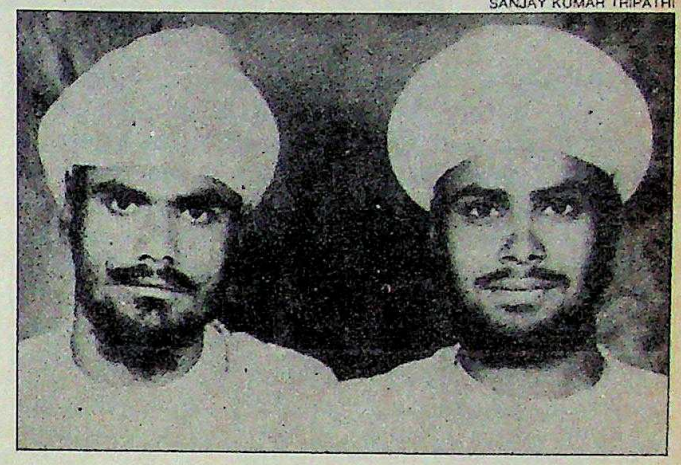
IT'S AN unenviable lot that falls to a Congress(I) leader in West Bengal. Much like the meat in the sandwich, he has to face a simultaneous onslaught from various quarters—the state's ruling Marxists, his own partymen, and as PCC(I) chief Priya Ranjan Das Munshi learnt to his discomfort last fortnight, armed desperadoes too. The leader was neck deep in party work when a group of menacing looking dissidents, armed with pipe-guns and rods, burst into his office, shouting anti-Das Munshi slogans. While one part of them confronted a shaken Das Munshi, the other went about ransacking the office. It was only thanks to the pluck of his security guard, and the timely arrival of a posse of Indian National Trade Union Congress workers, that the Pradesh Congress(I) Committee chief escaped certain death, or at least injury. And so all-pervading is the dissidence in the party that the troubled politician had a hard time fixing responsibility for the attack. The list of suspects swung from Union Law Minister Asoke Sen to PCC(I) General Secretary Subrata Mukherjee. Even after Party General Secretary R.L. Bhatia was sent rushing to solve the whodunit, the final shortlist had five names, whom the party decided to expel. Nonetheless, Das Munshi is still guessing.

Das Munshi: threatened

Blood Relations

RAMPURA Taluke Majra, an obscure hamlet 70 km from Shahjahanpur in Uttar Pradesh, suddenly woke up in the middle of the night to the shrieks of 13 members of a Sikh family who were hacked to death by a family member. The maniacal killer, Gurmeet Singh, 30, was the youngest son of Nazir Singh, the patriarch of the family. In his drunken orgy, Gurmeet, along with an accomplice, Lakkha Singh, killed his father, two of his brothers, their wives and his eight nieces and nephews. Gurmeet had always been the family's black sheep and had run away from home to Punjab where he met Lakkha Singh, a hard core criminal wanted on a murder charge. Gurmeet and Lakkha came back to the village to live with Gurmeet and Gurmeet's new wife, Dalbir Kaur. Police claim that Lakkha turned Gurmeet against his family, then he turned to the women in the family and developed relations with

SANJAY KUMAR TRIPATHI



Gurmeet Singh (right) and Lakkha Singh: snapping ties

Gurmeet's wife. Two days after Lakkha was caught making love to Dalbir by Nazir Singh, he and Gurmeet got together with the servant and attacked them with swords. Only four members of Nazir Singh's family survived the massacre.

Mourning Merit

THE DEATH occurred last fortnight of merit in the state of Andhra Pradesh. And "mourning the death of merit" throughout the state were students who expressed their grief by polishing shoes, sweeping streets, planting saplings and collecting clothes and money for the state's flood-victims. Underlying their novel campaign—provoked by the hike in reservation from 25 to 44 per cent—was the message: "No job is demeaning and merit knows no caste." Spearheading the protest, the Andhra Pradesh Nava Sangharshana Samithi organised a "challan bharo", collecting five paise each for the cremation of merit, a 6-km 'Merit Aid' run led by Asiad volleyballer Radhika Reddy and, borrowing a trick from Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao's bag of gimmicks, a procession of seven 'Pratibha Rathams' (merit chariots) in Hyderabad.

Students sweeping a street in Hyderabad: novel protest

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SIKHS OUTSIDE PUNJAB

A Desperate Dilemma

AMONG the most tragic—and pathetic—victims of Sikh terrorism are the Sikhs themselves—millions of Sikhs who have made their homes and livelihoods outside Punjab and have prospered because of their skills and initiative. Many of them have never even stepped inside Punjab. But with increasing terrorism a pall of suspicion now surrounds this community which has lived in time-honoured religious fraternity with the Hindus. Because of a deeply-held psychological perception, real or imagined, among the majority community that moderate Sikhs have not boldly and vociferously denounced extremism, they are faced with a poignant existential dilemma: to stay where they are and repeatedly prove their nationalist credentials or to to give in to their fears and insecurities and migrate to Punjab from the only homes they have known. Thousands of them have already started leaving or, alternatively, clustering together in Sikh ghettos. Special Correspondent RAMINDAR SINGH travelled to Kanpur, Patna, Calcutta, and Bombay to gauge the feelings of Sikhs and report on their dilemma:

FOUR days a week, the Tata Express links Kanpur with Amritsar. Every time the train steams out of Kanpur railway station, it carries at least two Sikh families who are moving back to Punjab with bag and baggage. Sometimes more, but almost never less. In this way, the one lakh-strong Sikh population of Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh's worst-hit town during the November 1984 violence, is slowly dwindling.

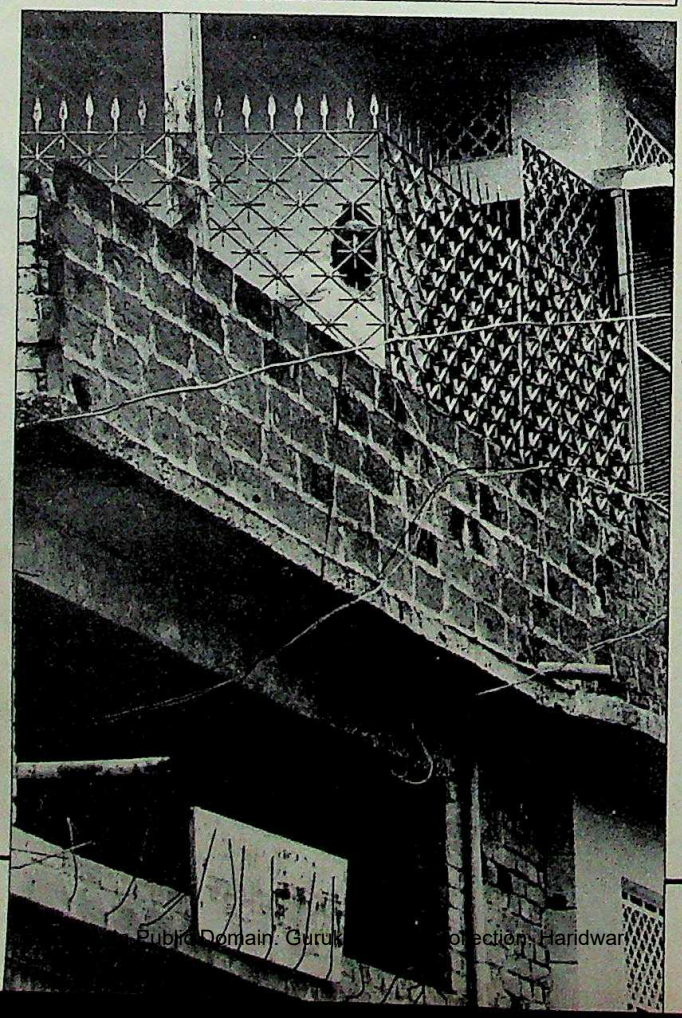
"Half the property owned by Kanpur Sikhs has already been sold, sometimes at half the market price. No Sikh has bought land here after 1984. Not a brick has been added to houses that were being built," laments Bhajan Singh, a 58-year-old shopkeeper of the Birhana Road market. He says that a quarter of the Sikhs in the town have departed.

Whether it is Kanpur, Patna, Delhi or Haryana, and now Pune, the story is the same. A proud community, which till two years ago was the toughest warp in the country's socio-economic fabric, is now beset by fear and doubts about its future. The activities of the terrorists create turbulence for Sikh communities around the country but most of all in the Hindi belt states, where the hostility they face is thick and palpable. Some arm themselves; others, in a siege mentality, fortify their houses with iron railings. All this has left them confused, bitter and a little helpless; hostage to the developments in Punjab.

Take the plight of Patna's 7,000 Sikh families. Local toughs saunter down the middle of the road leading to the historic Gurudwara Harimandir Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Gobind Singh, daring motorists to brush past them. Sikhs are taunted constantly: "*Sardarji kab Khalistan lay rahe ho* (when will you get Khalistan)?" So, though estimates vary, many have left. Saran Singh, former Bihar chief secretary, claims that "at least half the Sikhs in Patna and Ranchi have left". Charanjit Singh, grandson of the gurudwara head priest argues that, in fact, "75 per cent of the Sikhs have left" and the head priest, Bhai Maan Singh, says that three-quarters of the visitors to the gurudwara are now Hindus. In the *gallis* and *mohallas* around the gurudwara, house after house is either locked or has been sold.

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Some arm themselves; others, in a siege mentality, fortify their houses with iron railings. This has left the Sikhs bitter.



Harbhajan Singh, who runs a small cloth shop near the gurudwara, is clearly worried. With so many of his neighbours and friends having moved away, he confesses he takes a Calmpose every night before sleeping. In the group of shopkeepers sitting by his side is a former neighbour, Iqbal Singh, who recently ended a 40-year association with Patna, sold his shop and house and migrated to Punjab. "I now come here only to sell goods," he said. Almost all the others in the group have sent their families away.

But it is difficult to say whether those that have left are any better off than those who have stayed behind. The

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feeling of vulnerability persists as much for those remaining behind as for the truncated families in faraway Punjab. Safety is a perceived state and nowhere is this more poignant than in Delhi, which has the largest concentration of Sikhs outside Punjab.

The Sikh Forum says about 25,000 Delhi families have completely or partially shifted. "Anyone who could afford it has gone," asserts Lt-General J.S. Aurora. Things had cooled down somewhat after the Punjab accord, but with that having come unstuck and the July 26, post-Muktsar riots in Delhi, uncertainty once again clouds the future plans of Delhi Sikhs. "All the businessmen who could make alternative arrangements in Punjab have done so. Everyone who has an establishment here is wondering how long he can continue being safe outside Punjab," says Manmohan Singh, managing director of Frick India and vice-president of the Punjab, Haryana and Delhi Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Entrenched factory owners like him and Raunaq Singh cannot obviously move out. But others like Texla TV have moved lock, stock and barrel to Mohali, near Chandigarh, the Ranbaxy group of companies has located two new plants in Punjab, while Continental Device, owned by Gurpreet Singh, former president of the Association of Indian Engineering Industry, has started a separate unit in Chandigarh.

More than anything else, the Sikhs outside Punjab mourn the loss of their place in public esteem. And many blame local newspapers for this. Said Manmohan Singh Kalra of Calcutta: "When a Sikh performs an act of bravery, only he is rewarded. But when a terrorist kills people, why is the whole community branded?" And former national pistol shooting champion Lt-Colonel P.S. Cheema is distressed that people doubt the Sikhs' nationalism. "I spent my entire life in the army and my son, an air force pilot, died in the service of the nation. What more proof of patriotism can I give? It upsets us Sikhs that despite being Indian, we are not being regarded as Indian." Saran Singh echoes this: "Everyone looks on a turbaned man with a degree of suspicion. When spies were caught a year ago, nobody called them Hindu spies. I say a terrorist is a terrorist, and the Government should come down on him with a heavy hand. The Punjab terrorists are not Sikhs; religion does not sanction violence. Before my guru or in my gurudwara, I am a Sikh and only a Sikh. But in the rest I am an Indian first and last. Why should I be doubted? I refuse to prove my patriotism."

IN THE illogical atmosphere of communal suspicion, some periodic demonstrative action by the Sikhs to reiterate their nationalism may be called for, even if it goes against their grain. Though the majority, however wrongly, view most Sikhs as fence-sitters on the issue of terrorism, probably because terrorism is seen as having originated in religious sentiment, most Sikhs outside Punjab are against Khalistan and say so. "The terrorists want *dahshat* (terror) to spread so that a Khalistan is formed. And we, who are asked to uproot home and hearth once again, will be Khalistan's first victims," says Bhajan Singh in anguish. Giani Nidharak Singh of Bombay's Koliwada is more forthright: "It's strange that a couple of mad terrorists with the help of Pakistan kill a few people in Punjab and in large parts of the country, Hindus organise themselves to attack us. The Hindus in Punjab have only the terrorists to fear as no Sikh mob in the state has attacked the Hindus. We face the prospect of ordinary people around us becoming mobs."

Younger Sikhs like Bombay's Amardeep Singh blame the Akalis' internal squabbles for queering the pitch for normalisation in Punjab and outside. "We are partly to blame. The idolisation of Bhindranwale by Punjab youth has proved counter-productive to the whole community," he says. Some Bombay Sikh leaders recently made it a point to participate prominently in the birthday celebrations of a Marathi savant Guru Namdev. And in Calcutta, Saran Singh himself joined a peace march organised by local Sikhs. "Every Sikh must believe his future and the country's future are interlinked," he declared.

Calcutta and Bombay are isolated islands of peace, and a drive past the Victoria Memorial provides proof that Calcutta's Sikhs are a more relaxed lot. Early every morning, the city's paunchy Sikh traders park their Marutis and Ambassadors by the kerbside and grunt and wheeze through the ritual game of volleyball they have played every morning for 20 years. One of them, Sarnagat Singh Sahni, complains he is treated like a common criminal when he travels out of the country. "Why such treatment, aren't we proper citizens of India?" Sahni says that in 1984, the Jyoti Basu Government managed to control things, "but what can you predict about mob behaviour?" Adds Gurbachan Singh Sethi, a motor parts dealer: "The bang bang will continue. But as long as the CPI(M) is in power we are safe in West Bengal." But safety is a relative thing, as Kulwant Singh Kohli, a prominent Bombay hotelier, found out. Just days before the Vaidya assassination, Kohli proudly

"I spent my life in the army, and my son died in the air force. What more proof of patriotism can I give?" —LT-COL. P.S. CHEEMA

"There is no show-sha even during weddings. We go to the gurudwara and that is it." —JOGINDER SINGH, *Kanpur*

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pointed to the new 75-room luxury hotel he was building in Dadar, to illustrate that Sikhs were still expanding their businesses in Bombay. Ironically, his hotel was the first Sikh property to be damaged by a bomb in the wake of the assassination.

Kanpur industrialist and philanthropist Sajjan Singh Taluja, 70, the biggest manufacturer of oil expelling machinery in the country, illustrates the predicament many Sikhs are caught in. A school that he runs and his house were looted in the 1984 riots but Sajjan Singh vows to stay on. "If we must die we will die here," he declares, but at the same time refuses to refurnish his large home, which is still bare. And, in an attempt to reduce his assets, Taluja has closed down two of his three factories, "in case I have to leave". On the one hand is the never-say-die spirit which helped him build his industrial enterprise, and on the other, there is doubt and uncertainty.

UNLIKE him, Manjit Singh Kalra, who also has doggedly stuck on to his three-storeyed house in Kidwai Nagar, demonstrates a siege mentality. The Kalras have moved up from the ground floor to the third floor, installed a heavy steel grill at the entrance and by way of insurance, rented out the lower floors to Hindu families. *"Hum danga peerit log hain* (we are riot-affected people)," says his wife with an embarrassed laugh, apologising for the lack of furniture in the otherwise ornate house.

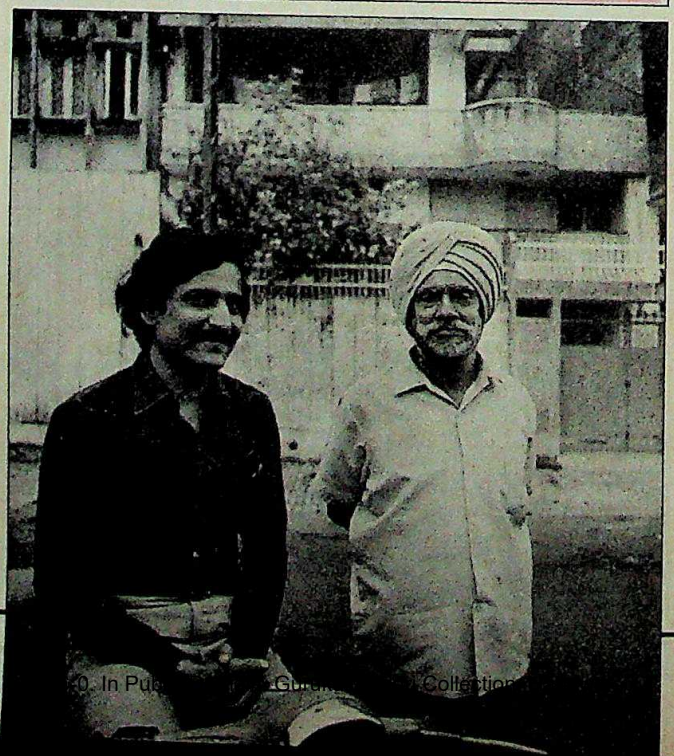
Everywhere, local politicians, toughs and rabble-rousers keep the tensions and Sikh fears alive. Kanpur's Sikhs point to the fiery speech by local Congress(I) MLA, Vilayati Ram Katyal, in which he exhorted Hindus not to buy the property of departing Sikhs. The meeting turned into a procession which closed markets in its path and created tension in the town. Bihar Rajya Sabha member S.S. Ahluwalia sent the prime minister copies of offensive posters in Lucknow and Patna virtually calling for a pogrom of the Sikhs, put up by the Bajrang Brigade, a militant off-shoot of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. And in Bombay, after the murder of General Vaidya, Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray warned that any further terrorist action in Maharashtra would invite reprisals. As a local Sikh businessman asked: "Reprisals against whom? The local Sikhs? What have we done?" And in Delhi, the BJP, with its eye on future elections, kept an agitation going for weeks on the question of Hindu migrants from Punjab. All that the charged atmosphere of Delhi needed was a flashpoint, and the terrorists helpfully provided that at Muktsar.

Prosperous Sikhs say some of the hostility towards them may be economic. In most riot cases, unprincipled politicians and fundamentalists provide the spark and then the lumpen elements take over. "In Delhi, the Hindu Manch, Shiv Sena and BJP have motivated the lower class and the criminal fringe and given them status and respectability. Such people have now got used to looting," charges Mahip Singh of the Sikh Forum. To keep a low profile, many Sikhs have now simplified their lifestyle. Says Jogindar Singh of Kanpur: "There is no *show-sha*, lighting or decoration, even during weddings. We go to the gurudwara for the ceremony and that is it." Added Dilip Singh of Patna: "Earlier we used to live with *thaath* (style), now we don't move out after 7 p.m."

Reversing the Sikh diaspora would not be a solution to such problems. It would, in fact, create greater problems for the country, the Sikhs and Punjab. Neither is it possible for everyone to move. Except Jat Sikhs, who maintain an umbilical link with their village homes and land in Punjab, most other Sikhs, who migrated directly to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Calcutta or Bombay after partition, have no such connection with the state. Operation Bluestar established an emotional link between Punjab and these Sikhs, but they are helpless to influence events in the state; yet they feel the backlash of each one. They are mere traders, rugged individualists who did not need the cement of community feeling to bond them together. Adversity has created that bond, but they still lack leadership. Leaderless, they are numbed by the suspicion that both the Barnala Government and Punjab's extremists have written them off as expatriate Sikhs, as G.S.

A Bihari by birth and upbringing, head priest Bhai Maan Singh speaks no Punjabi. He'd be a misfit in Punjab.

"The terrorists want *dahshat* to spread, and we, the uprooted, will be Khalistan's first victims." —BHAJAN SINGH, *Kanpur*



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Tohra jokingly suggested while talking to Bombay Sikhs recently. Avtar Singh Bagga, secretary of the Patna Gurudwara Managing Committee complains that the five head priests told him: "We cannot take responsibility for outstate Sikhs. You all come to Punjab."

That's easier said than done. And nobody realises it more than Avtar Singh Manchanda, 38, who was born in Patna, spent all his life there and never travelled beyond Delhi till the day he dispatched his family off to Ludhiana. Appearances apart, Sikhs like Manchanda are more Bihari than Punjabi. A striking example of this cultural divide is head priest Bhai Maan Singh. A Bihari by birth and upbringing, the old man speaks not a word of Punjabi. Questions put to him in Punjabi have to be translated into Bhojpuri by his grandson. Maan Singh would be a total misfit were he to change places with the head priest of a major Punjab gurudwara. And herein lies the tragedy of the situation. Where do such people go?

FIFTY-year-old Pritam Kaur, wife of a Calcutta taxi owner, succinctly voices the common dilemma: "*Na assi jaan jogay na rahen jogay. Punjab vich khaavan gay ki* (We can neither stay nor go. How will we survive in Punjab if we go there)?" When her husband, Gurbachan Singh, suggests that they should return to Punjab, Pritam Kaur snorts: "Do you expect our boys to till land in Punjab?" The suspicion with which Sikhs are viewed often leads to gross miscarriage of justice. Like the arrest and torture, at Calcutta, of 21 villagers from Ferozepore who were boarding a Dhaka flight on July 7. They were charged with sedition till *The Telegraph* pointed out that they were mere dupes lulled by a travel agent into believing that highly-paid jobs awaited them in Lebanon. They had sold their land and belongings in Punjab to pay the travel agent. A similar incident took place in Gurgaon. The Delhi police raided and arrested the staff of a non-resident-owned export factory manufacturing ornamental rosewood and mother-of-pearl grips for revolvers. The police and local newspapers went to town proclaiming that a large gun manufacturing factory had been unearthed with "links to an international gun-running syndicate". An inquiry was ordered by the Prime Minister's Secretariat but the irate NRI-owner, Harbans Singh, is shifting part of the operation to Punjab and the rest to the Philippines. "I will pull out the Rs 50 lakh to Rs 60 lakh I have invested here," he said, "even if I get 70 paise for the rupee."

Harbans Singh could pull his money out, but all the Sikhs living elsewhere cannot shift to Punjab. "There won't be enough space in Punjab to park all the trucks and taxis owned by Sikhs in this country," remarked Lt-Colonel Cheema. But for every trader and industrialist who has moved to Punjab, there are hundreds who have stayed back. An ambitious, adventurous community which could not be contained by national boundaries, can hardly be expected to remain constricted within the confines of a postage-stamp size state like Punjab.

"Sikhs don't want Khalistan, because India is our country. *Saara Hindustan saada hai.*" —MANMOHAN SINGH BEDI, *ex-mayor, Bombay*

Calcutta is an isolated island of peace. A drive past Victoria Memorial shows that Sikhs here are a more relaxed lot.

The desire for a solution to the Punjab problem and peace in the state fills the hearts of Sikhs everywhere. "*Sachay padshah shanti rakhin* (almighty God, keep things peaceful)" is the prayer Surinder Kaur Sohi of Patna recites daily.

But how can peace be brought about? "The Punjab accord must be implemented and the Hindus in Punjab must be given confidence. If they continue to migrate, it will affect Sikhs living outside Punjab," suggests Inder Singh Gandhi of Kanpur. Urges S.S. Bhatti, a Bombay businessman: "Rajiv must take the bull by the horns and talk to the representatives of the All India Sikh Students Federation and Damdami Taksal. If the present leadership (in Punjab) has failed, an alternative should be tried." And Pritam Singh Sohi of Patna warns: "The family whose members fight is destroyed. That nation whose communities fight is destroyed." Interjects Bombay's former mayor, Manmohan Singh Bedi: "Sikhs don't want Khalistan, because India is our country. *Saara Hindustan saada hai.*" But ultimately, everyone agrees with the prescription of Gurcharan Singh Kochar, chairman of the Punjab-Maharashtra Cooperative Bank: "*Punjab nay bachna hai tay Sikhan nay bachna hai* (Sikhs will be saved if Punjab is saved)." And for that, it's not too late.

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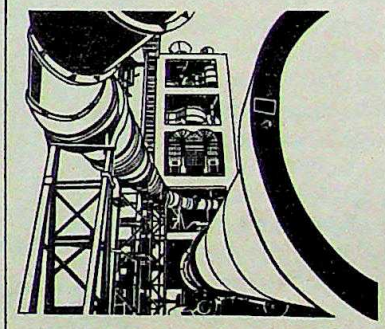

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P.C. SETHI

"I am not crazy"

JUST when the political grapevine in Delhi had begun to dismiss him in 'out of sight, out of mind' terms, Prakash Chandra Sethi, the Congress(I) MP from Indore who has held several portfolios in the Union Cabinet including home, besides the chief ministership of Madhya Pradesh for four and a half years, was back in the headlines. With a display of rash, idiosyncratic behaviour that left a trail of controversy from Srinagar to Delhi, he was back in form while reputations tumbled and his party leaders watched in red-faced stupor.

This bull in the china shop spell culminated last fortnight in the Kidwai Bhawan trunk telephone exchange in Delhi. "They did not give my lightning call to Bombay for two hours and I offered to go and find out what was the problem," he says, justifying his midnight inspection tour of the phone exchange manned by "fat and lazy women". But it was no ordinary inspection for Sethi stormed into the exchange with his Czech-made pistol at the ready ("I put it in my pocket when I entered the exchange," he says). The result; a row with the exchange staff who struck work and also shattered over Rs 1 crore worth of imported equipment.

This was the third time Sethi had made news in the capital within a week. On Independence day he had clashed with officials including Home Minister Buta Singh for not seating him in the front row at the Red Fort function and, later in the day had an angry exchange at the Rashtrapati Bhawan reception with the prime minister who chided him for "first of all coming late and then fighting for a front-row seat". There are many versions as to what exactly Sethi said to Rajiv Gandhi. But eye witnesses say he expressed doubts about the pedigree of the Union Cabinet members. Sethi who repeatedly pleads: "I am not crazy, I am fit as a fiddle," refers to his letter to the prime minister which begins with an apology for "having spoken to you in a loud voice".

The trouble at Rashtrapati Bhawan began when the ushers refused his 10-year-old grand-niece Sonal to go along with him and his wife, as children were not invited. But Sethi managed to bully his way in. In his letter he reminds the prime minister that on seeing Sonal "you smiled and you were very happy when she presented a rose to the President and to you a rajnigandha (tuberose)." The action resumed when the prime minister pulled him up for the tantrums at the Red Fort. Sethi concludes his letter. "I respect you and you have always respected me. You call my wife *chachiji* and me Sethiji."

> I used to drink foreign whiskey, cognac, red and white wine. But madam told me to stop.

> I spent Rs 5 lakh a month for information from Punjab. Had madam listened to me history would have been different.

> I want to stay within the party and reform it from inside. I do not want to leave like Pranab Mukherjee.

But it was quite obvious that Rajiv was upset with Sethi for many other reasons. Just a day before, he had held the administration in Chandigarh in terrified embarrassment by standing at the balcony of his state guest-house room, screaming that he was going to be assassinated and that his security was inadequate. He had officials on tenterhooks for four hours in which they summoned an ambulance and fire brigade, till senior officials came and he agreed to unbolt the door at six in the morning. "They were going to kill me. There was a plot. I am the second on the Bluestar hit-list. Number one, Mrs Gandhi and number three, Vaidya are already gone," he repeatedly says.

This paranoia of the hit-list explains some of his recent shenanigans. At Srinagar, where he had gone to "relax" before going to Chandigarh, Sethi got upset on finding that the geyser in his Pahalgam room had its light on but did not heat water. Curiously, he discovered the same problem with the geyser at Chandigarh. "There was sabotage at both places to kill me," he asserts.

His prime concern is his security and, besides the extremists, he also sees a lot of "threats from within". He thinks party Vice-President Arjun Singh is constantly plotting against him. He says Arjun Singh planned the trouble in Chandigarh through trusted officers "whom he bought there while he was the governor" and of planting newspaper stories against him by using the "PBI" (PIB, Press Information Bureau) in a manner worse than in the Emergency.

In the midst of this controversy, perhaps the most serious of his career, which has had its moments of comedy, however embarrassing, he spoke to INDIA TODAY Special Correspondent SHEKHAR GUPTA for three hours. Excerpts from the interview:

Q. *Have you apologised for your conduct at the telephone exchange in Delhi?*

A. No, that is wrong. In fact I am planning to sue Mr Mirdha, PIB, telephone department and the police. They have deliberately defamed me. Mr Mirdha has not done the right thing.

Q. *But why did Mr Mirdha do this?*

A. I will tell you how it happened. Bhajan Lalji first took a blank paper signed by me in good faith. Later when he came back around 11.30 p.m. with the draft, I said, Bhajan Lalji *yeh draft nahin chalega*. I did not go to the exchange unauthorised or as a trespasser. I came on the invitation of the monitor. Trespassers are those persons who are security risks. How could I be a security risk when I have a security risk on myself? I had my security. I had my licenced pistol which I put in my shirt pocket before entering.

Q. *Then it must be a small weapon with short range?*

A. No, no. It is a Czech brand which now costs Rs 40,000. It can shoot up to 200 yards. According to Home Ministry instructions, hit-listed people should

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carry it like this (*gestures with the palm in shooting position*) without the lock. But before I entered, I put the lock.

Q. *When did you learn to fire it? Have you practised at a range?*

A. Of course, when I was the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh. I will show you where I shoot. (*Moves to the large tree in the backyard of his Safdarjang Road bungalow and points towards the large blotch on the trunk where the bark has been blown off*). I can shoot beautifully.

Q. *Were you drunk or intoxicated when you went to the exchange?*

A. How could I be drunk when I gave up drinking so long ago? I used to drink foreign whiskey, cognac or red and white wine. But once Madam called my wife and me and asked me to promise that I would never drink. Now once I promised her, I cannot drink. So when the allegation was made I went to the hospital. The two doctors on duty said. "Sir, where is the need for a test? We will give you a certificate just like that." I said no. I insisted on the test.

Q. *Do you think the Punjab problem has been handled properly?*

A. Not at all. If they had taken my advice, history would have been different. When Atwal was killed I went to Madam and said this is the time. I will lose 50 to 60 people but I shall bring Bhindranwale to you tomorrow morning dead or alive. But she did not decide.

Q. *Why was she hesitant?*

A. Because of people like Rao Saheb and Alexander. Even Rajiv. They said the Sikh opinion will turn against us.

Q. *And didn't you agree?*

A. No. I said a Sikh DIG has been killed. The Sikh opinion is with you. Today Bhindranwale is in the serai and you can do it. I told Madam that within 10 days he will move to the Akal Takht. I said this information is from my sources.

Q. *What do you mean by "my own information?"*

A. I spent Rs 5 lakh every month for information from Punjab. All home ministers have a fund from which they can spend for such work.

Q. *Didn't you have serious problems with Punjab and Assam?*

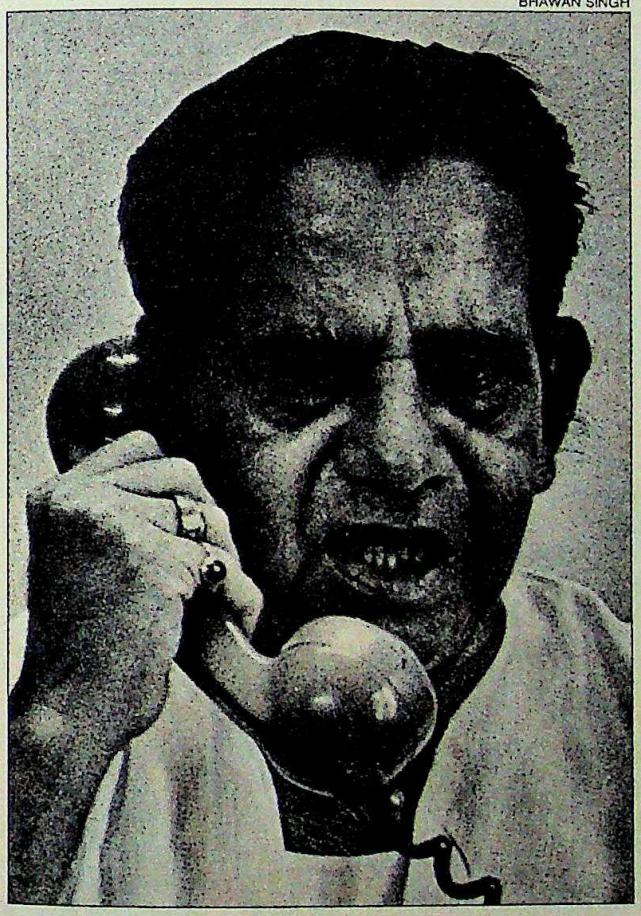
A. To tell you the truth, I was the home minister for all things minus Punjab and Assam. These two were handled by the committee of ministers. Left to me, things would have been different. Now, had Lal Bahadur Shastri been prime minister, you think he would have waited to amend the Constitution? No one would have known a thing and overnight the forces would have crossed into Pakistan.

Q. *You think Lal Bahadur Shastri was a much more decisive prime minister than the present one?*

A. So was Indira Gandhi. After all she was the one who did Bangladesh in 1971.

Q. *But didn't even she show a lot of weaknesses later?*

BHAWAN SINGH



A. Yes, after Sanjay's death. She became a completely different person. She did not cry in front of anyone. But she cried in front of me. She said she had lost her everything.

Q. *Are you happy with the way the Government is going?*

A. What do I say? Now see how they removed Shah (in Kashmir). Till the last moment they kept on saying that he would not be removed. *Lekin yeh jo baitha hai yehan par Fotedar* (But this Fotedar is operating here). He is Mufti's (the Kashmir Congress-I leader) man. Mufti wanted to become chief minister with the breakaway group from Shah's party. Rajiv had asked me. "Sethiji, what do we do about Kashmir?" I said, call Mufti to the Centre. Make Mir Qasim the president of the Kashmir PCC(I), make Farooq's wife the CM and send Farooq away as an ambassador.

Q. *But isn't Farooq's wife a foreigner?*

A. O.K, if she is a foreigner then make Farooq the chief minister. It is just that he is a slippery customer. Like that MGR.

Q. *Isn't it true that the governor himself wants to rule Kashmir for some time?*

A. Yes. *Phir to aur marengey* (they will suffer even more). He has already started beautifying Srinagar. He has broken a bridge upsetting 6,000 people. Once a man acquires a habit, it is difficult for him to shed it. At this rate we will lose more Muslim votes. Already the BJP has won a by-election in Jammu. Now who takes care of all this when Fotedar and Arun Singh have taken on the role of advisers? Arun Nehru was a better adviser. (Now) you have Shiv Shankar, Arjun Singh.

Q. *What is the state of the party?*

A. The prime minister takes advice only from these people. There are no standards. When a train accident took place, Lal Bahadur Shastri quit. Mrs Gandhi was killed when Narasimha Rao was home minister. He is still there. Look at Jaipal Reddy's allegations against Madhavrao Scindia. In spite of their efforts to stop it, many newspapers carried it. They did not want the Pandora's box opened. But it has been opened. When does Madhavrao Scindia come and sit in the central hall (of Parliament) now? He doesn't.

Q. *You say Arjun Singh is plotting against you. Why should he do that?*

A. Because that has been his style of politics for many years. In politics he is like a snake; you don't know through which burrow he will enter and through which he will escape. *Muh mein ram-ram bagal mein chhuri* (He talks sweetly but carries a dagger by his side).

Q. *What are your political plans for the future? Are you happy with the way you are now?*

A. I want to stay within the party and reform it from inside. I do not want to leave like Pranab Mukherjee. But at the same time if these people insist on turning me out of the party what can I do? But Rajiv Gandhi knows my loyalty to him.

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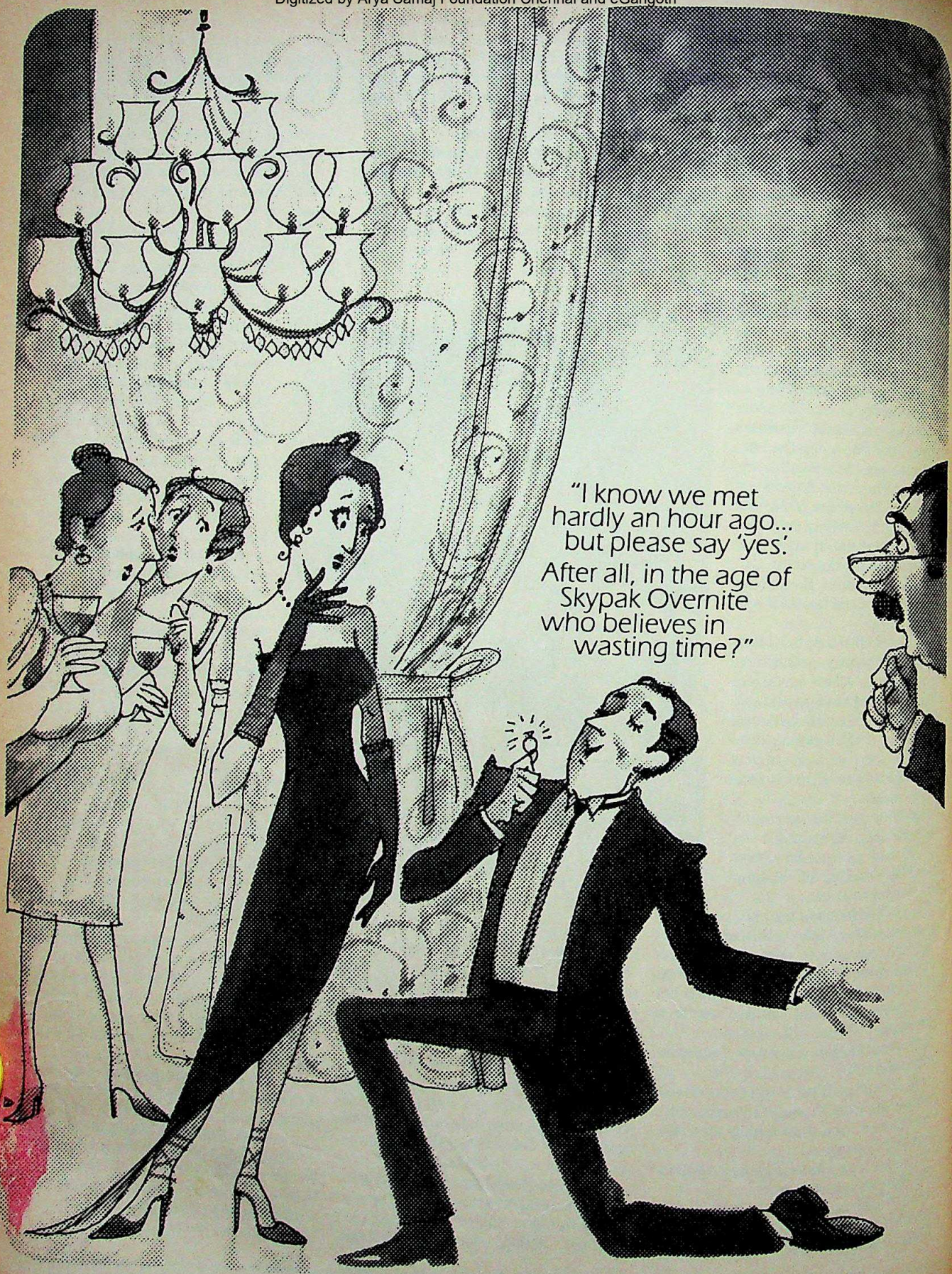

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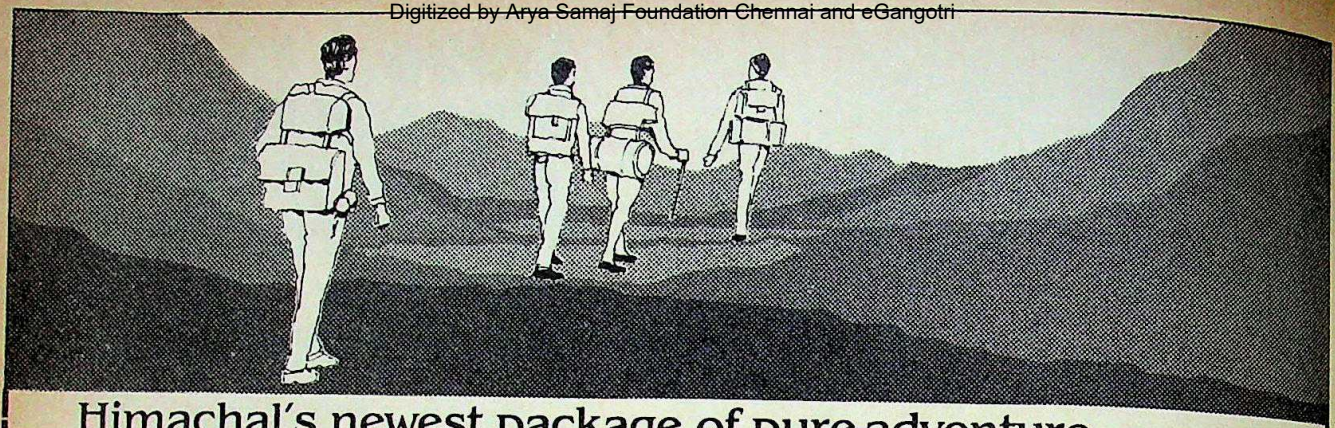

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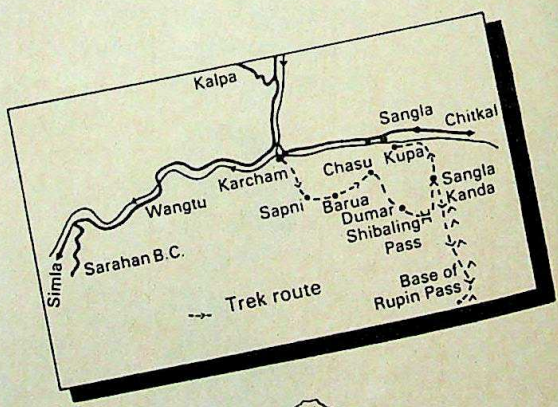

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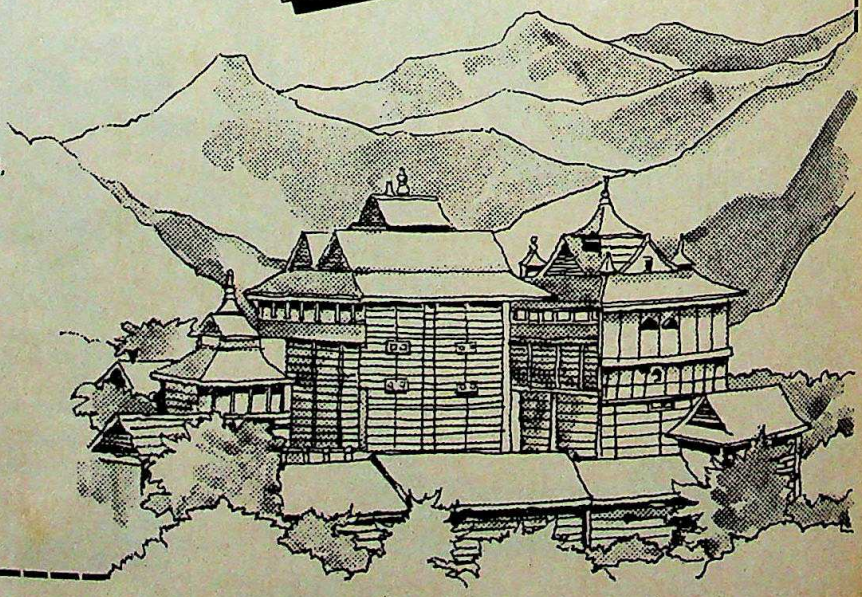

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FRESH PASTURES

THE MODIS, who have been going through a rough patch rcently, and whose fibre project has run into a wall of opposition from the Birlas, have signed up a series of new foreign collaborations. A deal has already been sewn up with the German Triumph-Adler to manufacture electronic typewriters, and another is on the anvil with the Italian Olivetti (now a subsidiary of American AT&T) for a range of computers. A collaboration has been clinched with the reputed American Champion for the manufacture of spark plugs, though an earlier project for automobile ancillaries has been given up. A fourth project being readied is for photofilm and the Modis are negotiating for a collaborator. Some of the group's projects had been held up in the past because it had been black-listed by the Finance Ministry. But with tax money now being paid up regularly, the required clearances are expected to come through.

PRESTIGE PROJECT

THE TTK group is floating a new company in association with Britain's Prestige group to manufacture stickproof cookingware, pressure cookers and portable barbecue stands at Hosur in Tamil Nadu. The group already makes some items in this range, but is expanding production with an eye to breaking into the vast unexplored markets of South-East Asia. The new venture is to be called Prestige Housewares (India) Ltd. The group is also branching out into hard gelatine capsule machinery. Sales from the two projects are expected to be anything in the region of Rs 15 crore once business gets fully under way.

CALIFORNIA DREAM

THE FIRST bank founded by Indians outside India will begin business in San Francisco this month. The First Indo-American Bank, initially conceived nearly five years ago and formally moved nearly three years ago, has been organised predominantly by non-resident Indians—most of them based in California, but including Hari Harilela of Hong Kong. The bank has now collected the minimum opening share subscription of $ 7.5 million (over Rs 9 crore) after several months of effort in a competitive market for funds. Substantial share subscriptions came in from the motel-owning Patels of California. The bank is expected to cater mainly to the needs of Indians in California, especially the small and medium-sized business and professional enterprises in and around San Francisco, including the hotel and motel business.

PRIVATE MOVES

WITH private consultants (both resident and non-resident) quite the government-rage, public sector units are taking a leaf from the Government's book. Three West Bengal-based public sector drug companies, all losing ventures, are about to invite private consultants to look into ways of rehabilitating them. No decision has yet been taken on the appointments, but the consultants are supposed to submit reports three to five months after they swing into action. Smith Stanistreet, Bengal Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals and Bengal Immunity have combined losses of about Rs 15 crore in the last five years. Earlier, the Government was considering other options, but action must now await the consultants' opinion.

GOLD RUSH

FOR ALMOST three months from the middle of April, gold prices had fallen steadily. Now, suddenly, bullion prices have gone through the roof. In early July, gold was on offer in Bombay at no more than Rs 2,105 for 10 grammes. By August 21, this had shot up to Rs 2,245: an increase of almost

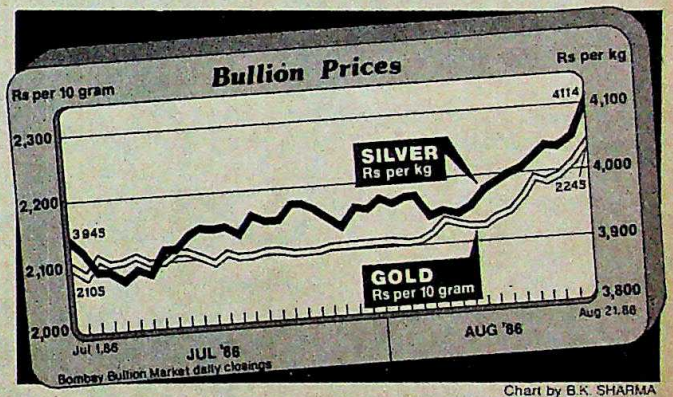

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

one per cent every week. Silver prices have similarly been climbing up the charts, from Rs 3,945 for a kilogramme in early July to Rs 4,114 by August 21. Several factors have brought about the sudden spurt: currency fluctuations, trends in smuggling, and uncertainty about current economic trends.

GIANT MERGER

THE STATE Trading Corporation of India (STC) and the Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation of India (MMTC) are sizeable companies, but a Rs 5,000-crore-turnover colossus could emerge if a proposal to merge the two goes through. The proposal, awaiting Commerce Minister P. Shiv Shankar's clearance, recommends the formation of Bharat International Trading Corporation on the lines of the Japanese *sogo shoshas*, or general trading houses. A note which may go to the Cabinet argues that STC and MMTC together represent a buying power of almost Rs 5,000 crore in world markets, that the new trading conglomerate can use this to advantage, and that duplication of effort and infrastructure abroad can thereby be avoided. However, even if the Government agrees, it may not put all the STC and MMTC subsidiaries under the trading corporation. S.V.S. Raghavan, till recently common chairman of both companies, and now only the MMTC chairman, is pushing for the proposal.

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— भगवद्गीता

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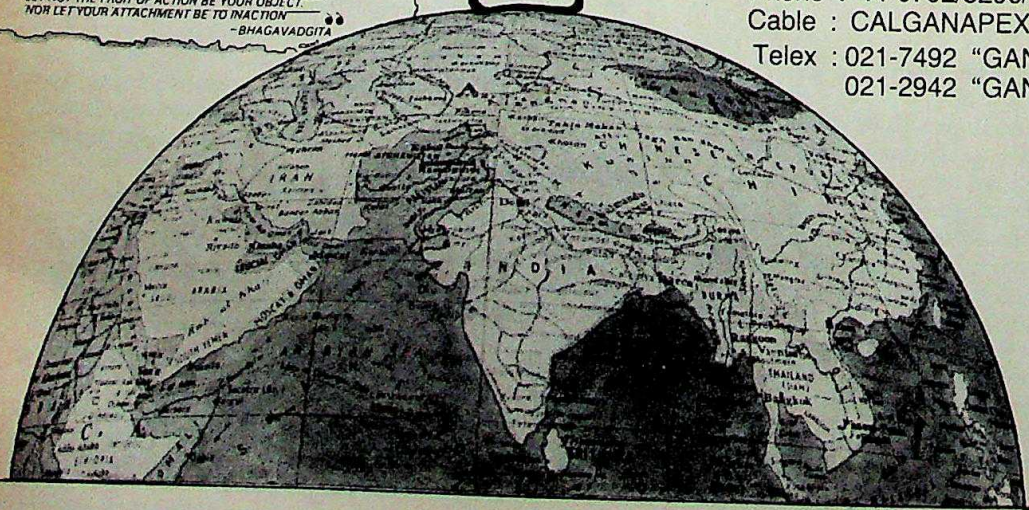
LET NOT THE FRUIT OF ACTION BE YOUR OBJECT.
NOR LET YOUR ATTACHMENT BE TO INACTION"
– BHAGAVADGITA



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The Reliance Example

THE controversy that has erupted around the alleged wholesale infringement of the country's export-import, industrial licensing and banking laws by Reliance Industries highlights how, over three decades, this country's economic laws have become instruments for providing stagnation not growth, increasing social inequalities instead of reducing them, and augmenting social tensions instead of dissipating them.

Reliance stands accused of cornering Rs 100 crore in bank loans to speculate in its own debentures, of salting foreign exchange away in tax havens abroad for a variety of purposes, including the purchase of its own shares, of "smuggling" in polyester filament yarn plants, and last but not least of corrupting virtually the country's entire bureaucracy and intelligentsia.

A close look at the accusations shows that while they contain some truth, they are highly exaggerated. To take one aspect of the "Reliance loan mela" first, a four-member committee has already cleared Reliance of the charge of speculation, and concluded that it had only indulged in support operations for its shares in the stock exchange. This, the committee has pointed out, is a common practice among large companies.

The other two accusations are a good deal less well founded. There can be no doubt that the Chairman of Reliance, Dhirubhai Ambani, was able to raise Rs 22.5 crore abroad literally over a weekend. But the *Indian Express* gives no evidence to support the implied contention that the money belonged to Reliance's managers, and not to Asian investors abroad as Ambani claims. And it is possible to fault some of the premises of the 'machinery smuggling' accusation and ask for a good deal more proof.

But my purpose is not to enter into a lengthy defence of Reliance, or to suggest that the more serious charges made against it should not be examined. There is enough evidence in the *Express* articles, and indeed in much else that has been rumoured or written about this amazing company, to lend strong support to the belief that it has merrily violated the spirit if not the letter of not one but a score of laws designed to regulate economic activity.

My purpose is to ask whether the laws that Reliance has violated ever made sense. Take the "loan mela" first: even if the Ambanis' *benamis* made a killing on the resale of the debentures they bought, where would the money have gone? A great deal would have gone to the Government in taxes and the rest would have been invested in more Reliance shares to finance further increases in investment and output. It is also possible that Reliance's managers cornered debentures and shares to prevent a dilution of their degree of control over the company. Since Indian laws virtually force promoters to dilute their shareholdings if they wish to expand, and since this has made company after company vulnerable to hostile take-over bids, can Reliance's management be altogether blamed for seeking to postpone this evil day as long as possible?

> "Licensing and import curbs combine to create a shortage regime from which competition is eliminated. Only inefficient producers and black-marketeers benefit."

Reliance has also been accused of consistently producing far more than its licensed capacity and seeking to create a monopoly. Apart from the fact that the way to prevent the growth of monopolistic conditions is to free access to all industries, it is necessary to ask: did capacity-based industrial licensing ever make sense? As far back as in the mid-1960s, economists Jagdish Bhagwati and Padma Desai had pointed out that such licensing discourages increases in productivity. More recently, the Government has been dismantling capacity constraints because it has at last realised how harmful these are. But what if growth has been through clandestine expansion instead of increased efficiency? The answer is that over-investment in plant and machinery has been going on for 30 years, and is a product of the licensing system itself. Reliance may have excelled in bending the rules, but it has done no more than what hundreds, if not thousands, of enterprises have been doing for the last three decades.

The central question is: what was Reliance's aim in exploiting loopholes in the law? Was it to make money for the owners, to spend in riotous living, or was it to speed up still further the growth of the company? In a poor country, beset by shortages of products and rising unemployment, is it a crime to produce more?

What purpose are laws serving that aim to restrict production, and make those who raise output in the face of these laws vulnerable to prosecution? If Reliance's growth falters, if its share prices plummet and future debenture issues start failing, if banks cut off lines of credit and create cash flow problems, who will gain? Will it be the consumer, who faces inflated prices today because of the perennial shortage of synthetic textiles in the country? Will it be the Government that, till July last year, took more than six times the imported price of polyester fibre in taxes on every metre of cloth produced? Will it be the million or so shareholders of Reliance, many of whom are new to the stock market? Can the share buying spree which has gathered momentum over the last three or four years itself survive the shock of a Reliance collapse? Can any other scrip remain unaffected by such a collapse, and if not, what will happen to the stock-market, and to Indian capitalism?

So whom does the jungle of regulatory laws really help? The answer is that whatever may be the ostensible purpose of these laws, the real beneficiaries are those who thrive in the pampered and protected market that such laws create. Industrial licensing combines with restrictions on imports to create a regime of permanent shortages from which all competition is eliminated. Inefficient producers and black-marketeers are the only ones who benefit, while the lines of the jobless grow longer every day.

PREM SHANKAR JHA is a well known economic writer and, till recently, senior assistant editor of *The Times of India*. He will be writing a fortnightly column for INDIA TODAY on the economy.

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TAX POLICY

Re-writing the Books

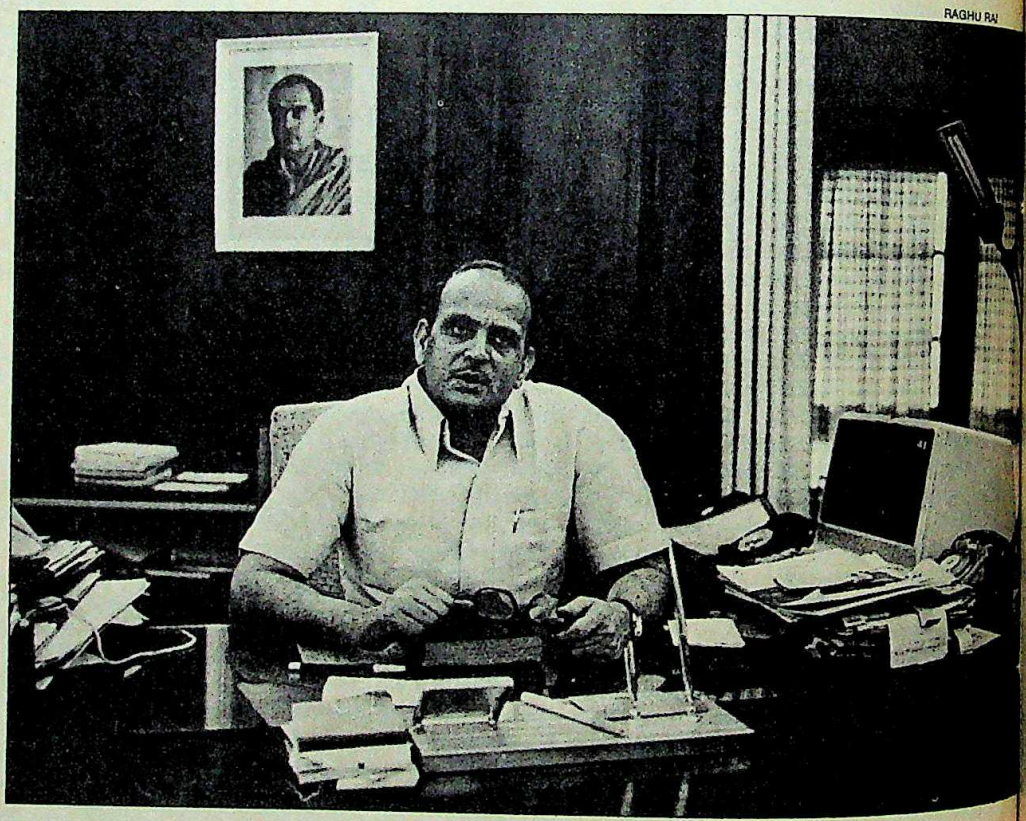
FINANCE Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh has a computer on his office desk in North Block. But what he refers to more often these days is an unusually powerful pocket-sized model, loaded with information on Singh's programme of action on more than a dozen fronts. The meticulous finance minister checks on his tiny machine every day on fresh deadlines for a new policy or administrative action, on the issues to be discussed at his daily morning reviews with senior ministry officials, on the monthly targets of revenue collection, on follow-up action that has to be taken during the month, on the trends in foreign exchange reserves, even on vacancies to be filled in his ministry and in public sector units under his charge.

The computer still comes in useful for the more detailed fact-sheets (the Government's computer network bosses say that Singh uses his machine more than anyone else). So, last fortnight, when Singh laid on the table of Parliament a 'Discussion Paper' on proposals to simplify and rationalise direct taxes, his electronic monitor told him that he had come close to the end of one stage of his labours for drastically overhauling the country's cumbersome tax structure.

Included in the discussion paper were such far-reaching suggestions as a uniform accounting year for all companies (meant to plug a major loophole used for tax evasion), major relaxations on taxing property income, the removal of ceilings on such items of expenditure as advertising, entertainment and travel, the setting up of a 'national court of direct taxes' that will take over some functions from the high courts, more liberal incentives for savings and investment in housing, and further liberalisations in wealth tax. In their totality, these proposals are as dramatic as those in Singh's path-breaking 1985 Budget. Said Singh: "The whole idea behind this discussion paper is to let the people decide how they want to pay their taxes. Let them decide the ways in which we should collect them. But once we agree on this, then there will be no room for evasion and defiance."

The discussion paper comes on the heels of several other steps that Singh has undertaken in an exercise that began with the 1985 Budget. Between then and now, Singh has announced a long-term fiscal policy, brought out a discussion on administered prices policy, announced an amnesty scheme to help excise evaders come clean, similarly encouraged the disclosure of concealed assets and income, announced (and, more important, stuck to) a total ban on state overdrafts, laid down clear guidelines for giving Central assistance to the states, reclassified the excise and customs nomenclature for greater 'harmonisation' (claimed to be the first such exercise in the world) and through the budgets themselves introduced the modified value added tax (MODVAT), radically altered direct tax rates, and begun what Singh calls the 'demystification' of the budget. Said Singh: "I was given a clear directive by the prime minister to carry out certain reforms in the financial management of the country. He provided the guidelines and we in the ministry have converted them into workable policies. The objective was to make the laws simpler and effective, so that there is better compliance and taxpayers become more honest."

RAGHU RAI



Finance Minister V.P. Singh by his computer: calculated change

Singh has certainly made history as a finance minister: none of his predecessors ever attempted any task of the scale and sweep that Singh has taken on; indeed, Singh has more to show for his 20 months in office than many finance ministers with far longer tenures. Said O.P. Vaish, a prominent tax consultant and vice-president of the Federation Of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI):

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"There has never been such a major overhaul of the tax structure and its management. Now we have better machinery for tax collection, for conducting raids and for better coordination in implementing the tax changes. Never before has the taxpayer been made to realise so clearly that he has no option but to be honest." Added a senior Finance Ministry official: "The finance minister has created a situation in which it will soon become more profitable to pay taxes rather than to evade them."

Singh's unfolded package—containing a series of tax reductions—has not met with too much criticism from even those with a socialist orientation because it has obviously delivered results. Despite the lower tax rates, revenue from direct taxes was a handsome 20 per cent higher than in the previous year. And revenue from personal income tax shot up by an unprecedented 45 per cent. Said M.S. Narayanan, chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes: "By reducing the income tax marginally, we have achieved a major spurt in our collections. What does this prove? Everybody is willing to pay, provided we in the Government are reasonable." And since the dangling of the carrot has been accompanied by the judicious wielding of the stick, Singh has been able to bring to the surface an additional income of Rs 1,000 crore which would otherwise have stayed underground. The Government earned extra revenue of Rs 300 crore out of this: equal to the sum recovered under the bearer bond scheme of 1982. Said Singh: "I think we have proved beyond doubt that higher taxation and numerous and irrelevant laws are no guarantee for generating higher revenue. We will not hesitate in reconsidering the existing rates yet again if they lead to buoyancy in tax collections."

Nevertheless, several unfinished tasks remain. Black money has been tackled to some degree through the lower tax rates, which reduce the incentive to keep earnings unaccounted. But the Government has yet to act fully on the basis of the black money report submitted last year by the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy. Also, the discussion papers on administered prices and direct taxes are only a starting point, and firm policies and decisions are still to be handed down—though this is now a matter of time. Finally, the announcement of a long-term fiscal policy has not introduced greater stability in tax rates, with Singh announcing new concessions and changes in tax rates with regular periodicity. And among the other measures that Singh has announced, MODVAT led to some confusion initially, and quick disenchantment with a proposal that had hung fire for a full decade.

But excise officials now defend MODVAT, arguing that it has delivered results. They point to the increase of over 23 per cent in the collection of excise duties during the first quarter of the current financial year (the corresponding quarter in the last year had seen an increase in excise revenue of only 14 per cent). One reason for this improvement: all production by companies has to be recorded for claiming tax set-offs under MODVAT; in the process, unrecorded production sharply comes down, and excise collection goes up. Encouraged by this rise in excise collections, Singh announced last month an amnesty scheme for those who had evaded excise duties in the past. Said Jyotirmoy Dutta, chairman of the Central Board Of Excise and Customs: "The basic attempt is to bring black money back into productive channels."

Perhaps as important as the tax reform has been the effort to enforce fiscal discipline in the states, by abolishing overdrafts. This has been attempted repeatedly in the past, only for the problem to resurface in next to no time. But this time around, Singh has made it clear that he will stand firm, and that plan funds will not be released in advance because they get diverted to non-developmental purposes. Result: earlier there would be as many as 50 questions in one session of Parliament on the overdraft question; now this issue has disappeared from the agenda of Centre-state disputes.

In another innovation, Singh has thrown wide open the doors of the Finance Ministry, inviting people from a large number of fields and specialisations to come and give their suggestions. None of the new policies was formulated without consulting a cross-section of experts. And Singh's Open House sessions have now become another regular feature, logged faithfully into his computerised schedule.

With major policy constraints out of the way, Singh is now concentrating on minimising the leeway that civil servants have in tax matters. One method: enlarging the scope for self-assessment for both direct and indirect taxes, up to a financial limit. The ministry has also devised a proposal for the time-bound clearance of all proposals for foreign collaborations, equity expansion, commercial borrowing from abroad and other requests for tax concessions. He says his ultimate objective is simple: "I want to get rid of the Finance Ministry's image as being a deterrent to growth." —PRABHU CHAWLA

FINANCE MINISTRY

Measures Taken	Results/Goals
Direct tax reforms in 1985 Budget	Direct tax revenue up 20 per cent. Large seizures of concealed assets
Long term Fiscal Policy announced	Direction of tax policy made clear to country
New excise and customs nomenclature	More rational and simple classification
MODVAT introduced	Cascading taxes minimised, reduced evasion
Discussion paper on administered prices	Public debate invited
Discussion paper on direct taxes	Public debate invited
Firm control over state overdrafts	No state now has an overdraft
Adoption of zero-base budgeting under way	Better control of expenditure
Thrust towards better bank customer service	Survey confirms improvement in service
Intensive drive against smugglers	Seizures up 80 per cent in 1985-86

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NTC

Smokescreen

IT WAS meant to be a tax raid. It has turned out to be a lesson in high-stakes corporate shenanigans. The tax money involved is not small: over Rs 85 crore. But the more important story of the New Tobacco Company (NTC) is about how its owner, Calcutta-based tycoon Gouri Prasad Goenka, used it as a milch cow to finance corporate acquisitions and then carefully divested it of its assets before selling it to a former employee—for no more than a notional price. And once Goenka was no longer on the scene, came the tax raids.

When the tax sleuths came calling last fortnight on the manufacturer of such well-known cigarettes as Number 10, Regent, Rothmans and Oxford, what they found was not the expected bonanza but a hollow shell of a company struggling to stay in business. If there had been any money around, it was all gone. Refusing to be cheated, they homed in on Goenka, the man behind a host of companies including Duncans Agro Industries Ltd (DAIL). They raided his office, burst into his home, seized various documents and accused him of perpetrating a massive excise fraud on the Government. Goenka was unperturbed, pointing out that DAIL no longer controlled NTC, 55 per cent of whose shares had passed on to new owners. Nevertheless, Goenka applied for anticipatory bail. When contacted, he declined comment on account of ill health.

Goenka's sensational but unannounced exit from NTC had been carefully planned, as the evidence now showed. The new owners were Goenka's former employee, N.K. Jain, and Andhra-based tobacco magnate Maddi Venkatesh Rao. The tax rap therefore falls on Jain and Rao, who now face an array of dismaying charges that are being investigated by the taxmen:

► NTC had created four front companies—Tabac Traders, Swan Marketing, Fairlie Distributors and Eagle Distributors—for routing kickbacks from wholesale dealers throughout the country.

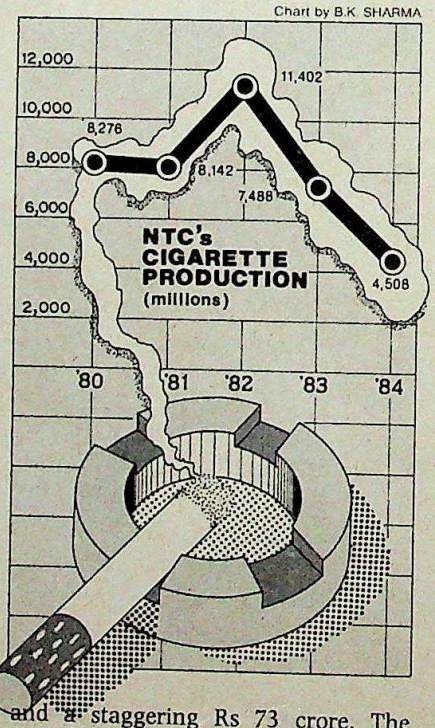
► One of the front companies had been collecting crores of rupees from wholesale dealers and depositing these sums into the bank accounts of fictitious firms floated by NTC employees, who in turn were transferring the funds to NTC headquarters. The officials said that documents showing such "laundering" to the tune of Rs 40 crore had been seized.

► NTC had been getting kickbacks from its front companies by imposing service charges on its wholesalers.

To these are added two earlier charges by the Calcutta and Guntur excise collectors, involving alleged excise evasion to the tune of Rs 13.9 crore and a staggering Rs 73 crore. The charges will be brought to court only after they are firmly established.

G.P. Goenka used NTC as a milch cow to finance corporate acquisitions, then divested it of its assets before selling it to a former employee.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



The irony of this sudden blow, as NTC's present chief N.K. Jain explains, is that "all these tax evasion cases relate to the period up to December last year, when we were nowhere in the picture." Even the latest accusations about the operation of the front companies relate to the time when DAIL controlled NTC. "We severed links with all the front companies by June this year and entered into a new agreement with one of them, Eagles Distributor," adds Jain. "And under the new agreement, we scrapped all previous arrangements for collecting service charges from dealers."

NTC was in fact flat broke when Jain and Rao took over. Indeed, so desperate had Goenka been to rid his flagship company, DAIL, of the NTC burden that he had actually given the two entrepreneurs a 55 per cent stake in NTC without any immediate payment. This had been done by raising NTC's capital base from Rs 45 lakh to Rs 100 lakh, with the extra Rs 55 lakh coming from DAIL via four private investment companies floated by Jain and Rao. The money given to the four investment companies, according to a DAIL executive, is non-recoverable. Goenka also pumped an additional Rs 2.75 crore into NTC's working capital to help the new management restart cigarette production that had ground to a virtual halt for three months since mid-December last year. The remaining 45 per cent of NTC shares are also proposed to be transferred to Jain and Rao, after necessary government approval.

Goenka's affair with NTC had obviously ended. When he had bought NTC in 1974, it was a sick company. Under Goenka and his hand-picked men, the company's fortunes improved dramatically. The company made a profit for the first time in years, in 1980-81. Cigarette production touched an all-time high of about 9,000 million sticks in 1982, and NTC, once derisively known as the "Number 10 company" (after the brand name of its cigarette), became the high profile makers of Regent filters. G.P. Goenka became one of the country's corporate celebrities.

But 1983-84 saw a decline in NTC's fortunes while Goenka prospered. DAIL acquired three major companies—Bakelite Hylam, Herdillia Chemicals and National Rayon. NTC's annual liabilities inched upwards as the company started borrowing heavily. Then abruptly, in March 1984, NTC was severed from DAIL and made into a wholly-owned subsidiary. Most significantly, the 1984 DAIL balance sheet explicitly stated that the entire "excise liabilities of DAIL up to 31st March, 1984...stand transferred to NTC without corresponding tax benefits". Also, as investigations revealed, massive

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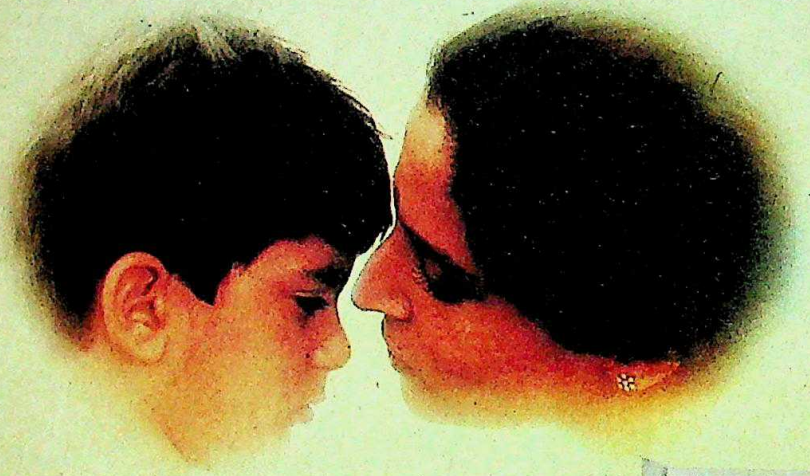

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BOILS

MINOR BURNS

INSECT BITES

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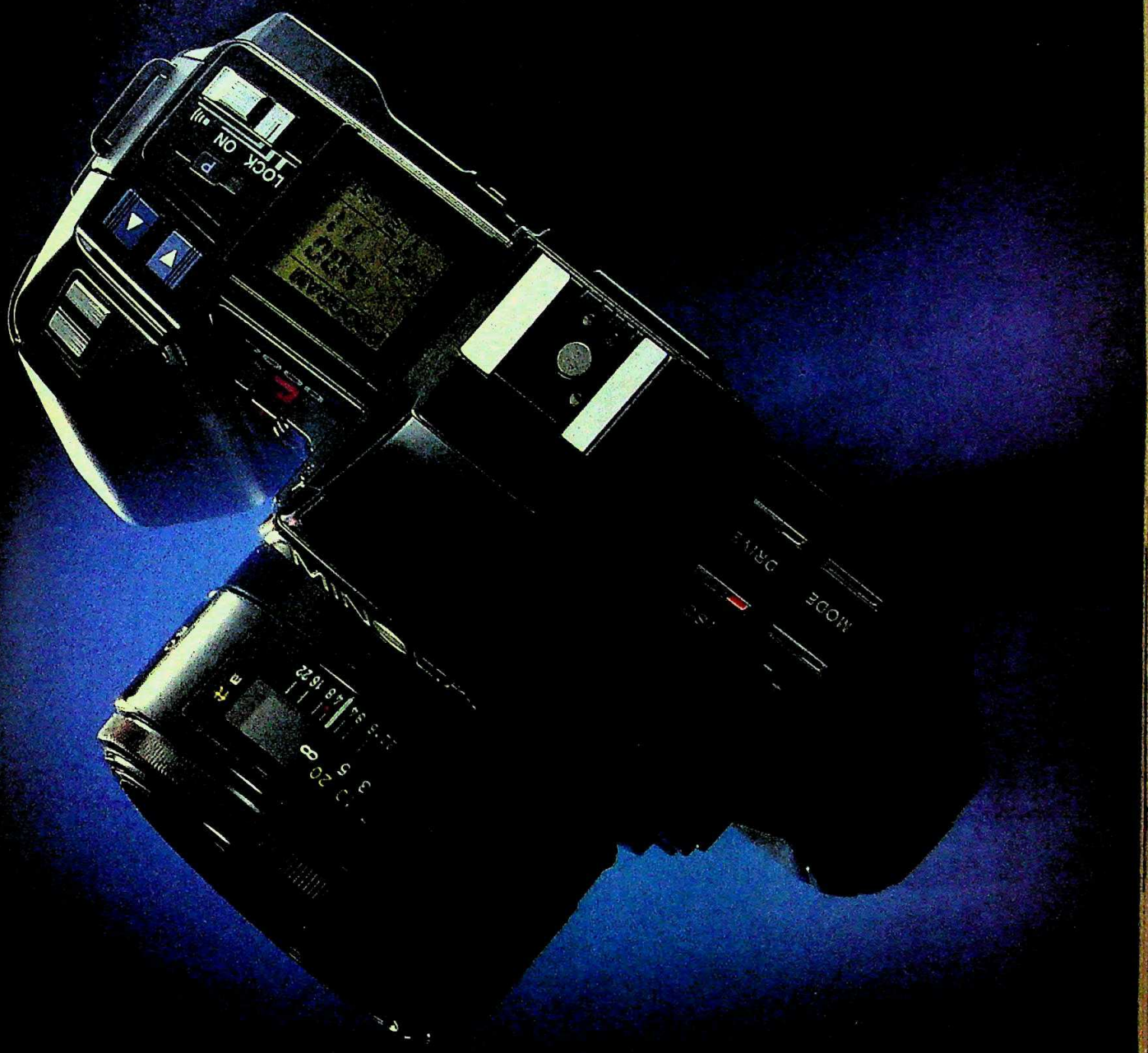

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Travel MARKETING The TTC Magazine

"The shops carry upwards of 15,000 different lines, which are constantly being reviewed, updated and improved. The statistics have steadily improved since the opening of this complex and in one year we sold 103 million cigarettes, half ton of gold, 15 tons of Toblerone, 40,000 watches and some 12,000 calculators."

INTERNATIONAL TAX-FREE TRADER

LOW PRICE POLICY SUCCEEDS AT DUBAI

Operated directly by the airport authority, Dubai's new Duty-free complex has achieved $20m sales in its first year and is now poised for further expansion. JULIAN FOX reports on this latest successor to Shannon and Schiphol.

Frontier The international duty free monthly

"An understanding of the needs of their customers, as reflected in their shop layouts and promotional activities, has won Dubai airport the Airport Tax Free Operator of the year."

مجمع السوق الحرة

DUBAI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

DUTY FREE SHOPPING COMPLEX

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bank loans unsecured by stocks or other assets, were also transferred to NTC.

"By the end of 1984, G.P. had made up his mind to dispose of NTC," recalls a senior NTC executive. Initially, Goenka even suggested the formation of a co-operative to run NTC, and held fruitless discussions with Godfrey Phillips for a sale. In the meantime, NTC's assets too were being disposed of, beginning with the sale of its Guntur factory. Then, amid angry protests from the NTC unions, Goenka transferred the Tobacco House building in Calcutta's Dalhousie Square (valued at Rs 85 lakh) to DAIL. The stage was set for Goenka's divorce with NTC.

Jain, who had been associated with DAIL for over 10 years and had left the group only in June 1985, was approached by Goenka, who promised him a stake in NTC if he agreed to run the company. "I had started a small leasing company but it had not really taken off," explains Jain, "and NTC was a challenge and a promise to become a true entrepreneur from an ordinary executive."

He denies parlour gossip in Calcutta by saying: "I am not Goenka's front man, although I have been his employee in the past." And he adds that he and Rao, and NTC's 4,000-odd employees, all have a stake in bringing the company back to life. "We are bringing money into the company and we are convinced we can make NTC profitable again," Jain stresses. Already, Jain claims, NTC's monthly costs have been brought down from Rs 140 lakh at the time of the transfer to Rs 85 lakh, while cigarette production has inched up to 200 million sticks a month. Three losing NTC units—at Hyderabad, Biccavolu (Andhra Pradesh) and Ghaziabad—are being wound up, leaving the company with one healthy, modern unit at Agarpara near Calcutta, which, apart from its usual Regent brands, has started producing three successful new brands.

But, like the tax hounds, NTC's new management might just have missed the bus. While their coffers are empty, the interest burden on the loans inherited from the DAIL days is proving to be crippling. The NTC management was counting on Government help—financial assistance and even a possible excise waiver—but now it is more likely that it is the governmental hatchet that will be on offer. If that does indeed happen, the tax sleuths will only complete the job that Goenka began. And the name behind the well-known cigarette brands will go up in smoke.

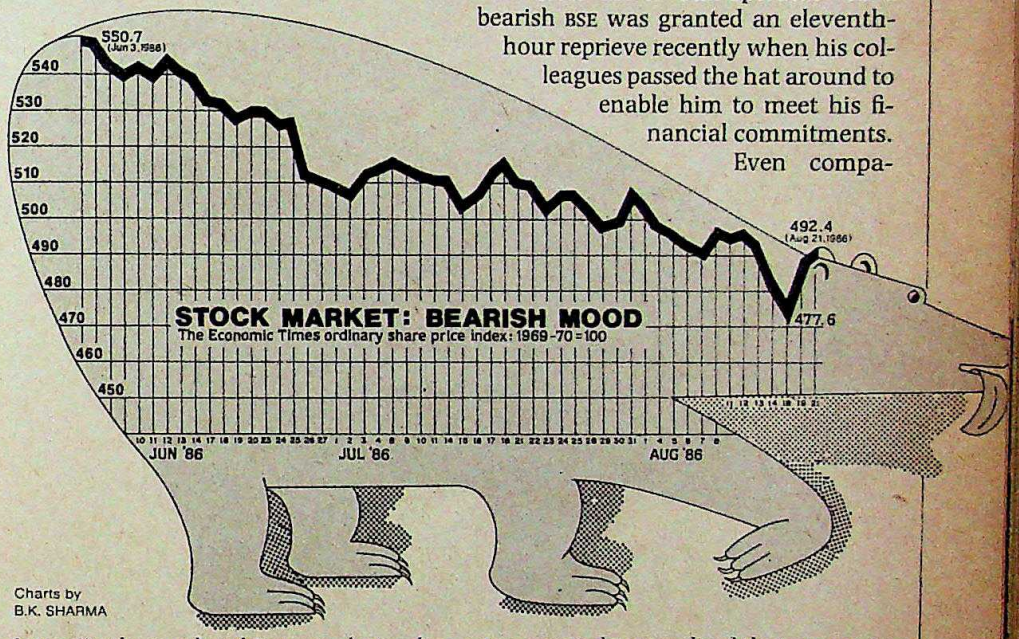
—INDRANIL BANERJIE

STOCK MARKET

Crash of '86

LAST year, Vinay Kapoor, 37, invested Rs 40,000 in the stock market. This year, the Delhi-based Kapoor has decided to give shares the go-by. Instead, the multinational company's employee will put Rs 20,000 into government securities and bank deposits. Says Kapoor: "I am not investing in shares. They don't provide steady returns."

Unlike Kapoor, M.G. Chopra will invest in the market this year—but only in top drawer shares. When the stock market boomed last year, the 57-year-old public sector company executive pulled money out of his widowed daughter's fixed deposit and bought stock for close to Rs 15,000. If he is wary now, it is because the shares Chopra bought last year have lost in value.



Charts by B.K. SHARMA

Kapoor and Chopra are among the thousands of small investors round the country who have woken up to a disillusioning reality: the heady stock market boom of 1985 is over, the crash of 1986 is here. Shares prices have nose-dived, with several blue chips leading the plunge. Mirroring the fall, *The Economic Times* share price index dipped by a worrisome 59 points, from 550.7 in June to 491.6 last fortnight (*see chart*). With the total equity shares listed on the stock exchanges worth some Rs 22,000 crore in June, that means the nation's shareholders have lost an awesome Rs 2,400 crore over the last three months.

"People have lost faith. Small investors are getting out," says Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) President Ramdas Lallubhai Dalal. One result: several new share issues have been under-subscribed. Says a Delhi share broker: "It's the new issues market which has been affected. This is reflected in the prices of other shares." Inevitably, brokers who underwrote several new issues have had to cough up cash to meet the short-fall. Admits Vinod Kumar, a Delhi-based share underwriter: "In earlier times one used to underwrite almost every issue. One is very careful now." Scores of small-time speculators are totting up their losses and a "bull operator" on a bearish BSE was granted an eleventh-hour reprieve recently when his colleagues passed the hat around to enable him to meet his financial commitments. Even companies seem to have realised that money is hard to come by in the stock market. Fewer of them are issuing shares. Last January, 55 firms listed on the Delhi Stock Exchange (DSE) offered equity to the public. In June, the number had tumbled to 14.

Clearly, the mood is downbeat—in stark contrast to the euphoria of 1985 when the metropolises throbbed to the strains of a new gold rush. Officegoers, businessmen, even housewives pooled their funds to play the market.

The precipitious fall of 1986 has been sparked off by a combine of factors: the Reliance Industries imbroglio, the Government's announcement in June that it would not permit companies to convert non-convertible debentures into equity, and what some share-market men regard as plain hanky-panky by several managements. Battered by adverse publicity and the official ban on converting debentures, Reliance plunged from more than Rs 390 at one stage to Rs 250. Even then, it had to be

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propped up by a ban on the sales of those shares that were not backed up by immediate delivery.

Reliance was not the sole victim of bull baiting. Orkay, which had been riding high at Rs 159 in early August, came crashing to Rs 102 in unofficial deals in Bombay after the declaration of its results. "The management had painted a very rosy picture," says a broker. "The figures belied all that." Forward trading in Associated Cement, Tata Iron and Steel and Premier Automobile shares also had to be banned to prevent a calamitous plunge.

"We are doing everything we can to prevent a crisis," said an obviously harried M.R. Mayya, executive director of the BSE. "Our job is to prevent a payment crisis and keep the market going and so far we have succeeded." That view is not, however, shared by official sources. The BSE accounts for most of the stocks traded in the country and last fortnight a government functionary pinned part of the blame on the BSE authorities for the market having got over-heated. Said the official: "Bull operators overbought without having the cash to take delivery of shares, and kept prices unrealistically high. The BSE's cash-down margins on shares that are speculated in were inadequate."

While the BSE for its part blames the crisis on the Reliance and Orkay affairs, others see more insidious reasons. Says Amritlal Bajaj, former president of the DSE: "The managements of many companies have been manipulating share prices before they come out with an issue. They created an artificially high unofficial premium on their shares."

"Ultimately, shares have to stand on the company's merit," echoes Delhi stockbroker Prakash Jusroi. "While the craze was on, most companies went in for private placement of shares in a big way. Brokers charged a commission and split the take with managements—money which didn't go into the books. With fewer shares available for the public, prices reached dizzy heights." The bubble had to burst some day.

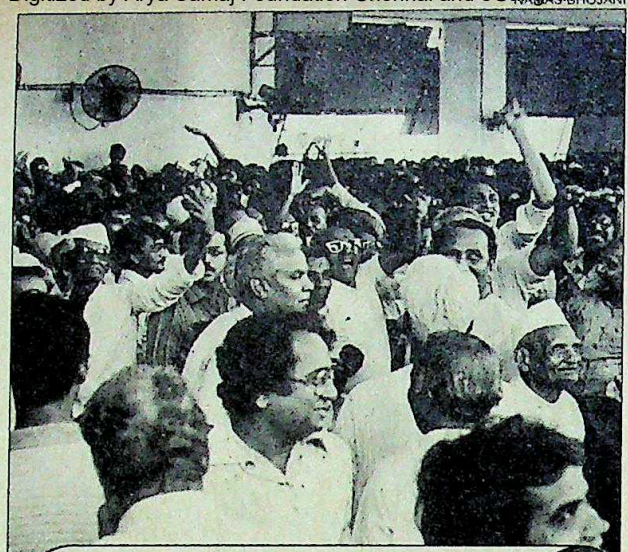
"The bane of the market," says Dalal, "is insider trading." Although company managements abroad are banned from dabbling in their own shares, this is a standard practice here. Reliance and Orkay, for instance, picked up big chunks of their shares recently in support operations. That, however, is not Dalal's prime objection. His grouse is that many companies are not above spreading rumours about their good performance, bonus issues and other goodies in the offing. But when the prices have risen and the managements have made a killing, the cupboard is found to be bare. "This is a market that operates on faith, trust and hope," he says. "You take away the faith and the trust, how long can hope sustain you?" And though the Government has been making its customary noises (a committee which went into the market's functioning has recommended a ban on insider trading), a new code of ethics is yet to see the light of day.

Amidst this rumpus, the market stabilising arms of the Government, the financial institutions, have refused to start buying operations. But in the end, it is probably the institutions that will rescue the market from its present plight. For one, they have clubbed together to form the Stockholding Corporation of India, a body meant to coordinate their share buying and selling, and it should get into top gear over the next few months. Then, a good part of the Unit Trust of India-Merrill Lynch pickings of Rs 125 crore in non-resident funds will be invested in equity, all helping to muzzle the bears.

What the latest ballyhoo in the stock market implies is plain enough: last year companies raised Rs 3,000 crore from the public, including public sector bonds, debentures floated by private firms, rights issues and new issues. This year's target is Rs 5,000 crore, and in the light of the present situation, that figure may be difficult to attain. The beneficiary of the investor's disenchantment with shares could well turn out to be public sector companies, several of which are bracing to kick off bond issues. The bonds are safe, if nothing else, and offer tax benefits to boot.

"But predicting the market," observes an investment counsellor, "is a species of crystal gazing. You can go to the race course after having studied form and fitness, but the chances are that you will still get taken for a ride. The stock market is no different." That perhaps is a telling comment on an institution which corporate skulduggery and Government pussyfooting have plunged into a crisis.

—PARTHASARATHY SWAMI and PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI



MAGS BHOJANI

SHARE SLUMP

	PRICES AS ON 3.6.86	PRICES AS ON 21.8.86	% CHANGE
SPIC	169.00	61.00	-63.9%
RELIANCE INDUSTRIES	377.00	254.00	-32.6%
HIND DORR	490.00	345.00	-29.6%
ACC	287.00	208.00	-27.5%
BARODA RAYON	370.00	270.00	-27.0%
GARWARE NYLON	52.00	39.50	-24.0%
HIND MOTORS	53.40	42.55	-20.3%
GSFC	180.50	149.00	-17.4%
CENTURY	880.00	740.00	-15.9%
ORKAY SILK	164.00	147.00	-10.4%

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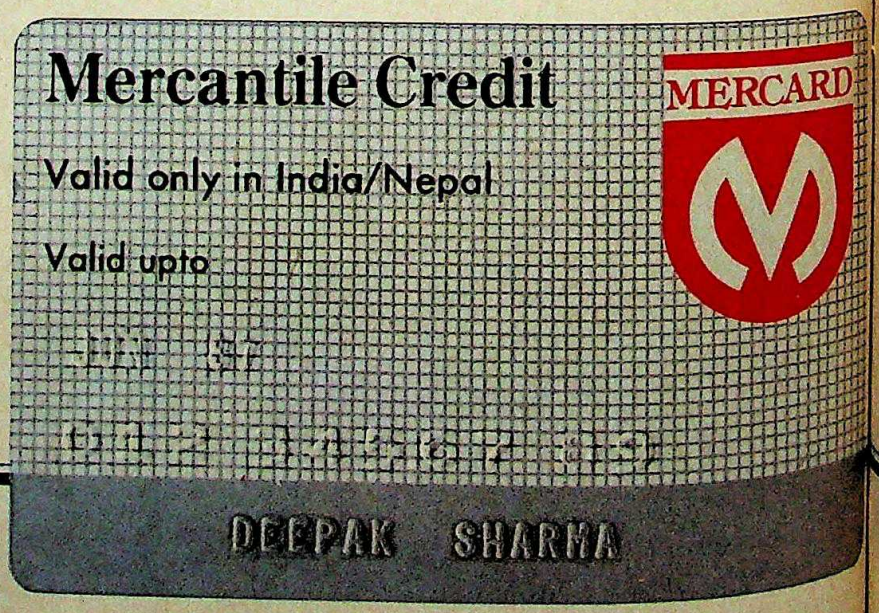

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But be that as it may, neighbours will always be neighbours. And when they drop in to watch the Sunday Feature Film ... you can only keep a cautious watch. And during the interval, perhaps, you can drop them a mild hint ...That buying an ONIDA will always mean a happy ending. ■ ONIDA with cordless remote

Love thy neighbour. But guard thy ONIDA

"The modern technology that we want is just not available in India."

D.K. SANGAL
telecommunications secretary

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN

"Until we develop our infrastructure, telecommunications cannot be improved."

SAM PITRODA
chairman, Centre for Development of Telematics

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Importing Trouble

WHEN faced with a problem, go in for imports. That seems to be the "quickfix" formula that the Department of Telecommunications has hit upon in a desperate bid to nurse the country's ailing telecom network to good health. But, inevitably, this has now resulted in a flaming row with the domestic manufacturers of telecom equipment, who fear a lack of orders to feed their own factories. What emerges from the squabble is a picture of lopsided planning, hasty imports, and the setting up of domestic production units that will have no customers.

The international shopping list this year includes a whole lot of equipment including cable systems, microwave equipment, electronic telephone line concentrators, automatic dehydrators, digital coaxial equipment, wave guide equipment, and 23 other items. And turning a deaf ear to the growing protests from domestic manufacturers, the department recently announced that it plans to import switching equipment (which is the heart of the telephone exchange) and one lakh telephone instruments.

That was what finally snapped the final cord of tolerance, and furious lobbying by the industry saw red-faced telecom officials withdrawing a limited tender floated for foreign telephone instruments. The total demand for telephone instruments in the country is not expected to cross 10 lakh a year even by 1990, and the public sector Indian Telephone Industries (ITI) alone will have the required capacity to manufacture that number. Besides, another 50 companies have been licensed recently by the Government to produce telephone instruments in the private sector. So, as far as the manufacturers were concerned, this was nothing more than trigger-happy imports.

But Telecommunications Secretary D.K. Sangal argued that the instruments to be imported were sophisticated "executive-secretary plan" telephones which, though in great demand, were not manufactured in the country. Talking of switching equipment, he said: "The modern technology that we want is just not available in India." Reacting to the widespread criticism that the department is on an import spree, he countered: "The import content in our plan is among the lowest. Why is it that only we are picked on? Why is the Gas Authority being allowed to import its entire telecom facility?"

But Sam Pitroda, chairman of the Centre for Development of Telematics (CDOT), argued: "Unless and until we change from our import-based mania to the development of local infrastructure, telecommunications cannot be improved in this country. The fact that, despite the existence of Hindustan Teleprinters and Hindustan Cables, we are still going in for large-scale imports of both teleprinters and transmission equipment shows that somebody forgot to plan in time for the upgradation of technology in both these units."

He has a point. For as K.P.P. Nambiar, chairman and managing director of ITI, points out: "Our technology acquisition is full of problems because it takes one-and-a-half years for negotiations with the collaborator, then another year for the licensing procedures, and finally another one-and-a-half years for project implementation. By the time all this is over, new technology develops and fresh imports become necessary."

Also, while the technology in some telecom sectors has been upgraded, that in others has not, so that imports have become unavoidable in order to install a fully modern system. Thus, the planners moved first on modernising switching equipment and telephone instruments, and forgot about the transmission systems in between; so now crash imports of transmission equipment are needed to maintain a balance in the network. With no present domestic manufacturing facility for optical fibre cables and microwave equipment, the department has no option but to import these if the investment at the two ends is to produce a better overall system.

Nevertheless, the import programme drastically affects the plans of a consortium of domestic public sector manufacturers—ITI, Bharat Electronics Ltd, and the Electronics Corporation of India Ltd (ECIL)—which were set up to fill this very transmission vacuum. The consortium had floated a tender in May last year for the manufacture of digital microwave and optical fibre equipment. But, according to ITI's Nambiar: "The imports now planned may not leave

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the spirit of dynamism continues

PRESSMAN

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enough demand for domestic production to be economically viable."

Even where the Government has gone ahead and created new manufacturing capacity for modern telecom equipment, the Department of Telecommunications may not now have the money to buy the goods that will be produced. Thus, a new electronic switching equipment factory is now coming up with the help of French collaboration at Mankapur in Uttar Pradesh. But the department now realises that it does not have the resources to pick up the production from this unit. Mankapur can produce five lakh lines of switching equipment annually, but the department's budget does not stretch beyond three lakh lines.

Meanwhile, ITI's Bangalore unit is faced with labour retrenchment problems because of the phasing out of its now obsolete Strowger and Crossbar exchange systems. ITI would like a second electronic switching factory to be located at Bangalore, to absorb the labour, but this too has not been cleared—for lack of funds, among other reasons. Said Sangal: "What we're telling them now is, if you set up a second factory and we can't place orders, what will you do?"

Meanwhile, CDOT (set up in 1984 to design an indigenous switching system in three years' time) expects to have its designs ready by mid-1987. Once again, there seem to be neither the plans nor the funds for setting up manufacturing facilities using this system. "It's not something that can come up in a day, once the designs are finalised. There has to be advance planning," says Pitroda.

At its root, the problem may be simply a lack of funds. The Planning Commission first scaled down the department's Seventh Five-Year Plan to barely a third of the initially proposed Rs 12,000 crore. And the 1986-87 annual plan was, as a result, scaled down from Rs 1,382 crore to Rs 835 crore. Of this, more than a fourth (Rs 220 crore) is meant to be spent on imports.

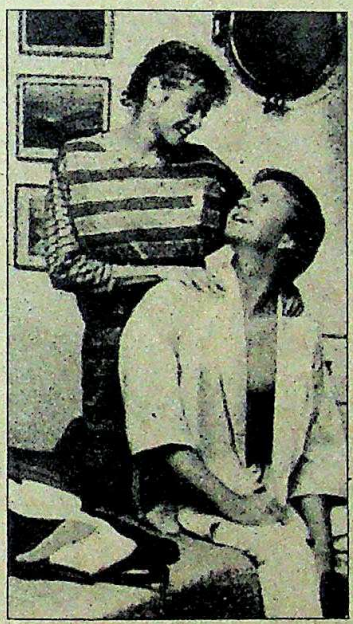
Predictably, the department has now come up with a please-all solution to the problem: a desperate plea for more funds, so that the five-year telecommunication plan can be increased from the present Rs 4,100 crore to Rs 6,000 crore. If the Government approves, it will meet with a lot more happier faces. If it doesn't, the gloves are going to come off in the fight between the domestic manufacturers and those pumping for imports.

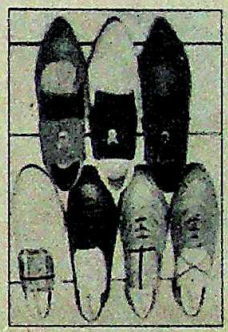
—TANIA MIDHA

FASHION

Bunny Hop

THE BUNNIES are coming to India. Courtesy Fashionsport (India) Pvt Ltd, Playboy Enterprises of the US will soon be making its debut in this country: but not with the magazine, casinos, nightclubs and playmates, not in fact with anything that means uncovering the body. Instead, the Fashionsport-Playboy tie-up is for manufacturing a wide range of garments, footwear and accessories: as Fashionsport Chairman Prabodh Agrawal puts it, "items that will cover all parts of the body".





Playboy clothes and accessories; and (below right) Agrawal: new markets

Though the group's and its magazine's strengths are more in the uncovering line, Playboy's merchandising division earned more than $240 million last year under its famous 'bunny' logo. Under the collaboration agreement, cleared by the Government last month, Fashionsport will pay Playboy 5 per cent of its sales turnover as royalty. "We expect a turnover of Rs 10 crore in the first year itself," says Agrawal, "most of it in exports".

Agrawal has promised to export 50 per cent of his production, though this is not a formal condition stipulated by the Government (such a condition caused Burroughs Wellcome to abandon its sportswear deal with Nike last fortnight), and Playboy has assigned it 35 countries as its exclusive territory—in west Asia, the Soviet Union and the east European bloc. Playboy is evidently hoping that it will effect a backdoor penetration in the land of the sheikhs and the citadels of communism.

On the Indian front, though government restrictions preclude the use of the Playboy brand name, it is likely that the logo will be displayed on the products. Fashionsport plans to set up half a dozen exclusive boutiques where men can get fully outfitted in the Playboy mode, from shirts and shoes to briefs, belts, gloves and caps. The fairer sex too will have a chance to pick up their 'playmate' apparel and accessories for women.

The price, however, may prove the limiting factor. With shirts at Rs 350 and even a humble belt or wallet at Rs 150, the rates are easily 20 per cent higher than existing up-market brands. Agrawal agrees, but adds that the target segment is made up of those who presently buy their clothes abroad. "Besides, we will be focusing more on exports," he says.

Fashionsport, with a project cost of Rs 1 crore, is the group's third venture in this line. Supra Fashions was set up in 1977 to cater to the designer-end of the market, followed by Elar Fashions which had more of a mass production orientation, but neither made much of a splash. Negotiations for a new collaborator began three years ago, and included Levi's and Wrangler. "We opted for Playboy because they gave us the best deal," says Agrawal.

But it all depends on the success of the export effort. A lot of components will have to be imported—the foreign exchange expenditure on this head alone is estimated at Rs 8 crore in the first five years. Playboy has undertaken to buy $2 million worth of products annually, but the icing on the cake depends on how fast the markets respond, and whether the Playboy image will appeal. Agrawal has an answer to that too: "Just because you wear a Playboy shirt you do not automatically become a Playboy. I have been negotiating with the company for over a year now, but I'm still faithful to my wife." Today's bunnies are evidently aimed at the wallet; their undercover aspirations are another chapter.

—PARTHASARATHI SWAMI

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LEASING

The New Boom

THEIR names suggest that they are small, insignificant enterprises: Ashok Leasing, South Asian Financial Engineering, Samudra, Cholamandalam Investment and Finance, Key Leasing, Classic Leasing and Financial Services. In fact, they represent the wholesale entry by big business into the new corporate El Dorado: leasing.

The big daddies of industry are now storming a citadel long held by a cluster of small companies. Commercial vehicle manufacturer Ashok Leyland kicked off Ashok Leasing last September, 25 big southern companies later joined hands to float South Asian Financial Engineering (SAFE), R.P. Goenka's Duncan group floated Samudra, the Madras-based TI Cycles group roped in Standard Chartered Bank and started the Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company, and tobacco giant ITC is readying to launch Classic Leasing along with some of its business associates. Even the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI) has got into the act. Last month, a leasing and hire-purchase company promoted by the DCM group's Shri Ram Fibres (SRF) went to the market to raise cash, close on the heels of J.K. Synthetics' Chairman Gaur Hari Singhania's Key Leasing and Finance.

"Big houses started floating leasing firms a few months ago. More are in the pipeline," says a director of Key Leasing. He is right. Goetze (India), an Escorts stablemate, has a leasing division on its anvil, and Reliance Industries is planning to shortly set up the Reliance Capital Finance Trust.

Clearly, the rush is on for the pot of gold at the end of the leasing rainbow, in the form of business opportunities and ready cash available virtually on tap to promoters (leasing companies are allowed to borrow 10 times their capital and reserves). Says P. Bhalla, general manager and secretary of Goetze: "The financial institutions have limited funds and will lend less to the corporate sector in future. Companies are looking ahead." Adds a Grindlays Bank official: "All the big groups want to get into financial services. In 10 to 15 years' time, it's going to be big business."

Most of the entrants are convinced that today's Rs 400-crore leasing market will burgeon in the years ahead. T. Anantha Narayanan, chief executive of the Ashok Leyland-promoted Ashok Leasing and Hire Purchase, reckons that companies can do up to Rs 2,000 crore worth of leasing business. And SRF sees an opportunity in carving out for itself a niche in financing the purchase of consumer goods durables. Says the company's Managing Director Arun Bharat Ram: "Our decision to go into leasing has everything to do with commercial reasons and nothing to do with tax reasons. It's a purely commercial venture which we think makes good sense."

Clearly, companies also plan to use in-house leasing and hire-purchase firms to finance the sale of wares produced by their stablemates. Examples: The soaring yen has pushed up the prices of DCM Toyota's trucks, slowing down sales. SRF Finance could partly remedy that by financing customers. Ashok Leyland's in-house firm already offers cash to truck buyers at a time when bank credit is tight. Notes P.N. Vijay, who heads Citibank's merchant banking division in India: "An in-house leasing company that finances sales makes eminent sense."

For all the optimism, however, several bankers and small businessmen who run leasing companies point out that the pickings are neither fat nor easy. Delhi stockbroker Harish Bhasin, who runs a leasing company, points out that leasing firms used to charge rentals of up to 48 per cent, and that the mushrooming of leasing companies has quite steeply pared rentals. Says Bhasin: "The cost of money to firms is 19 per cent. If you lend the asset at 21 per cent, your margin is just 2 per cent. Pick any leasing company. You will find that its profits come from activities other than leasing."

The new heavyweight entrants do not agree, however, that the gold has already been panned in leasing. Says F.R. Vevalna, finance director of ITC: "Leasing on a realistic and planned basis could be a reasonably viable business." Several big companies are also clearly banking on the goodwill that their names enjoy to raise money. Key Leasing, which shares only a common chairman with J.K. Synthetics, had its public issue oversubscribed recently, perhaps because it mentioned in its advertisements that it had sewn up a business deal with the J.K. group.

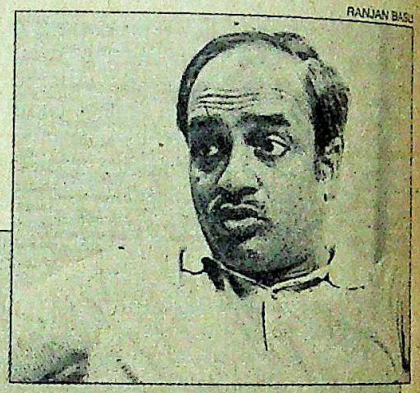
Finally, the big boys maintain that small leasing companies have failed to blend the more profitable hire-purchase business with the less profitable leasing. Says J.K. Synthetics President F.C. Rustagi: "With a balanced portfolio, leasing companies can offset their profits from

HARI OM GULATI

F.C. RUSTAGI
president, J.K. Synthetics

"Leasing firms can offset their profits from hire-purchase by depreciating assets and getting tax benefits."

RANJAN BASU



ARUN BHARAT RAM
managing director, Shri Ram Fibres

"Our entry into leasing is not for tax reasons. It's a commercial venture which makes good sense."

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hire-purchase business by depreciating their assets and taking advantage of the tax benefits." Indeed, this works both ways for a business group. Corporations are entitled to a tax write-off on the lease rentals they pay for equipment. Their leasing outfits in turn can depreciate their assets and so wind up paying little or even no taxes. "It's a case of having your cake and eating it too," one businessman said gleefully.

Leasing is certainly a beguiling option for companies that want money to expand, because of their generous debt-equity ratio. Firms can deploy this money, provided the legal hurdles are crossed. SAFE's corporate promoters invested Rs 2 crore in the company, which is going to the market to raise another Rs 3 crore. On a Rs 5 crore capital base, SAFE can borrow anything up to a staggering Rs 50 crore—and as the capital base expands, the process can, in theory, continue indefinitely.

Best of all, few formalities are involved in raising funds through leasing firms than if a company were to go to the financial institutions hat in hand. If a big group has exhausted its bank credit limits, it can set up a leasing company and ask for bank loans of up to Rs 6 crore without having to seek prior Reserve Bank of India permission. And if it wants cash for machinery, it can lease this from its leasing company, thereby circumventing the red tape involved in seeking term loans from the institutions.

Leasing's principal attractions for big business are plainly twofold: speedy access to money, and the tax shelters that leasing firms provide. A sister leasing outfit offers a manufacturing company considerable leeway to pare its tax bills. Goetze's Bhalla cites tax savings as one reason for Goetze setting up a leasing division. Says Bhalla: "Goetze is entering leasing as a business venture but we can also get tax benefits. The money that will be available by not paying taxes can be put to more profitable use."

A SIDESHOW to this tax avoidance saga is the ploy some tea companies have adopted of revaluing their vastly depreciated assets (usually furniture and stores) in line with current market rates, selling them to a leasing company at the new bloated values and then taking them back on lease. True, these companies have to pay capital gains tax when revaluing their assets. Also, the Government slaps on a sales tax when the assets are hawked. Nevertheless, the benefits can be substantial to both parties in the deal. Explains the chairman of a leasing outfit which has handled several such deals: "The company gets a large amount of money while retaining the assets. It also gets tax deductions by paying high rentals to the leasing firm. And the leasing company can charge depreciation on the assets."

With such a formidable combine of attractions, more and more corporate giants are likely to leap into the leasing arena in the months ahead. And as is inevitable with any fledgling industry, that means that several of the small firms that have characterised the industry so far could close down. Forecasts Arun Bharat Ram: "We foresee a shake-out in leasing, and two things will happen. Fly-by-night operators will not survive for long. And big companies will survive." If he is right, big will finally be beautiful in the leasing industry.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI
with bureau reports

FICCI

Fading Out

FOR WEEKS, R.P. Goenka, president of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), held out the olive branch: come back into the fold, he said; all is forgiven, all is mended. But the loud and clear response was that all is ended. For the Indian Merchants Chamber (IMC) and the others who had quit FICCI, there would be no second coming. IMC had found a suitable bedfellow in the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Assocham).

On August 8, Goenka had announced that FICCI's bogus members had been weeded out, and the decks cleared for the rebels' re-entry. But the rebels had their options chalked out. "We are going ahead with our plans," said former IMC chairman Pratap Bhogilal.

August 11 saw the first meeting between Assocham and IMC, plus two corporate luminaries like Hari Shanker Singhania, Lalit Thapar and Ashok Jain. "We all saw eye to eye, only the nitty-gritty remains to be resolved," said IMC strongman Viren Shah.

The Assocham constitution will be amended to enlarge its membership and executive council. The budget will also be hiked from Rs 18 lakh to Rs 80 lakh. And safeguards will be built in so that no large houses or factions can dominate the new body. To raise funds for the big league venture, 15 large groups or companies will become patron members, contributing Rs 3 lakh each annually for the first five years, and the promoter chambers will also chip in with more funds. "Finance is really no problem," said Shah.

HARI OM GULATI

Former IMC chairman Bhogilal: starting anew

There could be other problems, though. IMC would like Assocham (a stronghold of the Indian subsidiaries of multinational corporations) to change its name to reflect its new membership (mostly Indian business houses), but Assocham President B.R. Sule said: "We are quite fond of it and see no reason to adopt a new identity." He added, however: "Now it will have to be a larger body with a wider point of view. But we don't want to include every minor organisation as member. The trade bodies we induct must have an all-India base."

There is already some jockeying for power. The ex-FICCI group initially held out for parity with the present Assocham members, but this did not find favour. A three-member panel has now been set up to finalise the new constitution. If things work out, Assocham will be able to present itself as a truly rival body to FICCI. That is when the real fun and games will start.

—PARTHASARATHI SWAMI

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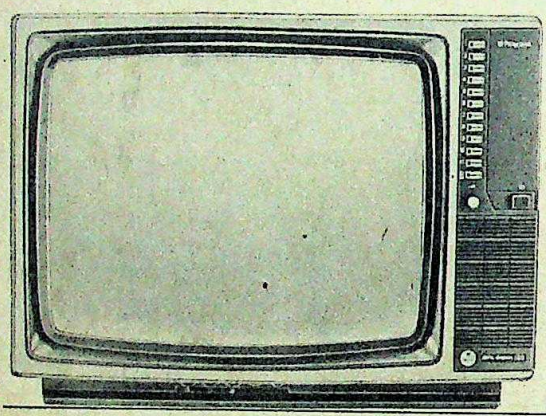

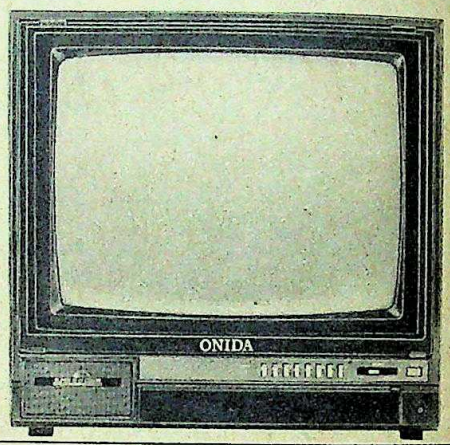

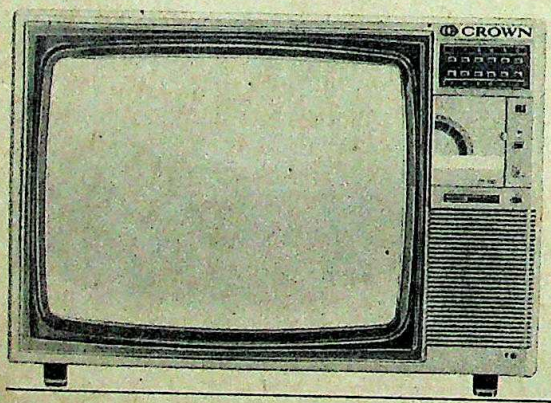

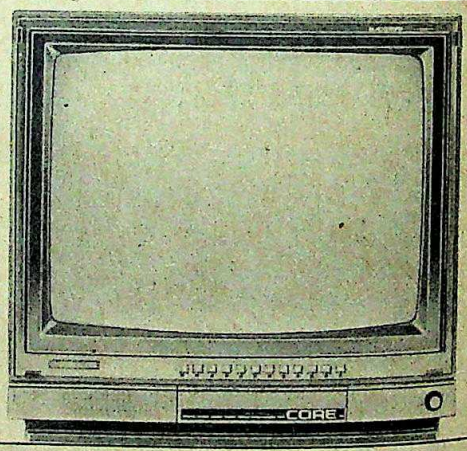

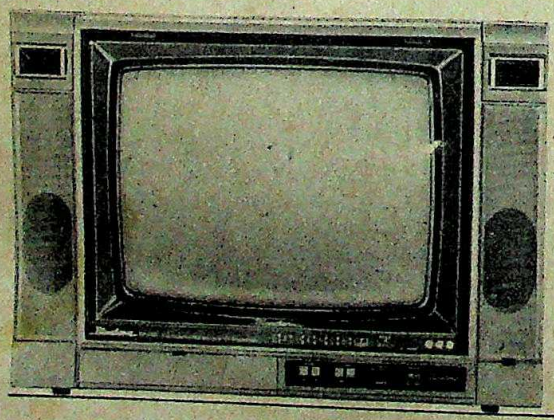

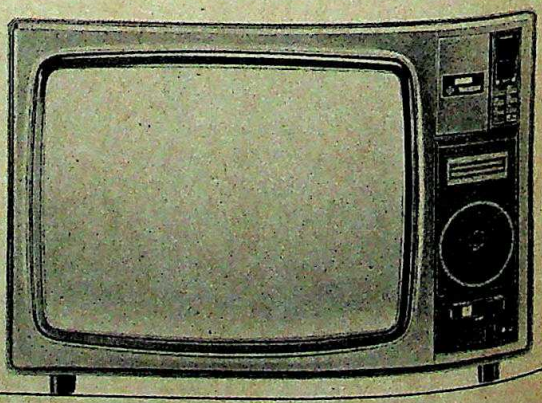

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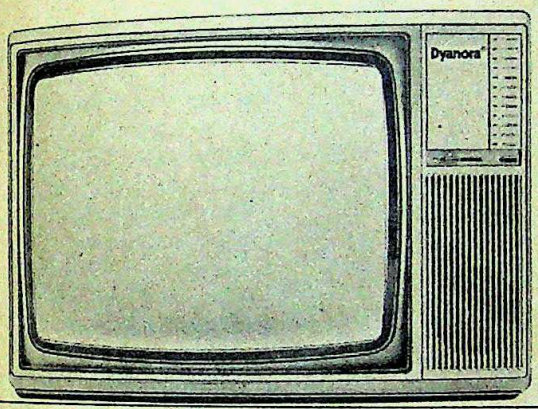

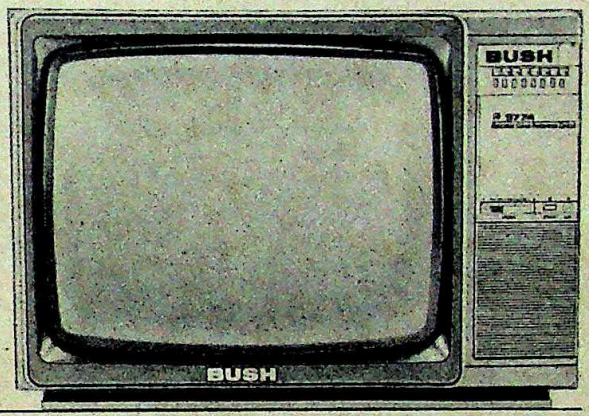

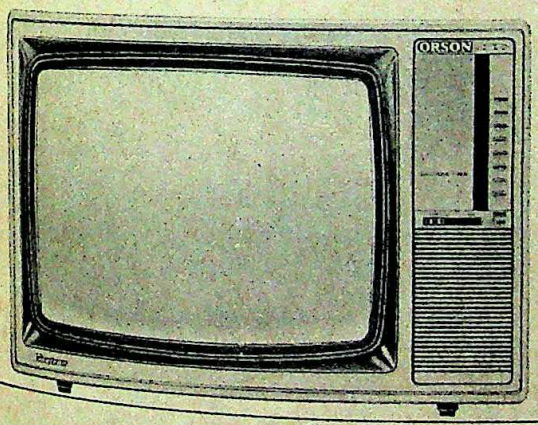

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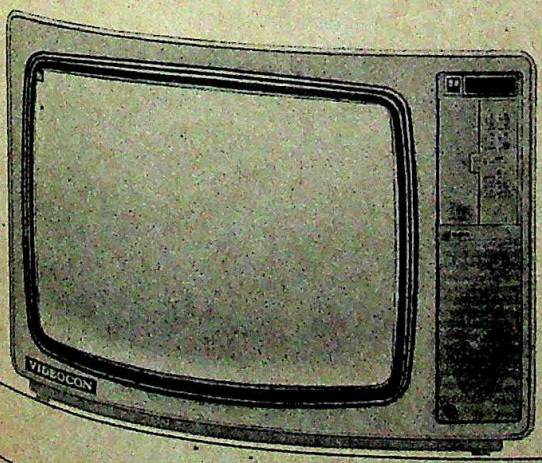

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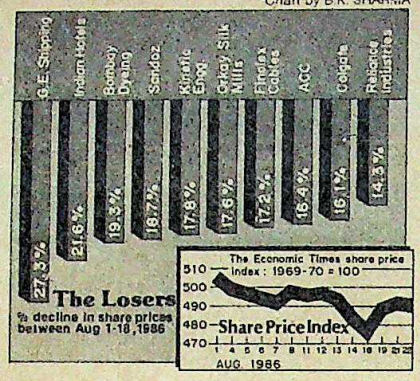
THE MARKETS

Bearing Down

RARELY have the bears been as firmly in control of the market as they are now, and rarely have the bulls been routed from the trading ring as completely as in recent weeks. Whether because of the Reliance controversy, the seeming lack of government control over national affairs or the several nagging questions on the economic front, there is little doubt that the market is now in a pessimistic mood. The Bombay stock-exchange Sensitive Index of Equity Prices dropped 10 points in one day last fortnight, and touched 529 (compared to a high of 635 a few months ago). And *The Economic Times* index fell through the 500-point barrier to as low as 491.6.

For good measure, investors have become very choosy regarding new share issues, and many will now not get the kind of enthusiastic response their promoters might have expected. Quite a few of the share issues recently floated were not fully subscribed, and the fate of some public sector bond issues due soon hangs in the balance.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



Nothing seemed able to cheer the market: not the momentary buying that the financial institutions resorted to, not the finance minister's new proposals on direct taxes, not the low charges for carrying business over to a subsequent settlement, not even the over-sold position of the market (which should normally have resulted in a corrective upswing and put sellers on guard). The market seems determinedly pessimistic, and leading companies in almost every kind of business have therefore suffered. The bears were even bold enough to launch attacks on the shares of some well-known multinational companies.

Indeed, the new word around the market is that the small investors' short-lived honeymoon with shares may now be over. Certainly, the phenomenon of shares of newly-floated companies hovering in stratospheric price ranges is now a thing of the past. Even several established companies closed the fortnight at prices well below the year's best prices, and dangerously close to the year's lowest quotations. Thus, Vulcan Laval closed at 52.50, compared to the year's high of 162.50, SPIC was at 59.50 (year's high: 184), Larsen & Toubro was down to 124.50 (year's high: 204), and Lohia Machines was struggling at 23 (year's high: 70).

Investor confidence in these circumstances was not bolstered by charges of insider trading in Orkay shares (which dipped dramatically around the time when the company announced its dividend), and by the statement made by TISCO's chairman that the company could not expect very good results this year without a hike in steel prices. Last year's boom phase now seems a distant and improbable happening.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1986 HIGH	1986 LOW	CLOSE 22.8.86	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	45.00	25.75	27.00	0.50 –
Asian Paints	280.00	130.00	202.50	20.00 –
Associated Cement	389.00	186.00	212.00	17.50 –
Atlas Copco	97.00	64.00	84.00	6.00 –
Avery India	146.00	100.00	135.00	nil
Bajaj Auto	3975.00	1950.00	3325.00	425.00 –
Baroda Rayon	490.00	260.00	270.00	25.00 –
Bata India	82.50	54.00	77.00	6.50 +
Bayer	680.00	445.00	580.00	20.00 –
Bharat Forge	86.00	48.00	76.00	1.00 –
Blue Star	110.00	75.00	82.50	5.00 –
Bombay Dyeing	123.00	77.00	91.00	11.00 -
Britania Ind.	150.25	85.00	141.00	5.00 –
Brooke Bond	96.75	56.00	72.50	11.50 +
Ceat Tyres	520.00	240.00	475.00	15.00 –
Century Spinning	1690.00	710.00	735.00	35.00 –
Chloride India	132.00	86.00	123.00	2.00 +
Colgate	350.00	200.00	300.00	16.00 –
DCM	58.50	32.62	37.00	1.50 –
Dunlop	74.50	49.75	64.25	5.75 –
Elecon	127.00	80.00	100.00	5.00 –
Escorts	117.00	69.00	93.00	3.00 –
Finolex Cables	97.00	36.00	84.50	1.50 –
Food Specialities	375.00	215.00	349.00	6.00 –
Garware Nylon	61.50	36.00	38.50	1.50 –
G.E. Shipping	36.00	13.00	16.00	0.50 –
Gujarat St. Fertilisers	182.00	92.50	151.00	1.00 –
Gwalior Rayon	88.00	59.00	76.00	3.00 +
Hind. Cocoa	170.00	97.50	157.50	nil
Hindustan Lever	184.00	124.00	173.00	3.00 –
Hindustan Motors	128.50	37.75	42.70	2.90 +
Hind. Dorr	660.00	330.00	350.00	25.00 –
IEL	84.50	61.50	65.25	1.75 +
Indian Hotels	157.00	90.00	100.00	25.00 –
Indian Organic	97.00	63.00	74.00	8.00 –
Indian Rayon	151.00	100.00	122.00	nil
Indrol	455.00	200.00	395.00	20.00 –
Ingersoll-Rand	505.00	250.00	277.50	17.50 –
ITC	76.50	53.00	65.25	0.75 +
J.K. Synthetics	132.00	90.00	112.00	3.50 –
Kinetic Engineering	385.00	220.00	315.00	35.00 –
KSB Pumps	495.00	205.00	235.00	45.00 –
Lakme	195.00	120.00	147.50	2.50 –
Larson & Toubro	204.00	111.00	124.50	1.50 –
Lipton	69.00	46.50	55.00	3.00 +
Lohia Machines	70.00	22.00	23.00	3.00 –
Madura Coats	92.00	51.00	55.00	2.00 +
Mahindra & Mahindra	86.00	47.50	60.00	2.00 –
Motor Industries	1000.00	605.00	857.00	17.50 –
National Organic	840.00	530.00	742.50	32.50 –
Nirlon	77.00	29.00	34.00	1.50 –
Orkay Silk Mills	192.00	111.00	149.00	16.00 +
Peico Electronics	104.50	48.00	58.00	5.50 +
Polychem	235.00	105.00	212.50	7.50 –
Ponds	390.00	200.00	347.50	22.50 –
Premier Auto	975.00	555.00	887.50	7.50 –
Ranbaxy	160.00	105.00	132.50	7.50 –
Raymond	97.00	72.00	78.00	nil
Reckitt & Colman	152.00	81.25	134.00	6.00 –
Reliance Industries	392.00	226.00	251.00	7.00 –
Shriram Fibres	88.00	40.00	45.00	2.50 +
Sandoz	135.00	62.00	104.00	8.00 –
SPIC	184.00	51.00	59.50	1.50 +
Tata Steel	1610.00	1090.00	1255.00	22.50 –
Telco	910.00	575.00	700.00	32.50 +
Vulcan Laval	162.50	52.50	52.50	7.50 –

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	7.7389	7.6606
Austria	Schilling	100	87.9079	87.1358
Bahrain	Dinar	1	33.3638	33.3180
Bangladesh	Taka	100	42.3383	42.8610
Canada	Dollar	1	9.0885	9.0166
Denmark	Kroner	1	1.6326	1.6189
Egypt	Pound	1	15.1210	15.0388
France	Franc	1	1.8850	1.8790
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	1.6196	1.6078
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	1.1099	1.0998
Iran	Rial	100	16.2480	16.1438
Italy	Lira	100	0.8730	0.8701
Japan	Yen	100	8.2538	8.1878
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7579	0.7406
Kuwait	Dinar	1	42.3987	42.3008
Malaysia	Dollar	1	4.8030	4.7661
Mauritius	Rupee	1	0.9430	0.9080
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.5998	0.5436
Netherlands	Guilder	1	5.4873	5.4431
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7338	0.7220
Singapore	Dollar	1	6.0556	5.8479
Spain	Peseta	1	0.0920	0.0901
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4221	0.4110
Sweden	Kroner	1	1.8377	1.8216
Switzerland	Franc	1	7.6823	7.6217
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.6998	0.6738
Thailand	Baht	100	47.9990	47.4038
UK	Pound	1	18.9178	18.7958
USA	Dollar	1	12.5950	12.5075
UAE	Dirham	1	3.3930	3.3740
USSR	Rouble	1	17.3660	17.3008
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	6.1804	6.1236

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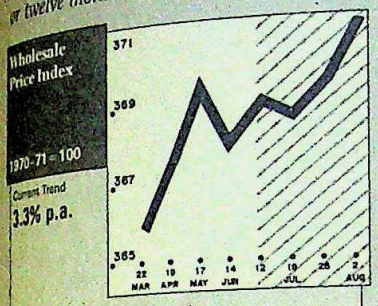
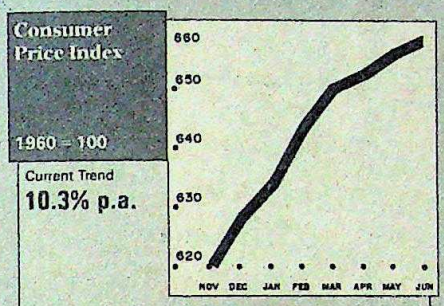
WHOLESALE prices are steady but consumers face double-digit inflation. Bank credit is expanding rapidly. The trade gap has narrowed as exports have picked up and imports have fallen. Foreign reserves are also up. The share market continues to be depressed and shows a steeply declining trend, while gold ruled steady before recording a spurt.

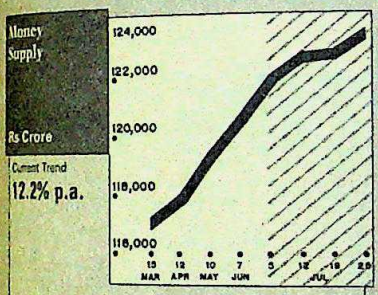
All data are seasonally adjusted. The current trends are computed on the basis of the last six or twelve months data to which a regression is fitted.



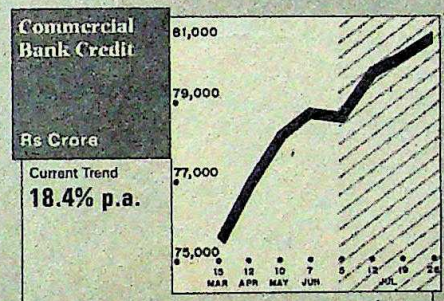
After discounting the normal seasonal price rise that occurs, the increase in prices is modest. But there was a sudden upswing in early August.



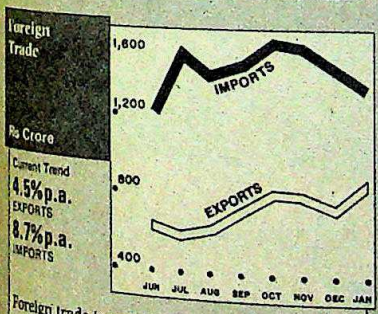
There is double-digit inflation in consumer prices, but the rising price curve has slightly levelled after March and might get better.



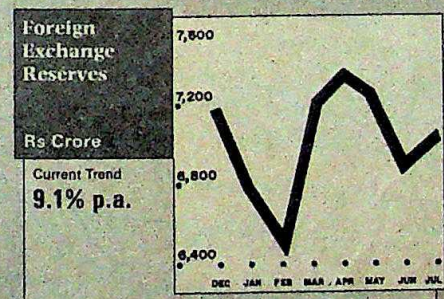
Money supply has maintained its steady growth, and the usual seasonal shrinking, with the onset of the monsoons has not taken place.



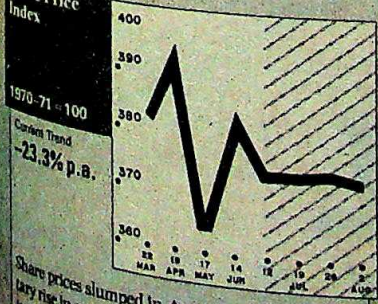
After holding steady through most of May and June, bank credit too expanded rapidly in July—climbing by 2.5 per cent in just three weeks.



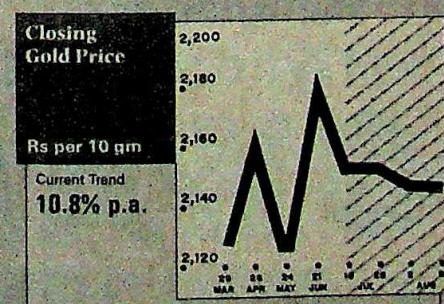
Foreign trade is now less imbalanced—exports picked up in January while imports dropped for the second successive month.



The slide in reserves since May has been somewhat checked as they rose by 2 per cent in July but on a long-term trend they are growing slower.



Share prices slumped in August after a momentary rise in end-July, causing only a slight step up in the negative trend seen throughout July.



After a spurt in June, gold prices were steady in the latter half of July and early August, but in subsequent weeks picked up momentum.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of Items in July, 1986

	% Growth
Ceramic Tiles	21.79
Onions	14.94
Pesticides and Insecticides	9.15
PVC Compounds	7.42
Hides Raw	6.82
Groundnut Seeds	6.51
Atta	5.43
Linseed	5.35
Oranges	4.51
Coir Yarn	4.39
Groundnut Oil	4.39
Fish	3.93
Cashew-Nuts	3.91
Zinc	3.39
Copra	2.28
Machine Tools	2.16
Groundnut Oilcake	1.96
Tin Containers	1.84
Tobacco Raw	1.8
Rape and Mustard Seed	1.52
Jower	1.41
Ghee	1.38
Watches and Clocks	1.17
Cars	1.17
Sugar	1.08
Mining Machinery	1.01
Caustic Soda	.92
Bolts and Nuts	.91
Silk Raw	.9
Dyeing Materials	.88
Meat	.87
Bananas	.78
Industrial Instruments	.75
Boilers	.73
Coir Fibre	.73
Cotton Yarn	.71
Pipes and Tubes	.69
Limestone	.63
Woollen Cloth and Woollen Khadi	.58
Buses	.57
Tractors	.53
Power-Driven Pumps	.5
Sugarcane	.5
Rice	.49
Tobacco & other Tobacco Products	.47
Dry Cells	.46

Of the 139 series considered, 74 of them with a total weight of 46.948 had a positive growth and 65 of them with a total weight of 39.878 had a negative growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1986	1985
Coal		
Thousand Tonnes, July	11537	10797
Saleable Steel		
Thousand Tonnes, July	600.4	656.0
Cement		
Thousand Tonnes, July	2700	2718
Fertiliser		
Thousand Tonnes, July	541.4	451.1
Thermal Plant Factor		
Percent, July	47.4	46.9

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The company which generates wealth from waste should do wonders for your investment too.

HIGHLIGHTS

- A Rs. 51 crore project promoted by OSWAL AGRO MILLS LTD — whose shares have shown phenomenal appreciation.
- **A UNIQUE PROJECT** to manufacture high value added products from rice husk — an agricultural waste.
- **WORLD'S LATEST TECHNOLOGY**
  - — Rice Processing Plant from BUHLER MIAG, WEST GERMANY.
  - — Furfural Plant from SOCIETA ITALIANA FURFUROLO S.p.A., ITALY.
  - — Power Generation Plant from STANDARDKESSEL GESSELSCHAFT LENTJES-FASEL GmbH, WEST GERMANY.
  - — Edible Rice Bran Oil Plant based on latest technology from EX-TECHNIK, WEST GERMANY.
  - — Full performance guarantees from STANDARDKESSEL who are supplying the complete plant on turnkey basis.
- **COMPLETE MARKET TIE UP**
  - — High purity furfural to be fully exported to West Germany (tied up for five years with WILHELM MEINSHAUSEN GmbH of WEST GERMANY).
  - — Edible rice bran oil for domestic market/(import substitute). Will be exported if permitted by the Government.
  - — De-oiled bran cake to be exported to UK and Europe (sales tied up for 5 years with WILHELM MEINSHAUSEN GmbH of WEST GERMANY).
  - — White Rice to Food Corporation of India and State Agencies. Will be exported if permitted by the Government.
  - — Rice Husk Ash to be exported to West Europe.
  - — Sufficient power generation for captive consumption and surplus to be sold to State Electricity Board.
- **HIGH PROFITABILITY**
  - — No customs duty on imported equipment due to 100% export status.
  - — Access to highly sophisticated closely guarded furfural technology not available to any other Indian company.
  - — Virtually free raw material in abundant supply.
  - — Very low working capital requirements.
  - — Tax concessions on account of backward area location.
  - — Self-sufficiency in power ensures no production hold-ups.
- **80 CC AND WEALTH TAX BENEFITS**
- **EASY LIQUIDITY**
  - — Listing on Bombay, Ahmedabad, Delhi, Calcutta, Madras and Ludhiana Stock Exchanges.

Promoted by
Oswal Agro Mills Ltd.

OSWAL AGRO FURANE

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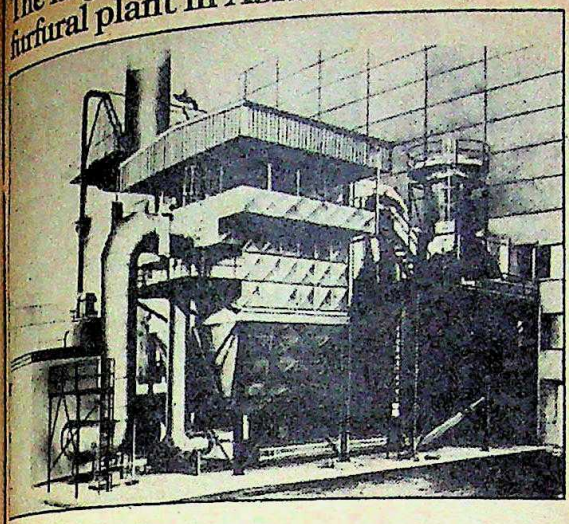
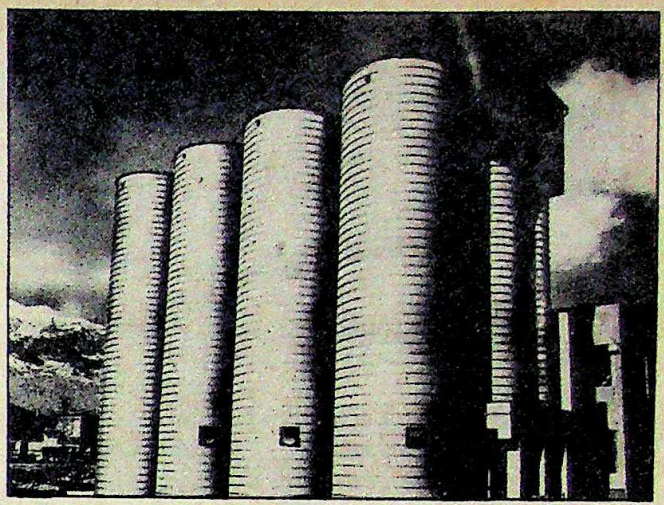
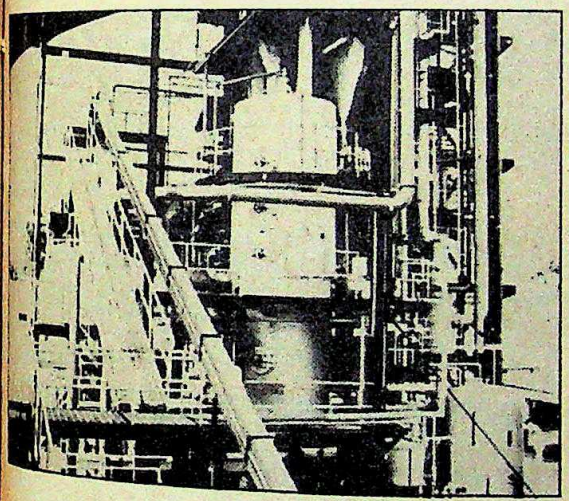
The largest 100% export oriented furfural plant in Asia.



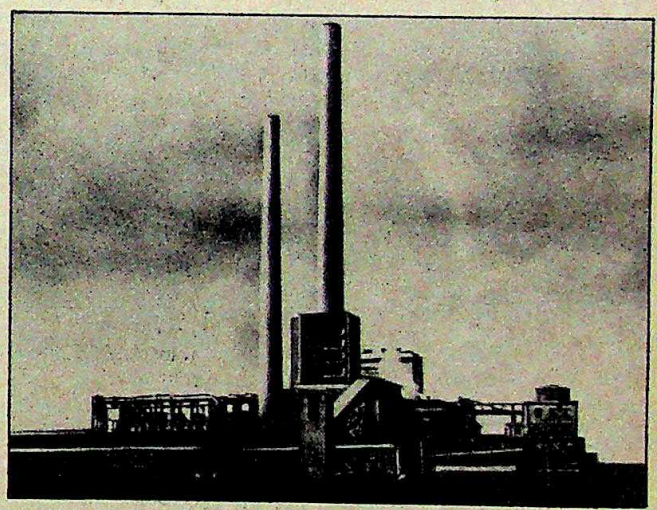
The largest rice processing plant in the world.



The largest edible rice bran oil plant in the country.



The only power plant in the country based on rice husk, a non conventional energy source.



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PRESSMAN

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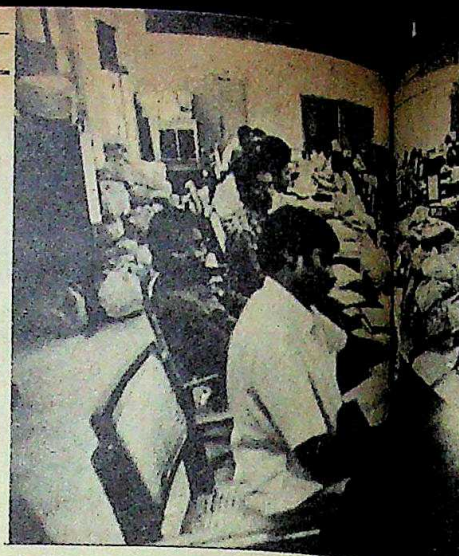
BHOPAL

The New Nightmare

JUSTICE P.D. Muley, who was appointed commissioner under a special Central statute about a year ago to oversee the welfare and decide the claims of the gas victims of the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, recently excoriated the Government in an interview with INDIA TODAY. "So far I have been given neither staff, nor funds or office, and no facilities to start work," said the judge of the Madhya Pradesh High Court bench. "I am yet to start functioning and I have not received any communication from the Government apart from the order appointing me as the commissioner." His plight sums up the delays, confusion, and lethargy which have become the hallmark of the Government in its attitude towards the worst industrial disaster ever occur in this century. Principal Correspondent N.K. SINGH reports:

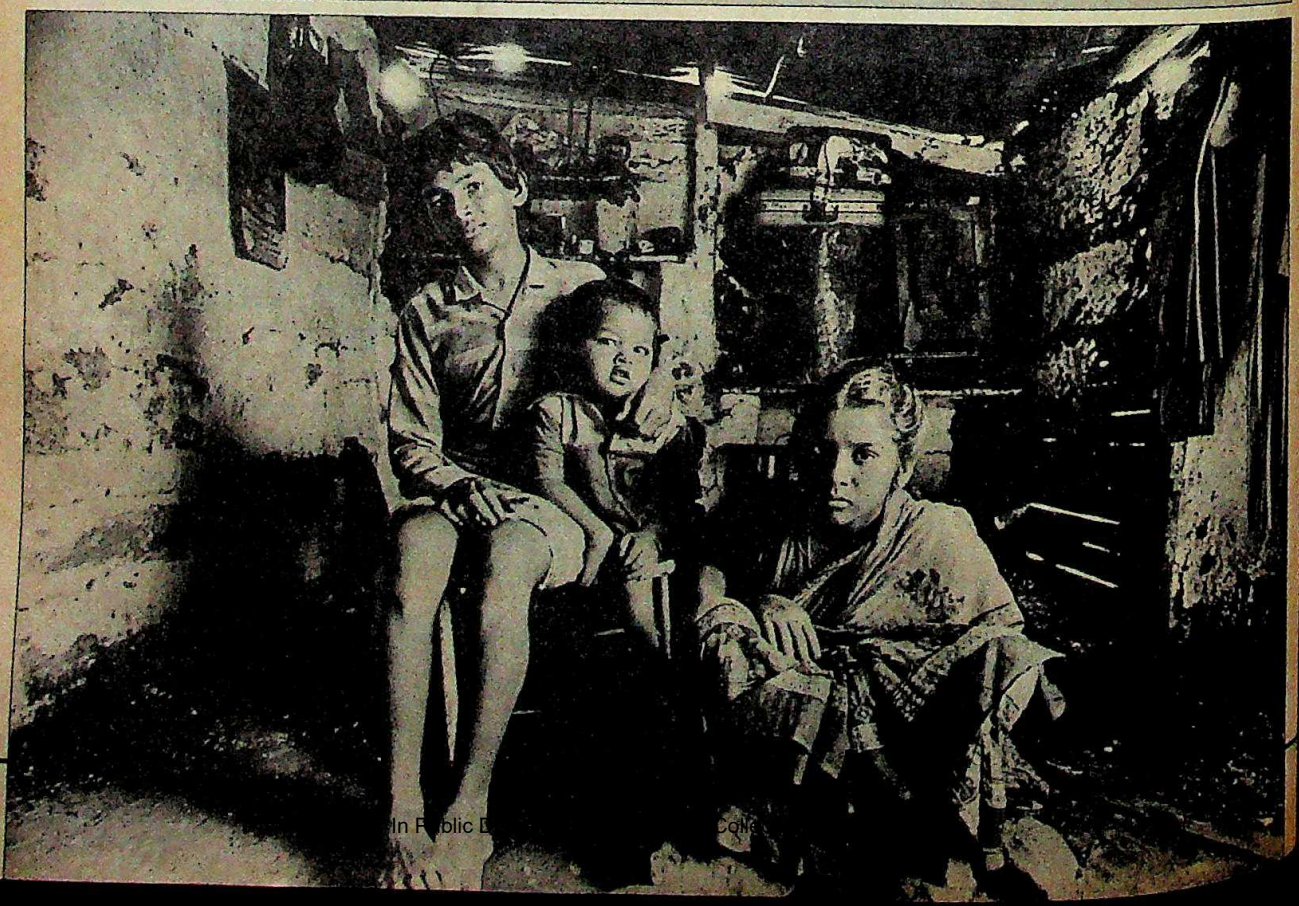


Gas victims' claim office in Bhopal: confusion confounded

THE BIGGEST law suit in the world may also become the biggest legal mess in the world. After 20 months of legal wrangling, and with $20 billion worth of compensation claim cases finally consolidated in the Bhopal district court, nothing, it appears, is moving forward in the complicated legal battle between the Government of India, representing the victims, and the corporate giant Union Carbide Corporation (UCC).

True, the dimension of the case is mind-boggling: more than five lakh damage claims for deaths, injuries and losses, another five lakh in claims for personal injuries, and thousands more for losses of livestock and businesses. The claim forms alone occupy 3,000 feet of space in the Directorate of Gas Claims (DGC) set up by the Madhya Pradesh Government. The logistics of the case should have galvanized the Government into speedy action. But just the opposite appears to be the case. Nobody has the faintest idea about how much time the case will take. Said Babulal Gaur, local MLA and a practising lawyer: "It may take up to five years in the district court provided 50 district and additional judges are appointed for this purpose." But if the experience of Justice Muley is any indication this appears to be a pipe-dream. "Government efforts in this direction," said Liyaqat Khan, an activist

Sunil, 16, lost his parents in the tragedy and was left to care for his little brother and sister. Earlier this year, the Government had him appear in a US court as an example of a gas victim. He has received no compensation so far.



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Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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of the Citizens Relief and Rehabilitation Committee fighting for the cause of gas victims, "suffer from ad hocism and lack of imagination." The DGC set up by an executive order last year has not been able to even scrutinise all the compensation forms the people had filled up last year. The director of DGC J.A. Khare, confessed that during the last 11 months the department had processed only 40 per cent of the forms. "I hope the work will be over within the next three months," he told INDIA TODAY. But insiders say that, at the rate things are going, a year might be a better guess. Earlier this year, reports appeared in local newspapers that hundreds of claim forms in the directorate were torn because there were no file covers for them. The directorate did not have powers to make purchases worth more than Rs 50,000 and a proposal sent to the state secretariat for the purchase of files gathered dust for months.

Such is the state of confusion in official circles that the citizens of Bhopal—all 5,17,992 of them—are being asked to file fresh compensation forms—for the third time in the last one and a half years. During the second such exercise, the state Government had established 113 camps in the gas-affected areas where citizens could file application forms "because the earlier forms did not have proper documentation". But even these revised forms, says Justice Muley, have not been filled out properly. So the process starts all over again this fortnight, along with a new and ambitious "medical documentation programme" launched by the Madhya Pradesh Government.

All the five lakh plus claimants who have sued for "personal injury" are being advised to undergo complicated medical tests to find out the extent of damage they have suffered because, according to official sources, "that will form the basis of compensation to each individual". When

CRIMINAL CASE

Jigsaw Puzzle

THE PROSPECT of millions of dollars of compensation money from Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) has overshadowed the once burning issue of the criminal liability of individual officials—those responsible for the catastrophe. Soon after the disaster, the Madhya Pradesh Government had registered, with much fanfare and publicity, criminal cases against several Union Carbide officials and arrested eight of them including the UCC Chief Warren Anderson, noted Indian industrialist and Union Carbide of India Ltd (UCIL) Chairman Keshub Mahindra, UCIL's Managing Director V.P. Gokhale and Bhopal Plant Works Manager J. Mukund.

Photographs by RAKESH JAIMINI

(clockwise from top left): Anderson, Mahindra, Gokhale and Mukund

Although the boss of the powerful transnational corporation was bailed out and flown to New Delhi by a state aircraft within six hours, the charges against the Union Carbide officials made impressive reading. They ranged from Section 304 IPC (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) to Section 120B IPC (criminal conspiracy) and Section 304A IPC (causing death by negligence). If found guilty, these men can be punished with life imprisonment.

The then chief minister of Madhya Pradesh Arjun Singh had thundered: "This Government cannot remain a helpless spectator to the tragedy and knows its duty towards thousands of innocent citizens, whose lives have been so rudely and traumatically affected by cruel and wanton negligence on the part of the management of Union Carbide. The power of the state is committed to fight for its citizens rights."

But once the powerful corporate managers were bailed out, matters came to a grinding halt. The Hanumanganj police station in Bhopal, which had registered case No. 1104/84 against the officials, says that the case was transferred to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Although 20 months have passed, the CBI is yet to frame charges against Anderson and other Union Carbide officials. The families of gas victims are fast losing hope of seeing the guilty brought to book. No one knows when or whether the trial will ever start. Said CBI Deputy Superintendent of Police B.K. Shukla: "We are still investigating the case. It (the case) appears to be a jigsaw puzzle and no one can say how much time it will take."

In sharp contrast to this, the Government has acted with extraordinary swiftness in the cases instituted against activists fighting for the cause of the victims of the gas leak. The Bhopal police had earlier registered two cases against them, one for "attempt to murder" and another for "rioting and causing hurt", following scuffles between the police and the rallies brought out by the action groups. Now charges have been framed and challans instituted in the courts. Among those accused are the noted social worker Anil Sadgopal, painter and Bharat Bhavan trustee J. Swaminathan and renowned theatre personality B.V. Karanth, who had gone to demonstrate in front of "killer Carbide".

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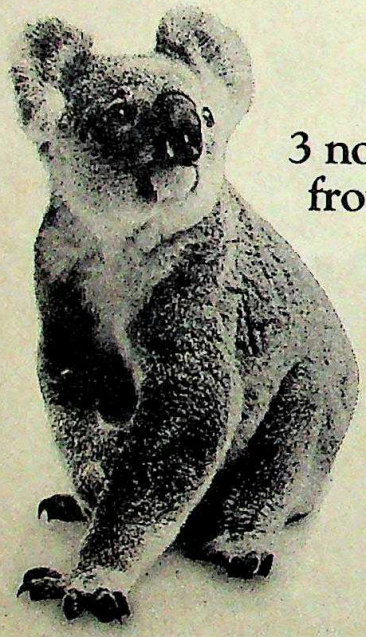

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asked what utility such tests would have 21 months after the disaster, Dr N.P. Misra, dean of the local medical college said: "It is true that if someone recovered subsequently we would not be able to tell what was there at the time of disaster, but we should be able to project it with the help of past records." According to Relief Commissioner S.L. Satyam, who brings a rare zeal to his work, it will take nine to 12 months to complete the job.

Embroiled in a legal and administrative muddle which they can neither understand nor contest, the hapless victims, a majority of them the poorest of poor, continue to wait for the compensation. They need some sort of interim relief and they need it fast. The MIC aftereffects have crippled an estimated 10,000 persons in the town. Most of the victims are daily wage-earners who, if

UNION CARBIDE

Red Herrings

LAST fortnight, CBI sleuths were back at the Union Carbide of India Ltd (UCIL) plant to investigate the multinational corporation's charge that the Bhopal disaster was an act of sabotage by a man with a grudge against his employers. So far the inquiry has drawn a blank. "Sabotage simply does not look plausible," Deputy Superintendent of Police B.K. Shukla told INDIA TODAY. Nevertheless, the CBI team has been combing the records in order to determine whether the disgruntled saboteur-employee, so far identified as Mr X by the company did, indeed, have anything to do with the disaster.

According to the company's theory, this unidentified employee sneaked into the well-guarded plant without management authorisation, rigged up a water hose to the methyl isocyanate (MIC) storage tank and quietly injected a large amount of water into the highly volatile and toxic chemical on the night of December 2, 1984, triggering off the disaster. All this in the name of revenge, following a demotion and a row with a supervisor.

UCC's accusations against Mr X surfaced last fortnight in the *World Petrochemicals Analysis;* Editor Hilfra Tandy was flown into India by the corporation for an exclusive interview on the subject with company executives. UCC spokesman Harvey Cobert refused to identify the culprit but said their lawyers would name and question him when the case comes up before the Bhopal district court.

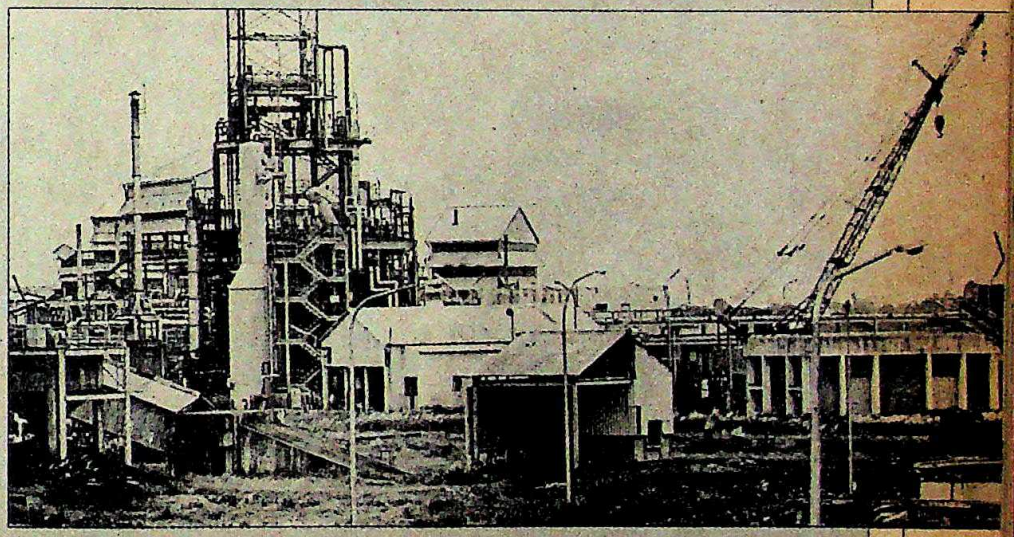
The legal implications of the UCC claims, if found true, could be stunning. Lawyers said it could not only dilute the company's responsibility but also absolve it of criminal liability. But official sources said this was a psychological tactic aimed at shaking the confidence of Indian officials, who had ruled out the sabotage theory earlier. "Publicity about the sabotage claims is also aimed at lowering expectation in India about the size of claims by implying that the Government bungled or covered up its investigation of the disaster," contended Bhopal advocate S.C. Godha, a former associate of lawyer John P. Coale who had filed compensation suits in the US on behalf of thousands of gas victims. But Michael Ciresi, a lawyer representing the Indian Government in the US says that notwithstanding proof of sabotage, UCC would still be liable for its failure to design an adequate safety system to prevent the catastrophe. And while the Indian Government has hinted that UCC has committed an obstruction of justice by witholding from it information about the alleged sabotage, American attorneys were quoted by newspapers saying that such limited disclosures were commonly used in legal infighting.

The pesticide plant's former employees at Bhopal pooh-poohed the charges and said the company's new "explanation" appeared to be one more attempt to shift the blame away from itself. UCIL Employees Union General Secretary R.K. Yadav described it as a ploy to divert attention. He said that the union had investigated the allegation and found that "no one was demoted a week before the incident and in fact no such person exists".

Scientists agree that water came into contact, whether deliberately or not, with MIC stored in the tank. The Vardarajan Committee, appointed by the Union Government to make a scientific inquiry into the leak, had offered an easy explanation: "During the cleaning of choked filters with water in the relief valve vent header, on the night of December 2, 1984, such water, perhaps mixed with alkali from vent gas scrubber accumulator, could have entered the non-pressurised tank and may have carried some metallic contaminants from the carbon steel portions of header pipelines." And that led to the disaster.

Various inquiries have established that Bhopal was a disaster waiting to happen. The investigations have indicated that it was the defective design of the plant, the failure to provide adequate safety measures and reckless cost-cutting which led to vital safety systems being switched off. But it appears that UCC has decided that the best defence is offence and is likely to put up a hard fight before it agrees to pay out any compensation.

—N.K. SINGH



Closed Carbide plant: sabotage theory

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they don't work today, cannot hope to get any food tomorrow. With their earning capacity having gone down considerably due to MIC after-effects—they find physical labour impossible—they are on the verge of starvation. Life has become, for some of them, worse than death.

Compensation, if it comes, would mean little to Ranu, who was one and a half months old when the pesticide plant orphaned her, or 8-year-old Suresh whose father, mother and two younger brothers perished in the leak, or young Ganga, who is simply unable to tell where her parents lived, or Salim, 12, who does not know what happened to his parents, or Ashok Kumar, 14, whose parents died in the disaster and he himself sustained irreparable damage to his lungs or Rajesh, who had landed in Bhopal by a quirk of fate just before the tragedy. Can any amount of compensation make life the same for these children in the orphanage?

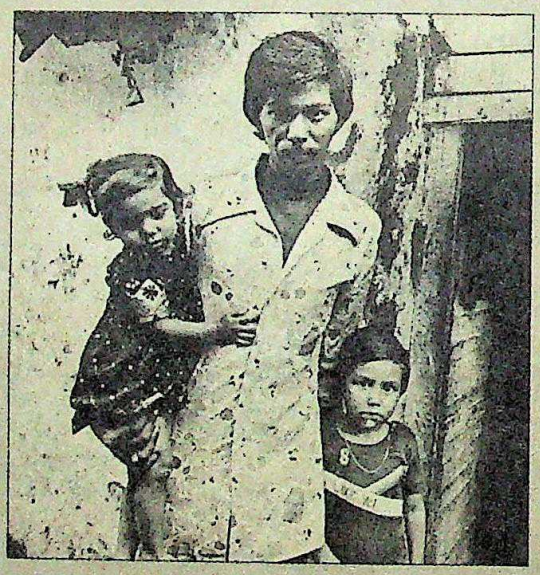
COMPENSATION

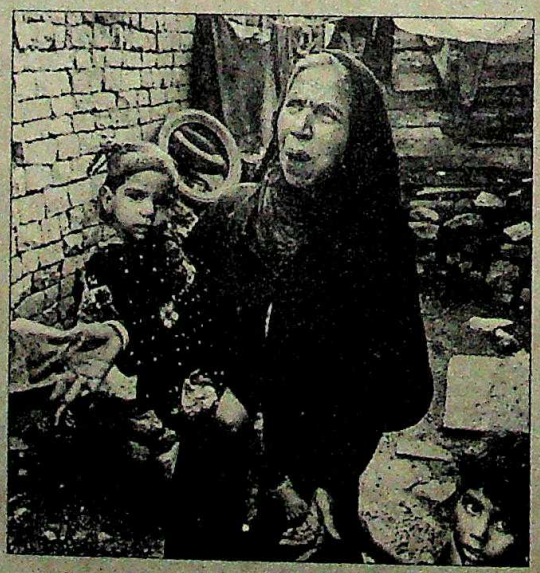
Fraud Claims

THE PEOPLE of Kasaipura, a slum in old Bhopal, could not believe their eyes. The young, lanky man walking furtively in the dingy lanes of their locality was none other than Abdul Rehman, 29, who was believed to have perished in the great Bhopal tragedy 20 months ago. His parents, brothers and wife had, in fact, identified him from one of the official photographs of unclaimed bodies of gas victims and collected the ex-gratia relief of Rs 10,000 announced by the Madhya Pradesh Government. In the computerised list of gas victims, his name figured at serial No. 557 and his family members sued Union Carbide for damages through the Government of India.

Whispers from Kasaipura soon reached the ears of the city police crime branch and, last fortnight, Bhopal CID nabbed Rehman and charged him and his family members with fraud under Section 420 IPC. "The plot went much deeper. We are investigating how he procured a death certificate and the local municipal corporation approved payment of compensation," said A.R. Pawar, the SP of Bhopal. After he was bailed out of prison, Rehman said that he had fled to Bombay the night of the disaster because of a tiff with his wife. "I worked as a baker there and made no contact with my family," he claimed. He returned to Bhopal, he said, because, "I wanted to meet my two children, Javed and Farzana". His family members, who live in abject poverty in subhuman conditions, also denied the charge of conspiracy. "We had reported him missing and we were given money by the Government," said his mother, Noor Bai. But police allege that although Rehman had returned to Bhopal about a month ago he never tried to contact them.

Abdul Rehman and (below) Noor Bai: using a tragedy





Rehman's is not the first case of its kind in Bhopal where those out to make a fast buck have tried to milk the tragedy to their advantage. There was the case of Neelam Bai, 40, who claimed that her husband and two relatives died in the leak, "identified" the photographs of their bodies and blamed the heartless authorities for not providing her with any relief. Taken in by her story, BBC's TV crew and Granada TV of Britain filmed her, scores of journalists wrote about her plight and Chief Minister Motilal Vora ordered a top-level inquiry, until one day her husband turned up to claim her. It appeared that she had left her husband and had tried to use the disaster to her advantage.

Police believe that there existed a well-organised racket, involving among others, some politicians, behind preparations of false death certificates for getting approvals for ex-gratia relief from the area municipal corporators. Official figures reveal that so far 685 persons have tried to include their relatives' names in the death-list but their claims have been found to be false after inquiry.

It is not only the poor who were tempted by the lure of easy money flowing in the city following the world's biggest industrial disaster. Several well-to-do persons also obtained the subsistence grant of Rs 1,500 which the state Government had announced for each gas-affected family with an income of less than Rs 500 per month. Moreover, many top government officials and rich traders were among those who drew the free rations announced for slum dwellers after the disaster.

—N.K. SINGH

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Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR

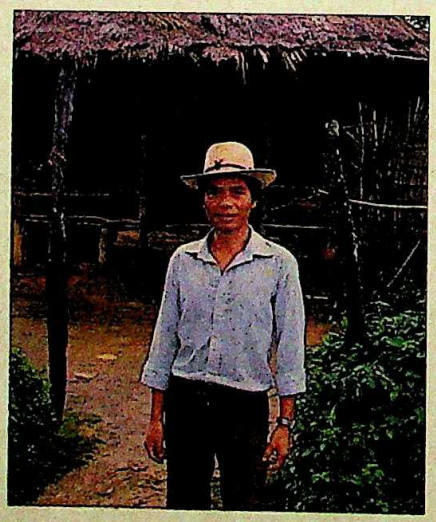
THE NORTH-EAST

Search of the Lost Tribe

The Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth to another, and there thou shall serve other gods which neither thou nor thy forefathers have known, even wood and stones.

Deuteronomy

THAT ancient biblical curse is being visited upon the unlikeliest of people—some 4,300 tribals in the remote North-east who have fiercely embraced Judaism in the belief that they are descendants of one of the 10 legendary lost tribes of ancient Israel. Scattered across the states of Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland, the Jews of the North-east have discarded their traditional tribal customs to rebuild their lives along the Mosaic and other Halachic precepts, carving out a lonely and isolated niche among hostile non-believers. "The Old Testament verse in Deuteronomy has come true for us," says Vaniah Benjamin, once a prosperous automobile dealer in Imphal and now reduced to driving a taxi for a living. But for the North-eastern Jews, such deprivation and suffering are shrugged aside as their divine destiny—till the day they finally return to the Holy Land, Israel.



Jews at prayer in Imphal Synagogue; and (left) Gideon Rey

More remarkable is the fact that the number of converts to Judaism is steadily growing. Between March and July this year, 93 tribals in the region had voluntarily become Jews—at no small personal sacrifice. Conversion entails giving up the eating of pork (the traditional tribal delicacy in the North-east) and the eating of any flesh without ritual purification (kosher), abandoning their old promiscuous ways to practise the teachings of the holy Torah, and for the men, undergoing the painful process of circumcision. In the process, they have also antagonised their Hindu and Christian fellow-tribals. But the separate, unique identity they strive to maintain has only added to the allure of Judaism among the tribals.

Fuelling the Jewish upsurge in the area is the powerful conviction that all the two million-odd Chin-kuki tribals living in Burma, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and parts of the Chittagong hill tracts are descendants of one of the 10 lost tribes of Israel. The basis of this "rediscovery" lies in the traditional Chin-kuki belief that they are descendants of a common pro-

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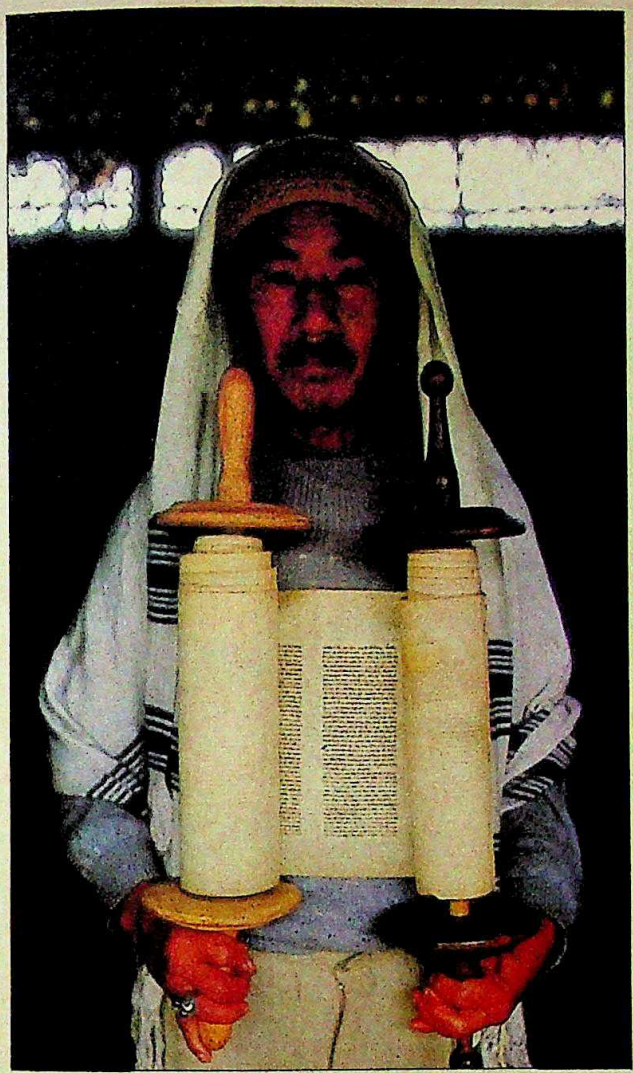

A copy of the religious Torah brought from Israel

monitor—called Manmasi or Menashi. Says Gideon Rey, a leader of the North-eastern Jewish community: "We realised that the ancestor our tribal priests would refer to was none other than Manasse, the son of Joseph, who belonged to one of the 10 lost tribes of Israel."

According to Jewish belief, the Jewish tribes were scattered all over West Asia after the Assyrian victory in 721 B.C., eventually integrating with the customs and religious leanings of their captors. The only Jews who retained their customs and genealogical purity in the diaspora were the descendants of the two tribes of the Kingdom of Judah: they ultimately returned to Palestine to create modern Israel. The other 10 tribes were "lost" in the demographic and martial upheavals of history.

But whether one of the tribes had found its way to the North-eastern reaches of India is open to lively debate. For centuries, the present converts—no different from the rest of the inhabitants in the area in their physical characteristics—have tramped the traditional tribal path, many of them being shepherded into the Christian fold by missionaries. In the mid-'50s, according to Nehsaul Ben Menasse, the rabbi of Imphal, the "miraculous reawakening" occurred in the Kuki-dominated town of Churachandpur in south-west Manipur when a group of tribals was "inspired" to study and preach Judaism. The movement revived in the mid-'70s and has been gaining momentum ever since.

Now, having "rediscovered" their roots, the North-eastern Jews have their sights set on an ambitious goal—migration to Israel. "How can we be happy living away from our eternal home?" asks Moshe Isaac, the Jewish community's president and a baker by profession. That yearning is fuelled not so much by faith as by the persecution new converts face from their Christian neighbours, mainly eviction from the community. "All of us fear that we will be forcibly evicted one day, if not by religious wrath then by government policy," says Benjamin.

But getting to Israel will be like the biblical crossing of the Red Sea. In 1983, when North-eastern Indian Jews' request to their Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin for recognition and assistance in returning "home" evoked little response. Four Kukis were allowed into Israel to authenticate their claims and receive formal instructions in the Torah and other religious texts. But since then, the Jewish Agency has refused to issue any more visas for Israel, obviously because of serious doubts regarding their claims.

Fuelling the Jewish upsurge in the area is the powerful conviction that all the two million-odd Chin-kuki tribals living in Burma, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and parts of the Chittagong hill tracts are descendants of one of the 10 lost tribes of Israel.

Consequently, these people are currently engaged in frantically trying to prove their Israeli ancestry. Says Rey: "Years of wandering and the influence of alien religions have smothered our Jewishness, but much still remains to show we are the tribe of Menasse." This is mainly contained in vague references to Jewish history in ancient tribal songs like the one which supposedly refers to the crossing of the Red Sea and translates:

We observed the Sipkui feast, crossing over the Red Sea running dry before us
And the walking enemies of mine, the riding foes of mine, were swallowed by the sea in the thousands
At night we led by fire and by cloud in the day.

Another tribal song declares

Manmasi, you came crossing seas and rivers, you came through hills and mountains
You came through all this to the land of strangers.

This journey, the tribals believe, began in 721 B.C. The Menasse tribe settled in different parts of Medo-Persia till religious persecution drove them eastwards to Afghanistan and finally to China by about 100 A.D. Rabbinical authority has accepted the trail till China but not the Chin-kuki claims to subsequent migration. The tribals, however, believe that between 600 and 700 A.D., their religion came into conflict with the state religions of China, Taoism and Buddhism and they were driven into Vietnam, eventually arriving at Aupatuang in Burma via Indochina around 1,300 A.D. and then spilling over into the North-east in India.

Argues Manipur Government Tourism Director L.S. Thangjom, a prominent member of the state's Jewish community: "If there can be black Jews (Falashas) in Ethiopia and Mongoloid Jews (Kai Feng Fu) in China, what is so surprising about our Jewish ancestry?" But that is an argument that can only be resolved by the orthodox Rabbinate in Israel. Till then, the Jews of the North-east seem content with the inner conviction that one day they will receive the call to return to Zion.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE in the North-east

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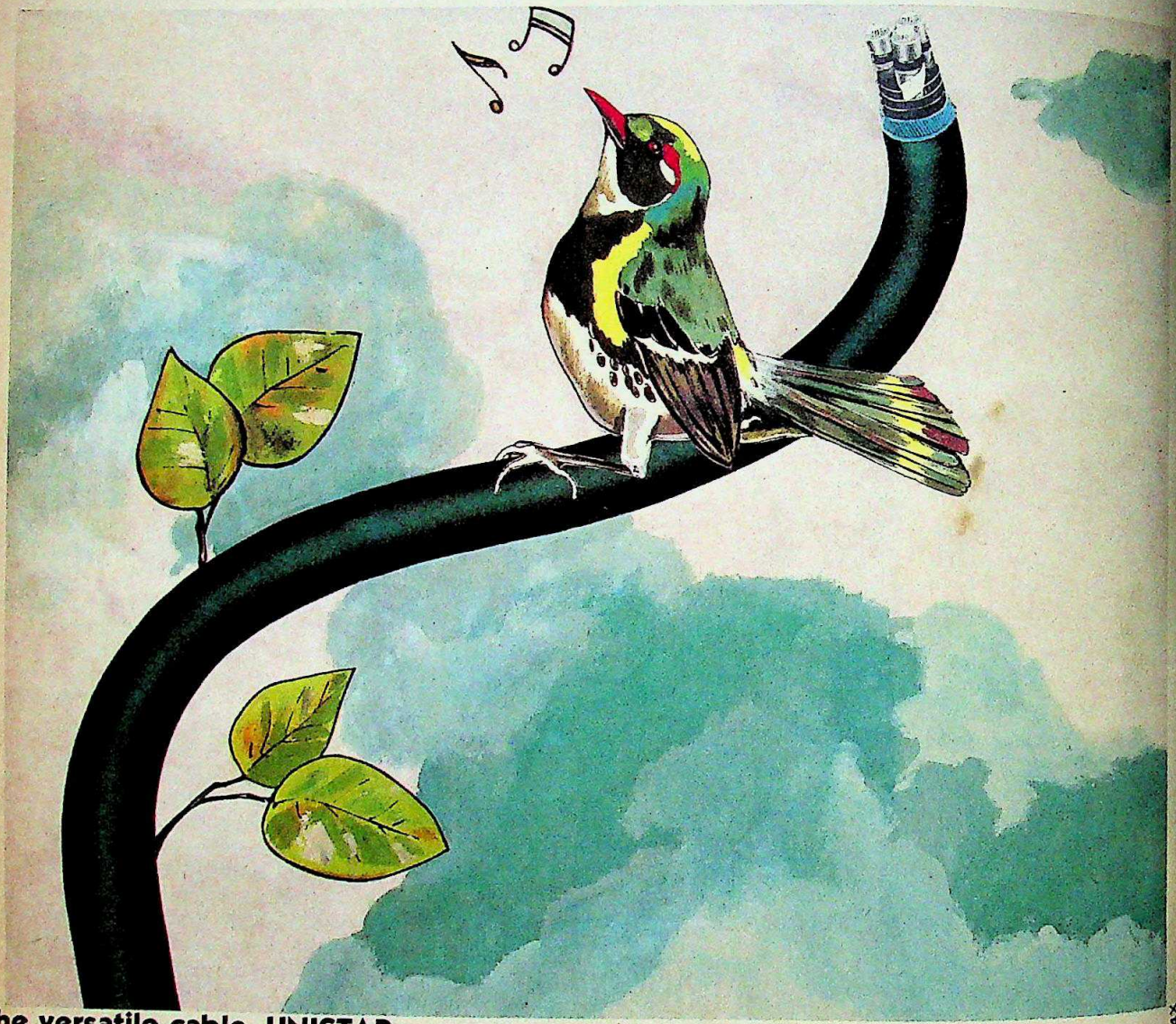

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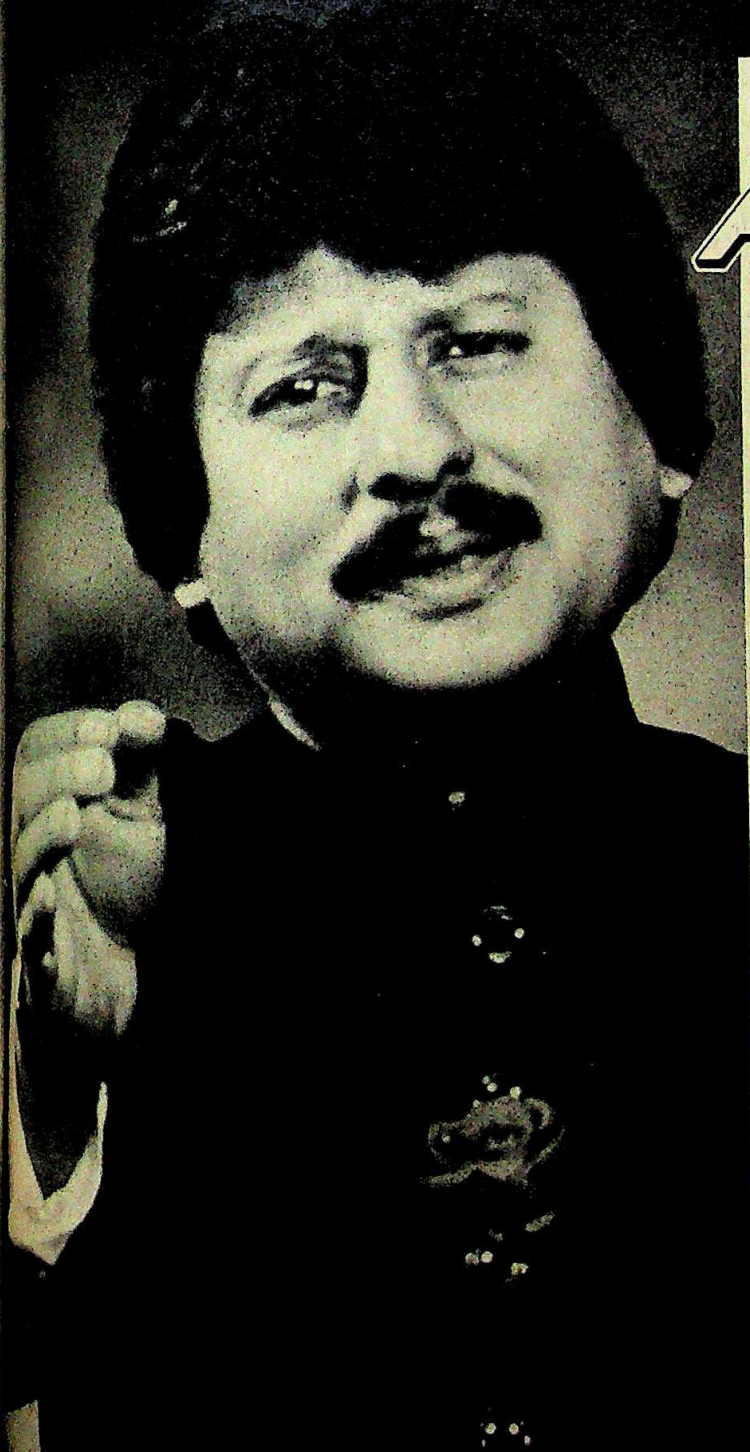

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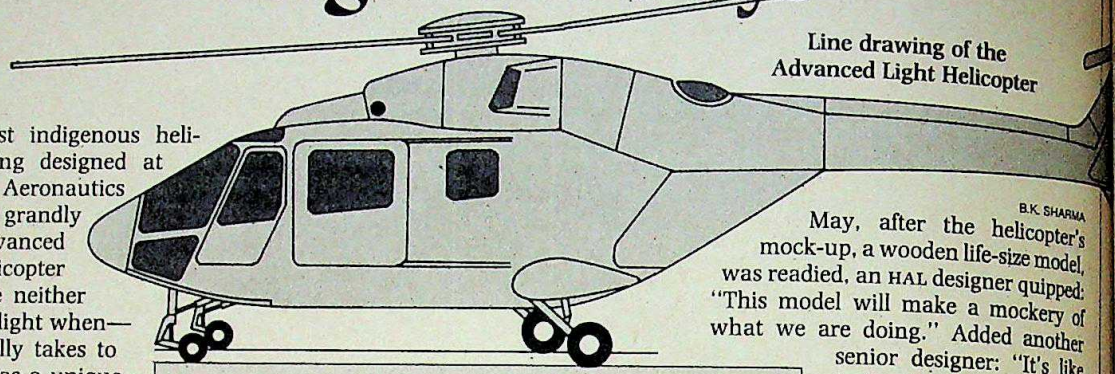

Line drawing of the Advanced Light Helicopter

B.K. SHARMA

INDIA'S first indigenous helicopter, being designed at Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) and grandly named the Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH), may be neither advanced nor light when—and if—it finally takes to the air. Billed as a unique helicopter for "hot (up to 44 degrees centigrade) and high (6 km) performances", the ALH project has, since it was first mooted in 1969, been dogged by unseemly controversies and inexplicable delays that have turned the entire and expensive exercise into a mockery of indigenous defence planning and production.

For nearly a decade, the helicopter was supposed to have a single engine. Then, in 1979, when the design was more or less complete, the ALH became a twin-engined affair because the Indian Air Force (IAF) had changed its mind two years earlier. And, another five years later, the French collaboration was replaced with a German one. So in 1984, work began from scratch on what had been planned as a multi-purpose workhorse helicopter "for the eighties". In the intervening period of uncertainty, a large number of design engineers left HAL in disgust.

Ever since, the Rs 100-crore project has been mired in a seemingly endless series of disputes over technical specifications, disputes with the collaborators, and sharp divisions within HAL itself. Planned as a high-tech replacement for the Cheetah and Chetak helicopters in service with the IAF, with different versions for the navy, the army and civilian use, the ALH was supposed to be unique because of its two very special features: its light weight and its ability to survive crashes (or crashworthiness). But now, both the special features may be missing from the final product, due to start production only after the 1980s are long gone, in 1991.

Investigations by INDIA TODAY reveal that the chopper's crashworthiness—the feature which had endeared the craft to planners and pilots alike—has been slashed from the initially quoted 95 per cent to less than 50 per cent. Its load carrying capacity has also been lowered by almost 100 kg, about 6 per cent. Last May, after the helicopter's mock-up, a wooden life-size model, was readied, an HAL designer quipped: "This model will make a mockery of what we are doing." Added another senior designer: "It's like trying to make a car and ending up with a motorcycle." Sources in HAL's helicopter design bureau conceded that even after the ALH goes into production, India may still need to import helicopters to meet its defence needs of the 1990s. Already, an undisclosed number of additional Soviet helicopters has been ordered to make up for the protracted delay in the ALH project.

The Government had decided to go in for the collaboration with Messerschmitt - Bolkow - Blohm (MBB) GmbH of West Germany after five years of haggling and innumerable negotiating forays abroad by HAL officers. The MBB was to be paid a fee of 89.7 million DM (roughly Rs 53 crore), in 13 six-monthly schedules, called "milestones". But ever since work started on the first milestone (the preliminary design phase) in November 1984, there has been much disagreement between HAL and MBB officials over the design.

These differences have now reduced the occasional meetings between the designers of the two partners into shouting matches, and vertically split HAL's staff on the utility of the changes. While a large section of the HAL team accuses MBB of "diluting" the contract it signed, HAL's top-rung officials feel there is no real problem. Said the Managing Director of HAL's Design and Development Complex, K. Balaraman: "It is nonsensi-

THE ALH PROJECT HISTORY

1969—A high-level committee headed by former defence minister C. Subramanium recommends that India should go in for an Armed Light Helicopter.

1971—India enters into a ten-year agreement with Aerospatiale of France for the designing of a single-engined ALH. The first prototype is scheduled to fly in 1982. Armed Light Helicopter project renamed Advanced Light Helicopter.

1977—Indian Air Force changes its Air Staff Requirement to a twin-engined configuration and recommends that the ALH project be suitably modified.

1979—The IAF proposal is sanctioned and HAL starts search for another collaborator. Cost of development on the project has escalated from Rs 23.04 crore in 1972 to Rs 37.50 crore in 1979.

1981—Agreement with Aerospatiale is terminated and direct project cost of Rs 7 crore along with single-engine helicopter design which was ready, goes to waste.

1984—A seven-year collaboration agreement for the ALH project signed with MBB of West Germany. Decision delay because of serious differences among HAL designers over the choice of collaborator. Work on the ALH project starts all over again from scratch.

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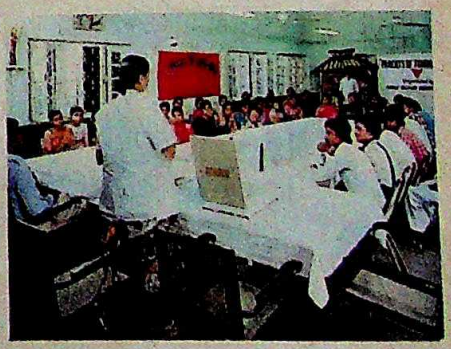

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cal to say that we are making unnecessary changes. Whatever changes have been made were with the approval of the customers (the IAF)." HAL's Adviser (designs), R. Varadarajan, was equally firm when he brushed aside the objections raised by the heads of various design sections in the helicopter design bureau, noting that "the changes are minimal".

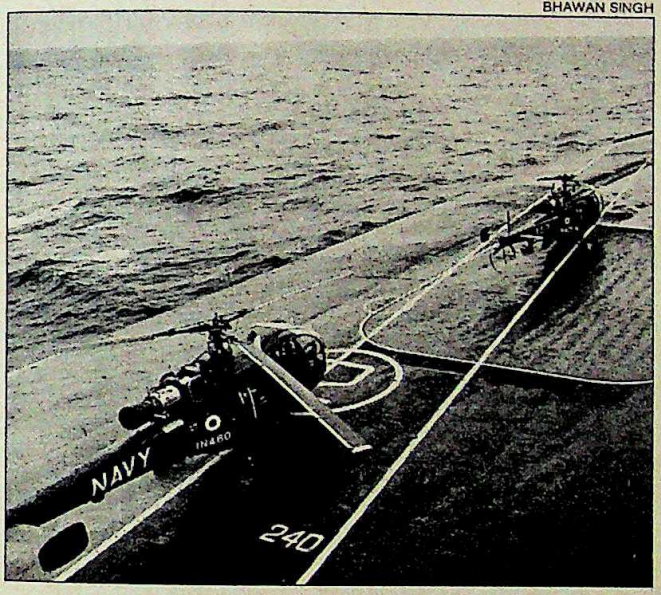
But the differences were obvious, and matters came to a head four months ago when the chief of the bureau, J.M. Debnath, was transferred to the insignificant advanced technology group, apparently for refusing to clear the changes introduced in the helicopter's design. While Debnath declined comment, it appears that he threatened to stall the second payment of Rs 3-crore due to MBB, forcing Balaraman to transfer him. The appointment and promotion of K.S.Sudhindra to replace Debnath, superseding two other officials, has only increased the sharp divisions within HAL.

MBB's chief engineer in Bangalore, Dieter Bender, also defended the changes: "It is ridiculous to say we are changing things. Changes have been made by MBB and HAL together, in consultation with the Indian armed forces. The collaboration is going on smoothly." Sources in the IAF, however, argue that approval was given to certain changes "only with a view to getting the best helicopter under the circumstances" after realising that MBB could not meet the ideal requirements specified in the contract.

CHANGES in the ALH began within weeks of the start of the project when the diameter of the main rotor was increased from 12.8 metres to 13.2 metres which may not have had any effect on the performance but was a precursor of things to come. More recently, the rotor (which should have been rigid and hingeless) had a damper added to it to dampen vibrations. This increases maintenance problems, leading to yet another squabble within the design bureau.

The aircraft's weight carrying capacity was also altered. According to the agreement, the basic empty weight (BEW) of the ALH—the weight of the empty helicopter on the ground—was to be a maximum of 2,240 kg. But in April, MBB projected an empty weight of as much as 2,700 kg—even though the agreement stipulated that a penalty would be levied if the weight crossed 2,374 kg. Inevitably, this drew strong objections from HAL designers. Furious arguments broke out between the designers of the two companies as to what constituted empty weight—whether it included just the pilot or the co-pilot as well, and whether the windscreen weight should be counted. The MBB designers finally recommended, and got approved, the replacement of indigenous avionics equipment like altimeters and sonars with lighter imported equipment so as to bring the empty weight down to 2,520 kg.

BHAWAN SINGH



Indian Navy Chetak helicopters on the Vikrant: no replacement

But this remained beyond the cut-off limit after which the penalty clause applies. So MBB designers decided to replace the retractable landing gear, weighing 240 kg, with skids that weigh barely 80 kg. This was yet another controversial change because a retractable undercarriage would have reduced air resistance during flight, and increased the craft's air speed. Also, in case of a crash, it would have minimised the danger to the helicopter's fuselage and the men on board. So, with the change in landing gear, the helicopter's crashworthiness dropped from 95 per cent to 50 per cent. In layman's terms, this means that instead of surviving 95 per cent of the crashes at a speed of 72.8 miles per hour, its survivability is now down to below 50 per cent.

The changes have raised a major question mark over the choice of MBB in preference to Aerospatiale of France and Augusta of Italy. While Augusta, which was interested in letting India manufacture its A-129 helicopter under licence, was eliminated in the early stages, Aerospatiale had lost out by the proverbial whisker. Those who favoured the French company had based their argument on the fact that Aerospatiale had been engaged in the earlier single-engine project. However, Aerospatiale's suggestion that India might have to import several of the Dauphin AS-65 components had gone against it. MBB, with no similar experience in manufacturing helicopters, had bagged the contract as it had developed considerable technical know-how and was ready to transfer its technology to India.

But as it turned out MBB made an ambitious and, as one top designer put it, "impracticable" offer to get the Indian contract and is now finding it difficult to deliver the promised package. Incidentally, Eurocopter, the company formed jointly by Aerospatiale and MBB to make PAH-2, an anti-tank helicopter for France and West Germany, has run into "serious technical difficulties" and is reportedly close to abandonment. The respected *Jane's Defence Weekly* said in a recent issue: "(Only) political will could save Eurocopter."

Meanwhile, the ALH project has to overcome yet another major hurdle: the selection of the engine. The current contenders for the engine are Turbomeca of France and Pratt and Whitney of Canada. Though HAL had sent its proposals to the Defence Ministry last December on the make of the engine, the ministry is yet to make up its mind. Further, as an earlier report of the Public Accounts Committee quoted the Defence Ministry, "the delay in the development and manufacture of the ALH has delayed the availability of the weapons system". Already the helicopter is priced at 1984 rates at Rs 2.2 crore, and HAL intends to manufacture at least 240 helicopters initially. The delay so far is likely to cause cost overruns, which can only bolster the foreboding that the jinx on the project is likely to keep the ALH on the skids till well past its planned debut.

—SRINIVASA PRASAD

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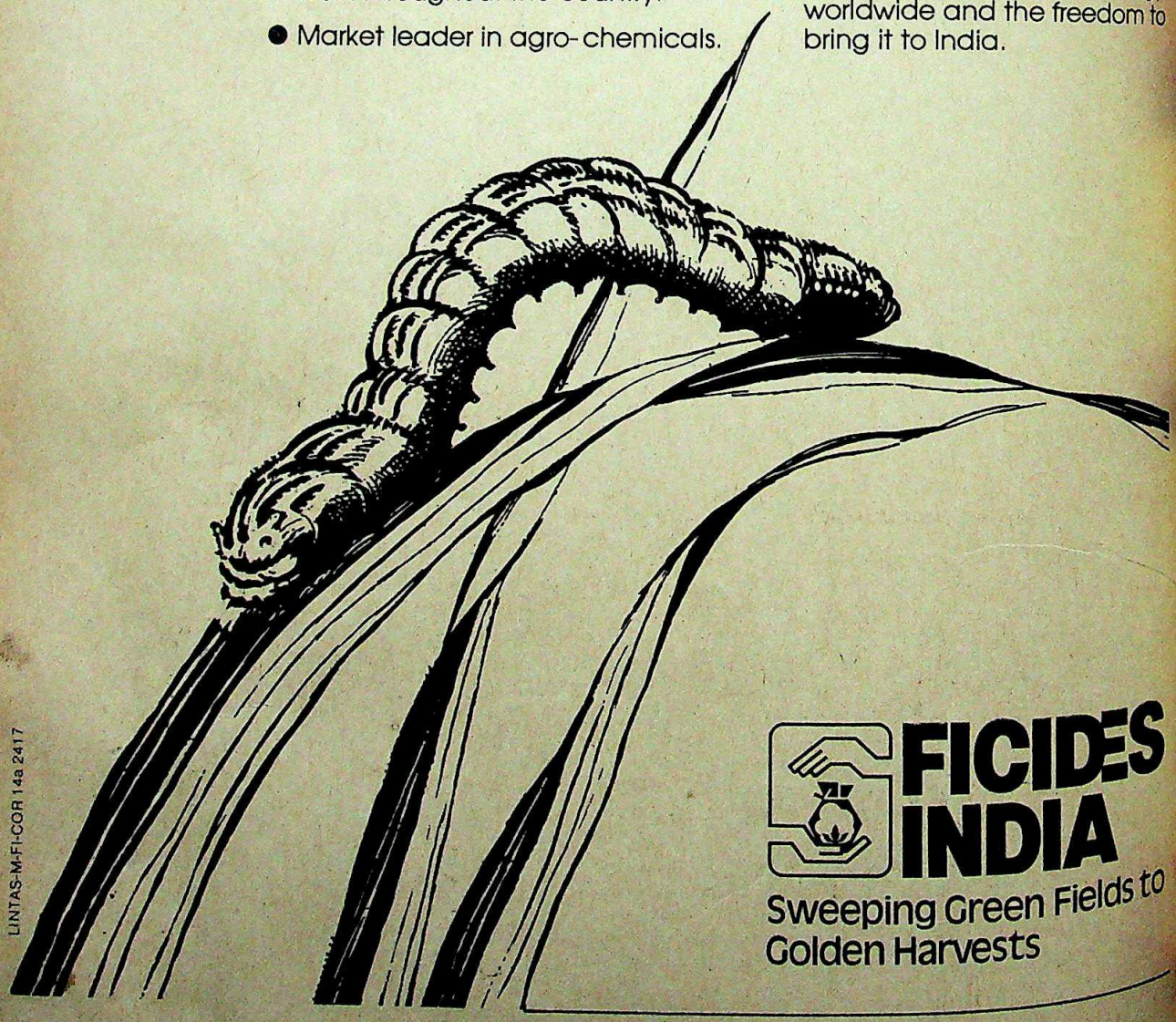

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VAIDYA CASE

The Killer Trail

EVEN as the massive manhunt for General A.S. Vaidya's assassins moved into top gear last fortnight, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officials investigating the killing had little illusions about the tough task ahead of them. Led by the shrewd and ruthless Jinda (see box), the killers have been able to cover their tracks effectively, having successfully evaded the police in several states during their gory career of dacoity and murder. Said a senior police official: "It's like looking for a needle in a haystack."

Besides Jinda, the other two killers identified are: Sukhwinder Singh alias Sukhi alias Vikas Goyal, who is from Ludhiana and who had escaped from the Golden Temple during Operation Bluestar, and Gurinder Singh alias Bhola, the terrorist who was involved in the Kamachanda killing in Delhi and later rescued by Sten gun blazing killers from a Jalandhar court last April. The fourth, who has not been identified, is described as medium-built and dark-complexioned.

The identifications were made on the basis of descriptions given by eyewitnesses. But the clincher came from the seizure of a book during a raid on the Antop Hill hide-out of Jinda in Bombay on July 3. The seizure was made by a Rajasthan police sub-inspector accompanied by a constable from the Bombay police on the basis of a tip off that Jinda and his gang were holed up in a flat rented from a Central Government employee. But while Jinda was able to bluff his way past the police, the articles seized included the photograph of an unidentified man, suspected to be a Maharashtrian from Bombay, and the novel *Triple* by Ken Follet. Inside the novel was scribbled General Vaidya's Maruti car number DIB 1437.

Surprisingly, police officials in pursuit of bank robbers known to have terrorist links and suspected of sending part of the booty to extremists in Punjab did not give much significance to the mysterious noting in Follet's novel. Their routine query from Delhi Police on the registration number brought them a simple answer: the car belonged to one Bhanu Vaidya. But on August 10, after General Vaidya was assassinated in Pune while driving home from the market in his white Maruti, the significance of the car registration number hit home with chilling finality.

Said a CBI official: "The car number in the novel is a dead give-away of the involvement of Jinda's gang. Besides, the modus operandi identifies them as the same gang—it was a swift, neat operation on stolen vehicles and the gang covered its tracks well, never staying in hotels or lodges but renting private houses through underworld contacts or sympathisers."

M. RAHMAN

'Wanted' posters of the killers in Pune

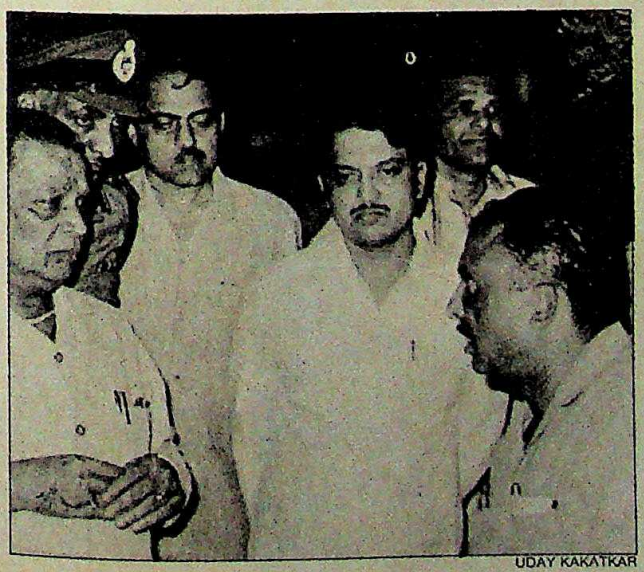
Thousands of posters have since been put up by the Maharashtra police in Pune and other state towns describing the killers and offering a reward for information. The posters describe Jinda as 5 feet 7 inches tall with a mole on the right side of his neck and two wounds on his right leg; Sukhwinder Singh, 28, as 5 feet 10 inches tall, who speaks softly, is fluent in English, Hindi and Punjabi, always walks with his head down, strokes his hair often and is fond of English novels; Gurinder Singh alias Bhola, 23, as 5 feet 8 inches tall, who can drive any vehicle and is a good painter; and an unidentified medium-built, dark-complexioned man, about 23 years old, who speaks Hindi in the *Bombaiya* Marathi style and occasionally breaks into Punjabi.

Ten CBI officials headed by a deputy inspector-general are working on the case, assisted by detectives from Pune and the Bombay police. A top CRPF officer from Punjab, familiar both with terrorist operations and Pune city where he was posted some years ago, has also been flown down to assist. The police suspect that Jinda and his accomplices may be holed up somewhere in Maharashtra using the network of terrorist sympathisers.

The police have been able to confirm that the killer quartet, possibly with other accomplices, came to Pune some days before the killing of General Vaidya. They were, according to the police, "definitely given shelter by a local person, possibly an ex-armyman or a local sympathiser". According to them, Jinda and Sukhi, who has definitely been identified by witnesses as one of the gangsters in the abortive bank robbery in Pune in June, remained in the city till August 14, and even visited a prostitute on August 13. Jinda is also believed to have visited a village, Vadgaon-Nimbalwad, near Pune soon after the killing.

In pursuit of its theory, the police raided a bungalow in

Chief Minister Chavan (left) with Vaidya's bodyguard (extreme right)



UDAY KAKATKAR

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Chardi on the outskirts of Pune, and arrested its owner, truck operator Maliyat Singh Niranjan Singh Tiwana, his two sons and a visitor from Jalandhar. Police chief Mohan Katre said that among the material seized from the house were two fake passports which had been used for travel to the US last year, some cartridges, pro-Khalistan posters and manuscripts of seditious articles in English, foreign currency, a diary containing phone numbers in India and abroad, and letters in Gurumukhi and English posted from Punjab and Delhi.

The police, however, is yet to find the Lohia scooter used in the killing and there are doubts whether the Ind-Suzuki motor-cycle used was the same which was stolen from an Ethiopian student on the morning of the killing. But these are minor factors in an investigation which promises to be one of the most exhaustive—and obsessive—in criminal history.

—M. RAHMAN in Pune

JINDA

Death Dealer

WHO IS Jinda? The man suspected to be the mastermind behind the killing of General Vaidya is currently the most wanted man in the country, a sinister shadowy figure who wanders unseen through the length and breadth of India carefully selecting his victims, killing them and then disappearing once more into the shadowy limbo in which terrorists find refuge.

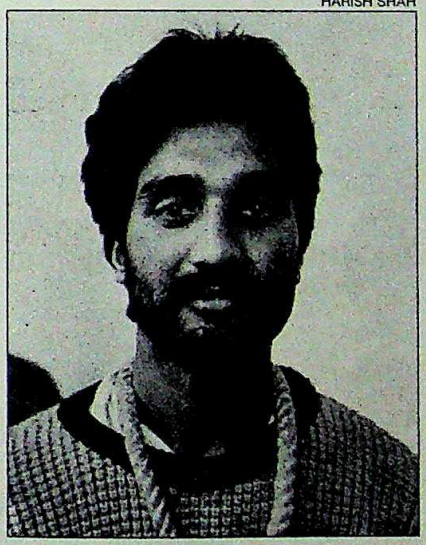
In fact, Jinda was caught in January this year by the police and interrogated for several hours and from the interrogation report he emerges as a young man who likes new cars and girls, who eats in expensive restaurants and who commits crimes merely to fulfill tastes that are unusual for someone regarded as India's most dreaded killer.

Jinda or Harjinder Singh, is described in police records as being of "wheatish complexion, long face, medium build, height 5 ft 7 inches, black mole on the right side of the neck, two healed wounds on right leg". He was born on April 4, 1962 in Gadli village near Jandiala, a small town in Amritsar district which has become notorious for the number of terrorist incidents committed in it. He went to school in Jandiala and then to the Khalsa College, Amritsar, but never managed to get any kind of degree. While at college, a school friend called Bakhshish Singh, who had given up his studies to become a smuggler, introduced him to a fellow smuggler called Upkar Singh Sandhu, brother of Harmindar Singh Sandhu who had already gained infamy as one of the late Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale's main spokesmen.

Jinda himself appears to have shown little interest in the wave of political and religious fundamentalism emanating from the Golden Temple and claimed during his interrogation that he only went there once when he was sent for by Bhindranwale who wanted to settle a dispute between rival gangs of smugglers. In his free time Jinda concentrated on committing daring bank robberies in places as distant from the Golden Temple as Delhi's genteel Connaught Place. In 1984, just before Operation Bluestar, he went off to Singapore and managed to smuggle in VCR's, TV's and other electronic equipment which he then sold in Hall Bazar in Amritsar.

At the time of Operation Bluestar he was at home in Gadli but fled shortly afterwards fearing that he would be picked up by the army. In June, he made his way to Pakistan across the Rajasthan border with the help of a cousin in Ganganagar. He claims to have met several Pakistani officials who took them to safehouses where other Sikhs were staying, many of them former residents of the Golden Temple. He met Atinder Pal Singh, a suspect in the Indira Gandhi murder case, but did not admit to having been given any training.

HARISH SHAH



Jinda: elusive killer

According to him, after about six months he asked Atinder Pal Singh if he could return to India. He also asserts that he was not given any arms when he was sent back. He arrived in Amritsar in February 1985 but moved soon to Delhi where he stayed in Anand Parbat with a friend called Daljit Singh. To earn money, they started on a career of bank robbery which began with a bank in Anand Parbat. He admitted that they looted Rs 44,994 and said that the money was taken away by Mathura Singh, another wanted terrorist, who was also involved in the bank robbery.

Jinda then moved to a house in Tagore Gardens and supported himself by looting more banks. He bought himself a red Maruti car from Delhi Motors in Lajpat Nagar and somewhere along the way managed to pick up a couple of girls called Renu and Pammi. He and a friend and the girls often dined at restaurants in the Siddharth Hotel and at the Nirula's cafe in Chanakyapuri. They would also go for walks, according to him, in Buddha Jayanti Gardens and see films at the Rachna cinema. Whenever they were short of money they would indulge in more armed robberies. Jinda admitted to having gone to Ahmedabad in January this year where he also robbed a bank.

It was after this robbery that he was caught. They had returned to Delhi and sold the red Maruti to buy a white one and had arranged to meet near the Treat restaurant in Connaught place to share out the takings from the Ahmedabad robbery when a police party raided the shop where they were meeting. Barely two months after his arrest, while he was being taken back from a court in Ahmedabad on April 3, he casually slipped away from the constables escorting him, and escaped.

Jinda is believed to have been involved in the killing of Lalit Maken and his wife and Arjun Dass but his interrogators appear not to have succeeded in getting him to confess to these. In fact, one of the most extraordinary aspects of the confession is the fact that Jinda admits to no acts of terrorism whatsoever. The police, however, are convinced that he is the man they would desperately like to get their handcuffs on—this time for good.

—TAVLEEN SINGH

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BY BHAWAN SINGH

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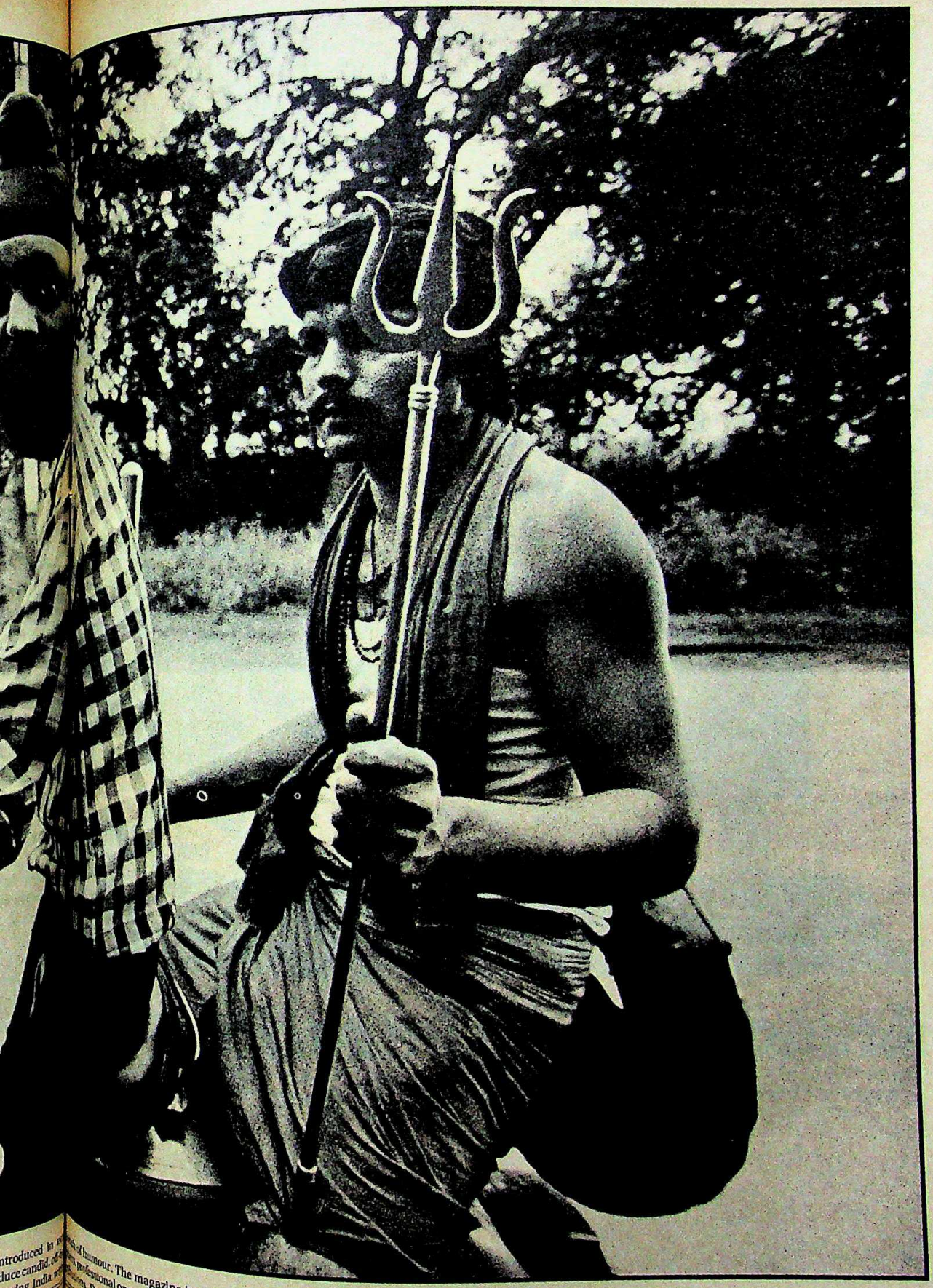

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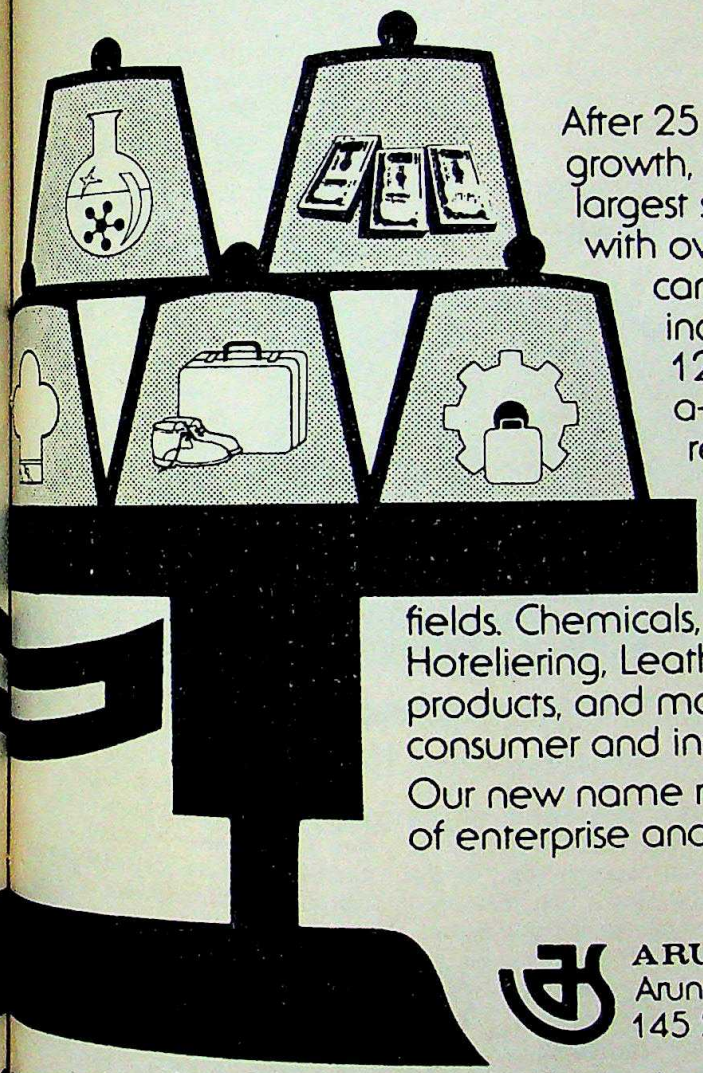

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FILMS

A New Dimension

IT IS now the hour of the video quickie. While movie moghuls bemoan the bygone age of the blockbusters and queue up at Doordarshan's door with scripts and pilots to feed the insatiable small screen industry, businessmen are poised to flood the market with local feature films made exclusively for video.

Until recently, only a few companies like Surya Bharti and stray individuals were making video feature films for the Indian market. The scale was small, the marketing limited. But last month, non-resident Indian magazine magnate, Nari Hira (*Stardust*, *Society* and *Savvy*) began his blitzkrieg of the video world with *Siyani* launched by his company Hiba Video, and in Madras, S. Charuhasan, noted Lawyer, actor and film producer and elder brother of film star Kamalhasan, inaugurated Goodwill as the second video film company in the country.

The race to make tightly budgeted films for video libraries (Bombay has nearly 1,500 and Madras 2,500), cable television in apartment houses, hotel chains and the airlines is on in earnest. Hiba Video has already completed five films, and even movie moghuls like B.R. Chopra, the Sippys and the Sagars have established their own video companies, though they are still on standby, with one eye on television and the other on the big screen.

But the pot of gold at the end of the video rainbow will be the proposed move to legitimise video parlours throughout the country (in Punjab, the state Government has already licensed video parlours). Once that is achieved, video theatres will not be far behind. Says Hira, conscious that he is on the threshold of a brave new video world: "The Indian market could easily absorb 3,000 to 5,000 cassettes for each film."

While Hiba is making Hindi films for north Indian and non-resident Indian homes, Goodwill is planning to make Tamil films solely for the domestic market. Working out of a video factory situated in Marve on the outskirts of Bombay, Hira's films contain the melodrama and hyped up emotion of the Bombay feature film but none of the big stars, big budgets, or big locations—thus reducing drastically the risk factors. "I can shoot a film for Rs 7 lakh or 8 lakh and easily recover the money from television or video," said Anil Tejani, director of two of Hiba's films.

At present Hiba takes a month to make a film; Hira's target is to release a film every 20 days: "It is just like bringing out a magazine. We have just made one film, we are in the process of filming another and we are already planning a third." Copying the old Hollywood studio contract system, Hira has a kind of repertory of stars and directors. While the first two films have fairly well-known stars (Persis Khambatta, Marc Zuber, Vijayendra Ghatge and Kanwaljeet), Hira has cleverly introduced a pair of new-comers, Aditya Pancholi and Nita Puri, on contract for Rs 5,000 a film. Explains Hira: "By the time the third film is out, these two whom I am grooming will have become known faces and I will not need any more stars. After a few films, I will introduce another pair."

Charuhasan too has rationalised his entry into video film-making on similar grounds. He is convinced that regular feature films are not tailored for home viewing because of their length. "People just do not have the time to lock themselves up in a room and watch 14 or 15 reels of a full-length film. And they tend to get irritated by the song and dance sequences and prolonged fighting scenes." In response, the grey haired, bearded entrepreneur plans to make "tight Tamil films of 90 minutes each and sell them in video cassettes."

Charuhasan feels that Tamil Nadu can absorb about 25 films annually. The production cost of each film is estimated at Rs 5 lakh and the veteran film director R.C. Shakti has begun working on Goodwill's first film *Vai Puttu* starring S.V. Shekar and Saritha. "So far we have signed up directors for six films that we are planning to make, and heroes and heroines for a couple of movies. Making serious video films is an opportunity for talented film makers and actors who feel that they want to do something creative apart from catering to the masses and making money," says Charuhasan.

Charuhasan feels that there are enough Tamil-speaking video viewers to justify the creation of a business to cater exclusively to them. Customs authorities in Madras say they have cleared about seven lakh VCP's and VCR's to date and, even at a conservative estimate, there are over a million potential customers in the state. Video libraries in the state have an estimated turnover of Rs 100 crore a year. "Making Tamil and other films exclusively for video is therefore a very viable line of business," observed S. Kumarakrishnan, a marketing and advertising professional who has joined Goodwill. Goodwill is also planning to have brief advertising spots in the film, adding to the profits.

Goodwill is laying down its own elaborate network to reach Tamilians in non-Tamil areas in the country. Using a scientifically worked out strategy, Goodwill plans to sell a pack of three duplicate cassettes at Rs 300 each to video libraries. This cost structure is to ensure that video libraries can keep pace with the demand, and also to discourage video pirates who might find it financially unrewarding to make pirated copies.

Hira too has formulated a multi-pronged approach to deal with the video pirate. In addition to assuring production of a film every 20 days, Hira has set up an anti-video piracy cell which will be headed by a former inspector general of police and manned by three retired assistant commissioners, a former deputy commissioner and 20 private detectives. Charuhasan and Hira are, obviously, hoping to trigger off another phase of the video boom.

—MADHU JAIN in Bombay
and S.H. VENKATRAMANI in Madras

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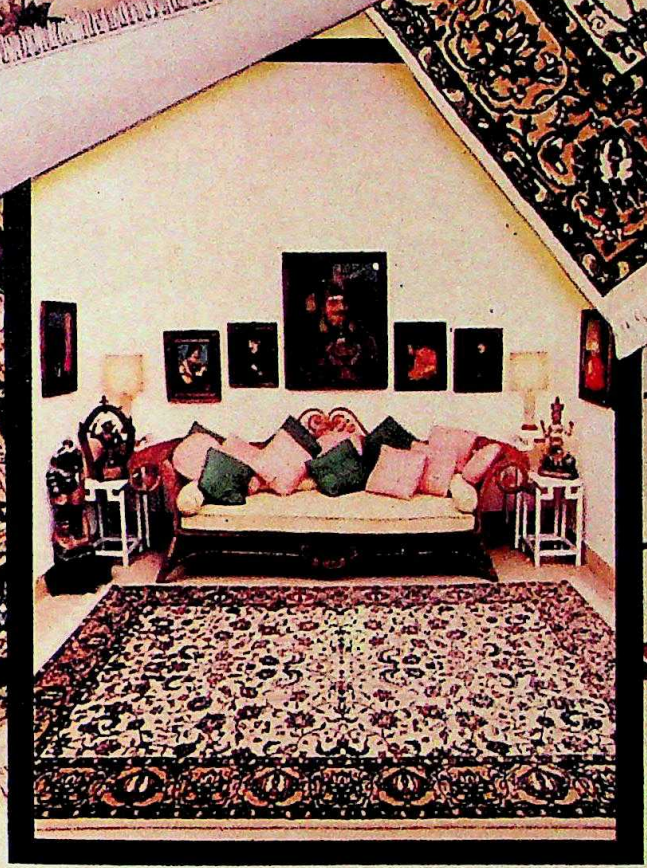

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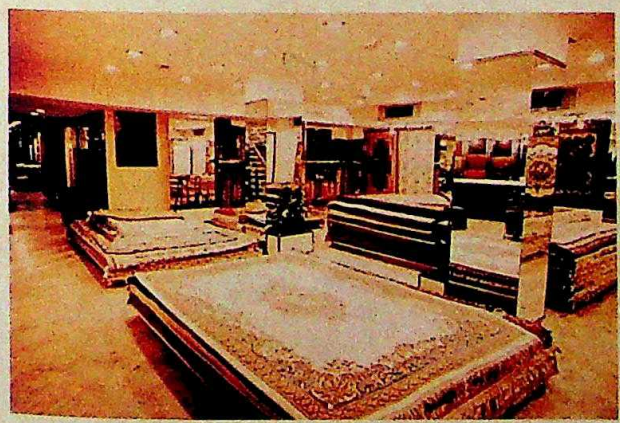

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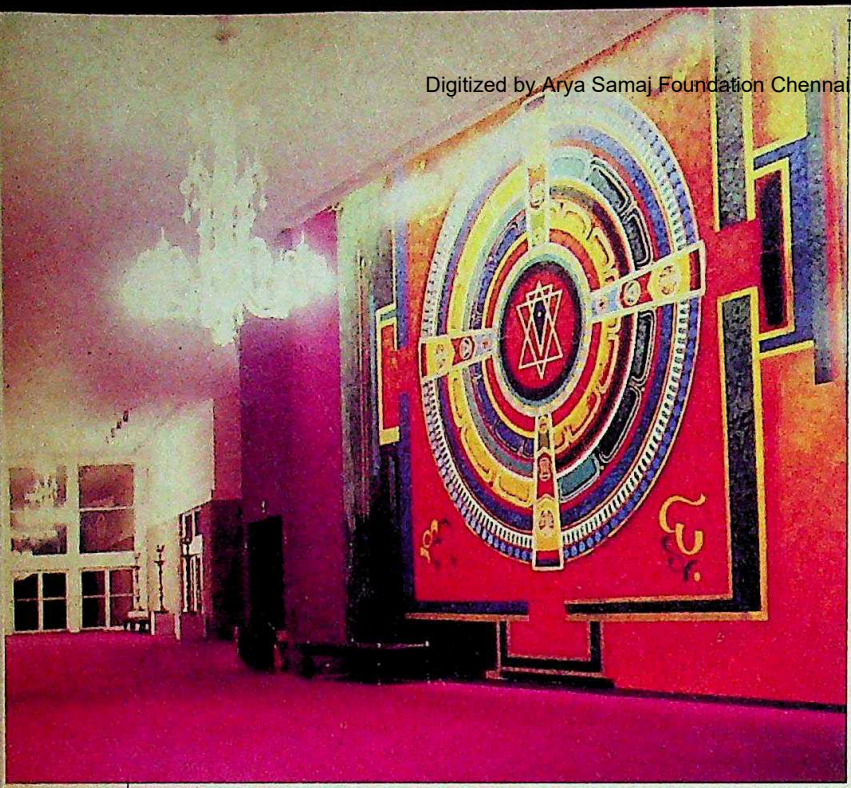

H.L. DESAI

Tata Theatre; and (right) Krishen Khanna's mural at the Maurya

THE ARTS

CORPORATE PATRONAGE

Culture Consciousness

RUDI von Leyden, modern Indian art's first corporate patron, would survey the art scene in the country today with a sense of pioneering pride. When von Leyden came to India in the 1940s as boss of Unilever, he had discovered that culture and big business just did not mix. Undaunted, he promoted the first ever cohesive group of Indian painters, the Bombay Progressives—M.F. Husain, Francis Newton Souza and the late S.H. Arya, who, incidentally, was von Leyden's former chauffeur. After his departure, it was only his friends, Dr Homi Bhabha and brother Jehangir, who kept the momentum going.

But today, after 40 years of gestation, the seeds planted by von Leyden have begun to sprout in frantic fruitfulness, metamorphosing the Indian culture scene like nothing else. Indian big business is today pouring money into every conceivable kind of cultural activity, from the fine arts, music and dance to book publishing, cinema and handicrafts. "Corporate patronage of culture has really taken off in this decade and today it is impossible to miss the corporate association from any major cultural event in the country," says Shyamanand Jalan, the Calcutta solicitor better known for his dance and drama group, Padatik.

Today, even the most obscure of cultural troupes can rope in a sponsor, chiefly the top three tobacco companies, which collectively spend about Rs 1.15 crore annually on the arts. "Big business has suddenly become so culture conscious that at times it seems they are literally throwing away money on culture," says Dr Sunil Kothari, professor of dance at the Rabindra Bharati University. Examples:

► An exhibition of four contemporary artists—Ganesh Pyne, Bikash Bhattacharya, Somnath Hore and Jogen Chowdhury—at the Birla Academy in Calcutta was sponsored by Duncan Tea.

► Every episode of "Satyajit Ray presents" being broadcast by Doordarshan also sports the Duncan logo.

► In Hyderabad last April, the Indo-Pakistani Musharia featuring Majrooh Sultanpuri, Ali Sardar Jafri, Pakistan's Qateel Shifai and Himayat Al Shiyar, was courtesy Vazir Sultan Tobacco.

► The recently-instituted annual Shiromani Puruskar for excellence in the arts has been established by Asian Paints.

► ITC, the makers of Wills Filters, is sponsoring a feature film starring Victor Banerjee and Mallika Sarabhai called *Kehkashaan*, to be released next year.

In Calcutta, Asian Paints is reviving the famous Banga Sanskriti Sammelan—an annual cultural extravaganza that had died out decades ago—under the name of Banga Sanskriti Utsav. The Shri Ram Group has its Bharatiya Kala Kendra and the Centre for Art and Culture in New Delhi. The Lalabhais have the Lalabhai Dalpatbhai Institute of Indology in Ahmedabad for students of Indian Antiquity. The Kanoria group has set up the Kanoria Centre for schooling budding artists, and industrial baron R.P.Goenka is setting up a performing arts centre in Calcutta.

Other companies are less blatant about announcing their involvement. Few people, for instance, know that the Welcomgroup hotel chain is one of the largest buyers of contemporary Indian paintings and has a collection worth nearly Rs 1 crore, including the giant mural at Delhi's Maurya Sheraton by Krishen Khanna. The fabulous Tata Art collection built up by Jehangir Bhabha now rivals government-funded galleries. Equally unpublicised is the growing practice of hiring classical dancers and musicians at business conferences. Top classical dancers like Raja and Radha Reddy

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HARI OM GULATI

Modi with his paintings: artistic investments

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Kannan Krishnamurti and Sonal Mansingh regularly feature on the corporate circuit, charging Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000 for a performance.

IN TERMS of returns, the pay-off for corporate patrons, though often intangible, is diverse and substantial. "We can't quantify the impact of our patronage of the arts but it gives us an extra edge in marketing, in reaching our consumers better," explains J.'Nari' Narayan, ITC's tobacco division chief. Admits Duncan Pick's Pradip Kakkar: "We are committing large sums of money on art and culture ultimately for commercial ends and not just for the love of it." And with increasing sponsorship, companies are spending unheard of amounts to get the best in the field. "When we wanted to use TV for promoting our teas we needed something impressive. We got Satyajit Ray and money was not a factor," explains Kakkar. A few years ago, TISCO's Modi hijacked Husain to Germany for the Hanover fair to paint the mystic panels for the company's exhibit. Now Nari Narayan has now roped in Husain for the company's "Raga Extravaganza" to be held all over the country to depict 20 "ragamalas" (paintings depicting different ragas) which will be exhibited at the performances.

Culture also spells class. For the cigarette company NTC, cultural association has overhauled its corporate image. "In the beginning we were known as the number ten company," recalls NTC marketing head, Rana Sengupta, "but in the last five years we have built up an association with the arts and our corporate image has soared—today we are recognised as the Regent Company."

TISCO Chairman Rusi Modi, a leading patron of the arts, offers a more hard-headed reason for supporting the fine arts: "Paintings have become an investment these days. I have just Rs 30,000 in bank savings and all I have is my art collection," he says.

The most salubrious effect of corporate patronage is the self-confidence it has instilled in the practitioners of Indian culture. "For a long time, the West was the best, it was the touchstone of cultural accomplishment," explains Dr Kothari, "but today our culture has fortunately acquired value in our own country and we have begun to experiment and evolve."

This is certainly true of dance, where veteran dancers like Mrinalini Sarabhai of Darpana, set up by the Sarabhai textile group, and Kumudini Lakhia of Kadamb, a dance school promoted by the textile tycoon Harshvardan Mangaldas of Ahmedabad, are today experimenting to break out of what Madras-based danseuse Chandralekha calls "the mummification of Indian Art". And catalytic in these changes has been the National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA), which is being developed by the Soli Dorabjee Tata Trust since the late 1960s with a total proposed expenditure of Rs 10 crore.

Books on art and culture are also increasingly coming under the domain of corporate support. The Tata group's MARG, which for the past 25 years was the only private sector art books publisher, will now face competition from Vazir Sultan's art books series. And Aveek Sarkar, managing editor of the Ananda Bazar group of publications and one of Calcutta's largest art collectors, plans to bring out books on paintings.

Art books publishing has thrown up one of the most striking successes of corporate patronage: Navin Kishore's Seagull Books. ITC set the Seagull empire sailing three years ago by providing seed capital of Rs 5 lakh. Says Kishore: "Art books are slow selling items and we could not have got going without ITC's support."

But tight as the culture-big business nexus has become, many top executives and industrialists believe it can only get closer. Explains TISCO's Modi: "I enjoy my work, I work hard but I also feel that is not the end of life—there are things to be enjoyed like art, like living well." Adds ITC's Narayan: "Our spending on the arts is not simply motivated to get business returns. Art bridges a gap." Culture will obviously have its corporate patrons as long as Indian business keeps growing and industry moghuls realise there is more on earth than dreamt of in their philosophy.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

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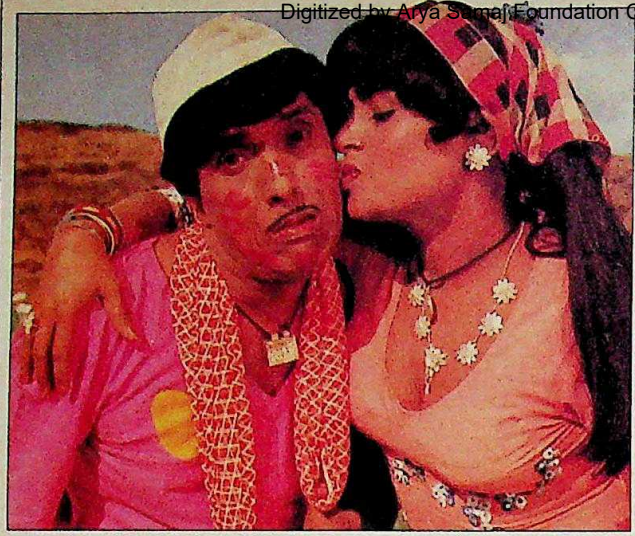
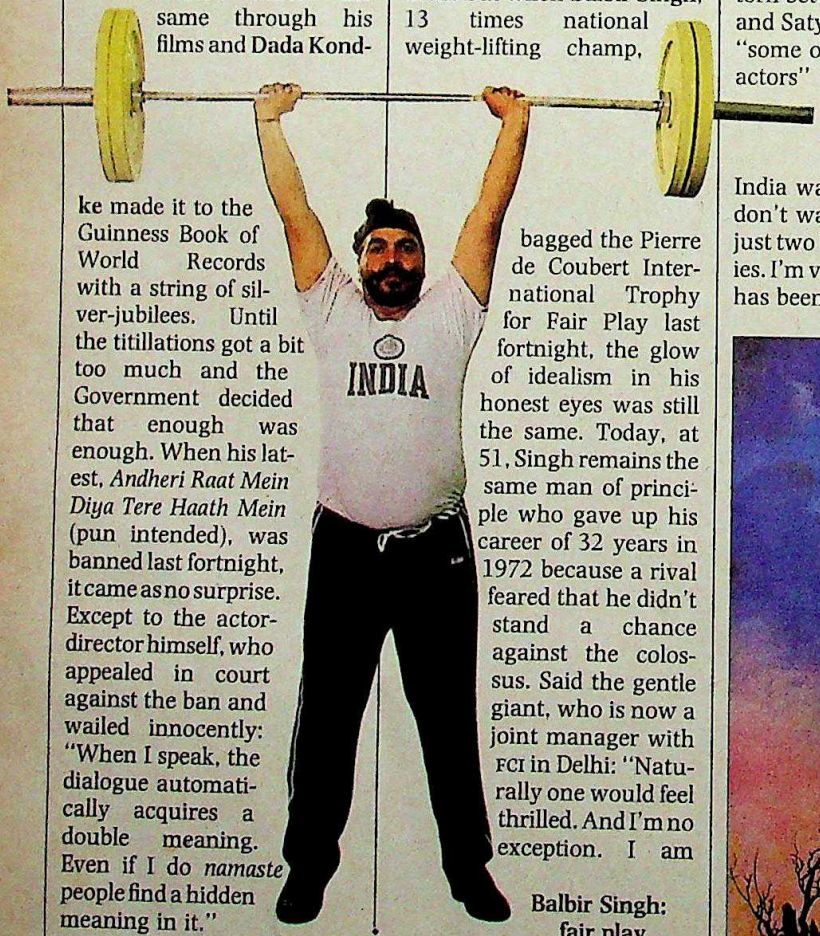


Kondke in banned film

◆ The men were dhoti-clad and foul-mouthed, the women overpainted and fat. They gyrated to loud, cacophonic music, spouted double meaning dialogue and ended up in a rib-cracking clinch that sent cheap thrills down the front rows. The scene remained much the same through his films and **Dada Kondke** made it to the Guinness Book of World Records with a string of silver-jubilees. Until the titillations got a bit too much and the Government decided that enough was enough. When his latest, *Andheri Raat Mein Diya Tere Haath Mein* (pun intended), was banned last fortnight, it came as no surprise. Except to the actor-director himself, who appealed in court against the ban and wailed innocently: "When I speak, the dialogue automatically acquires a double meaning. Even if I do *namaste* people find a hidden meaning in it."

◆ The biceps that once rippled like ropes of steel are now buried under folds of fat, the mighty chest heaves with the weight of years and burgeoning pounds, and the brawny body has gone the way of all flesh. But when **Balbir Singh**, 13 times national weight-lifting champ, bagged the Pierre de Coubert International Trophy for Fair Play last fortnight, the glow of idealism in his honest eyes was still the same. Today, at 51, Singh remains the same man of principle who gave up his career of 32 years in 1972 because a rival feared that he didn't stand a chance against the colossus. Said the gentle giant, who is now a joint manager with FCI in Delhi: "Naturally one would feel thrilled. And I'm no exception. I am happy that with this award, I've been able to do a bit of humble service to my nation."



Balbir Singh: fair play

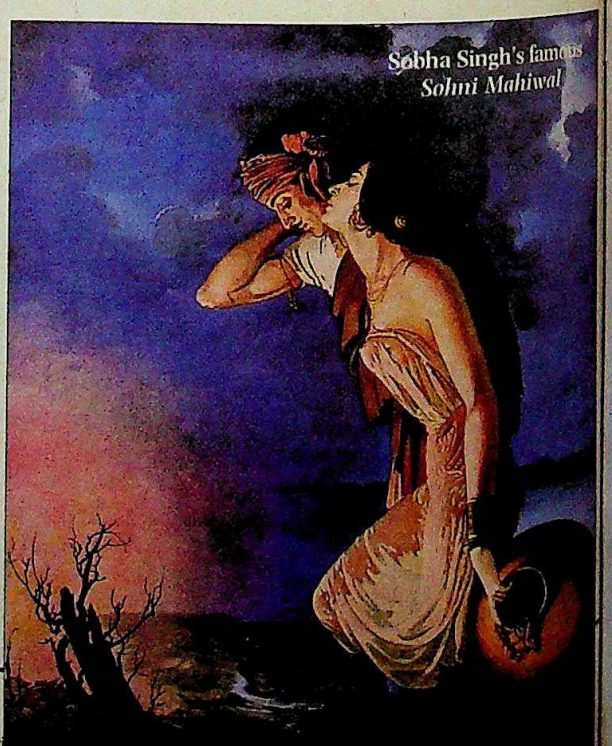
de Paul: happy hunting

◆ **Judith de Paul** has a secretary called Miss Relic. But it is Miss de Paul herself who belongs to another era. She wears her make-up two inches thick, produces minor epics like *Mountbatten—The Last Viceroy*, carries herself with all the hauteur of a Liz Taylor and sincerely believes that de Paul is no less (if not greater) than de Mille. The producer was in Delhi last fortnight, braving the August humidity and—when not posing with roses in five-star foyers—finalising the cast and crew for her next project, *Queenie*, the life story of the famous India-born Hollywood actress, Merle Oberon. When last heard, the lady was torn between Shyam Benegal and Satyajit Ray and wanted "some of your terrific Indian actors" though she didn't know their names. All that she seemed sure about was that India was a terrific locale. "I don't want to come back for just two but many more movies. I'm very happy here. India has been very kind to me."

SIGNPOST

■ **Died: Sobha Singh**, 85, on August 22 in Chandigarh after a heart attack. Lovingly called "Darji", the self-taught philosopher-painter gave calendar art a signature—and respectability. He brought to life the poignant love legends of Punjab and the human side of Sikh history. His cottage in Andretta in the Kangra Valley still bears the motto that he lived all his life: "Grow More Good." Perhaps the only artist to be loved and missed by the connoisseur and the corner *panwallah* alike.

—Compiled by MOHAMMED ASLAM



Sobha Singh's famous *Sohni Mahiwal*

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POST

Singh, 85, on
nandigarh af-
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: love legends
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His cottage in
Kangra Valley
notto that he
"Grow More
the only artist
missed by the
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IAMMED ASLAM

's famous
ghiwal

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Pakistan's Bloody Blunder

The hijacking of a Pan Am airliner at Karachi airport was the bloodiest such incident in the sub-continent. But the manner in which the Pakistan security forces bungled the handling of the hijack has raised intriguing questions.

COVER STORY 28

The Political Nexus

A major controversy in Punjab revolves around the suspected nexus between powerful politicians and extremists and smugglers. An investigation reveals that the political umbrella supplied by politicians has hampered the security forces.

INVESTIGATION 76

Political Ambitions

Despite their numbers and comparative affluence, not a single Asian has been elected to Britain's House of Commons since 1924. But the coming general elections in Britain has a number of Asian candidates in the field. A report on their prospects.

GLOBE TROTTING 90

The Oil Mirage

Despite ONGC's persistent claims of achieving self sufficiency in oil by the 21st Century, India's oil bubble could burst within this decade. Interviews with oil experts and scrutiny of confidential documents reveal a grim picture.

SPECIAL FEATURE 98

Slicing up the Cake

The Birlas are parcelling out their Rs 4,000-crore empire to family members by ending the complex cross-holding structure that binds the group firmly together. But the wealth is not being shared equally and consequently, tensions prevail

BUSINESS 127

Set for Seoul

As the Asiad fever catches on once again, the question being asked is: how well will India perform? A major share of the likely medals will be won by the women athletes. A report on India's medal hopes and their probable placing.

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The electronics people

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OPINIONS TODAY

Your chance to speak out

पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय
हरिद्वार

What has been the Government's most significant initiative? You decide.

Was it the anti-defection bill? Or, say, the Assam accord? What about the rationalisation of taxes, the eradication of rural poverty, the raids on economic offenders, improving relations with neighbouring countries, and the Mizoram and Punjab accords?

This, the last Opinions Today poll, is your chance to decide.

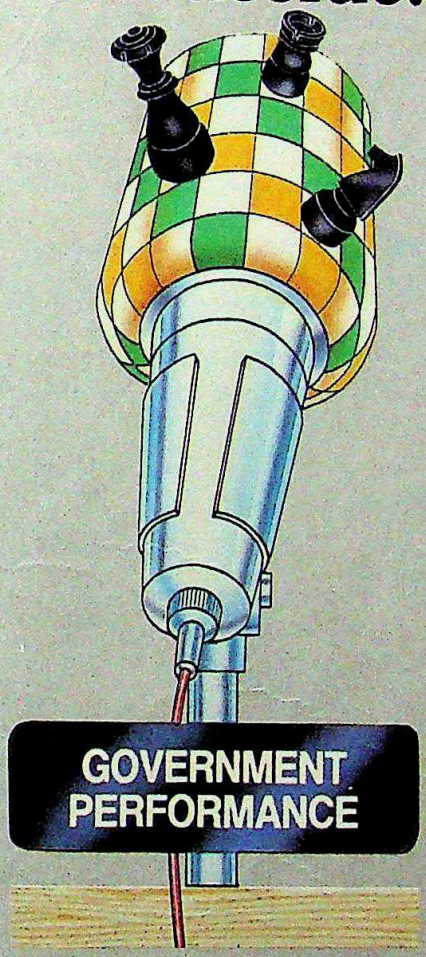
Your task : to rank the Government's major initiatives in terms of their impact on the country as a whole.

Thus, when you finish, each initiative will carry a number from 1 to 8, besides it. Since this is a ranking, no two initiatives can have the same number.

Explain your first choice.

If 'X' is your number one choice, then, in not more than 50 words, you have to tell us why.

If your entry ties in with the national average (evaluated by computer), you'll also become a contender for the awards associated with Opinions Today.



With this poll, the Opinions Today series comes to an end.

Over its three month tenure, we've received a flood of entries. Indicators of the pulse of a changing India – as seen by INDIA TODAY's readers. And indicators too, of the fact that our readers can and will 'speak out' on the issues confronting them.

The awards.

For this poll.

First	: Weston Colour TV and VCR, courtesy WESTON ELECTRONIKS.
Second	: Encyclopaedia Britannica.
Third	: Weston 2-in-1, courtesy WESTON ELECTRONIKS.
Consolation	: Annual subscriptions to INDIA TODAY.

Across six polls.

First	: Return First Class air tickets for two to Los Angeles, courtesy PAN AM.
Second	: A specially commissioned painting (30" x 40") by M.F. HUSAIN.
Third	: EIKO PC Junior Computer with printer, courtesy EIKO COMPUTERS.
Consolation	: The World and its People–a twenty-seven volume set.

Turn overleaf to express your opinion.

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OPINIONS TODAY

Your chance to speak out

Rules and regulations

Since the entry forms will be processed by computer, it is important that you follow these procedures carefully. Incorrect or incomplete entries will be rendered invalid.

1. You can voice your opinion only through a valid entry form, such as the one below.
2. In case you have difficulty in obtaining the entry form, please mail a stamped, self-addressed envelope marked 'Opinions Today' to us at INDIA TODAY, 316 Competent House, F-14 Connaught Place, New Delhi-110 001.
3. An individual can send in only one entry form per poll.
4. The entries will be evaluated by means of a software package, specially designed by Tata Consultancy Services. The package will be run on a Burroughs B 6900 mainframe.
5. Important : while filling in this entry form, please ensure that you leave one square blank between the various units in your name and address.
6. All the eight options in each poll have to be ranked from 1 to 8. No two options can have the same ranking.
7. The name should start with the family name, followed by the first name.
8. Also ensure that you enter your first two or three initials in the space provided.
9. The date of birth should start with the date (two digits), followed by the month (two digits) and the year (again two digits). For example, if your date of birth is February 9, 1956, it should be entered as 090256.
10. Please tick the appropriate square, for other details such as sex, education, occupation.
11. In your address, please also give the pin-code number.
12. Please ensure that you fill in your particulars consistently across all polls.
13. In every poll you will have to explain the reasons, in not more than 50 words, for your No. 1 ranking. This is the 'tie-breaker'. Be sure to write the tie-breaker. You can miss out on the big awards if you don't. However, if your entry ties in with the national average, you will still be entitled to receive consolation prizes.
14. The entries will be evaluated by a panel of judges.
15. The results will be published in the forthcoming issues of INDIA TODAY. The winners will also be notified separately by post.
16. Employees (and their relatives) of Living Media India Pvt. Ltd., its associate companies, Tata Consultancy Services, and Interface Communications Pvt. Ltd., are not eligible to participate in this opinion poll.
17. INDIA TODAY will not be responsible for any postal delays.
18. The decision of the judges will be final and binding and no further correspondence will be entertained on the decisions.
19. ALL ENTRIES MUST REACH LIVING MEDIA INDIA PVT. LTD., P.O. BOX NO. 29, N.D.H.O. NEW DELHI-110 001, BY THE LAST DATE INDICATED ON THE ENTRY FORM.

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Please fill in BLOCK CAPITALS

NAME : Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____ Surname _____ First Name

DATE OF BIRTH: D D M M Y Y SEX : M [1] F [2] INITIALS : _____

EDUCATION : Professional [1] Post-graduate [2] Graduate [3] Matriculate [4] Others [5]

OCCUPATION : Service [1] Business [2] Housewife [3] Student [4] Others [5]

ADDRESS : _____

CITY _____ Pin-code _____

Have you participated in any previous Opinions Today poll? Yes [1] No [2]

INITIATIVES	RANKING
ANTI-DEFECTION BILL	
ASSAM ACCORD	
ERADICATION OF RURAL POVERTY	
IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBOURS	
MIZORAM ACCORD	
PUNJAB ACCORD	
RAIDS ON ECONOMIC OFFENDERS	
RATIONALISATION OF TAXES	

Please give reasons for your No. 1 ranking _____

Signature of participant : _____

Your opinion must reach us by 4.10. 1986.

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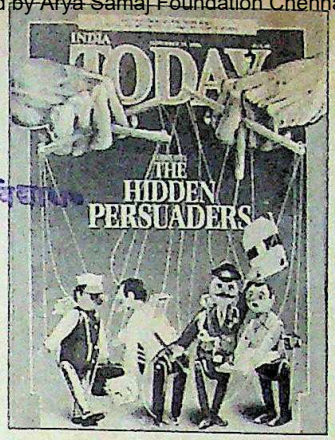

CALCULATING LOBBYISTS

Your cover story ("The Hidden Persuaders", September 15) was bold, frank and absorbing. It is evident that due to lobbying by top industrial houses, goods of inferior quality are purchased over better ones. The various irregularities and corruptions in the deals by lobbyists will be a great loss to the country, especially in the procurement of defence equipment.

Jamshedpur **BHUPEN BOSE**

■ The atmosphere in the corridors of power is becoming more and more conducive for the calculating lobbyists. They have the capacity to alter the most crucial government decisions by bribing the powers-that-be. The art of lobbying acts as a catalyst in securing lucrative government contracts and from the look of things the lobbyists are certainly here to stay.

Bangalore **K. CHIDANAND KUMAR**

■ Your article is in bad taste as it creates an impression that all retired officers who are working as consultants have no calibre. All the officers mentioned are generally known to be competent. It is wrong to suggest that substandard equipment is being inducted into the Indian Army on the representation of retired officers empolyed by armaments firms. The writers should have given concrete examples of money changing hands.

New Delhi **UMA PANT**

■ It is most unfortunate that you have cast aspersions on the conduct of retired senior service officers. Motives are being attributed if they try to earn an honest living by doing the only reasonable thing they can—offer their expertise and experience in the field of defence equipment to the dealers who require it. To be a consultant is not a crime.

New Delhi **Lt-Col.V.S. MATHUR**

PAINFUL KILLING

The terrorists who shot General Vaidya ("The Killing of a General", August 31) have not only killed the general but also the morale of all duty-conscious citizens. Which policeman would like to question a criminal knowing that the system for which he is willing to lay down his life will not be able to protect him in his hour of need?

New Delhi **AMRIT KUMAR**

■ The dawn of our 40th Independence Day was marred by the tragic memory of Vaidya's killing. It requires no intelligence to understand that the terrorists have been proving much more intelligent than the Intelligence!

Ahmedabad **NILAY V. ANJARIA**

TOO MANY COOKS

Your opportune comment ("Acting First Thinking Later", September 15) has done well to elucidate the haste with which our prime minister and his advisors deal with the issues of momentous importance. Mr Gandhi's Government is replete with advisors, who in their urge to earn his goodwill, are vying to feed the prime minister with thoughtless advice.

Ahmedabad **M.V.RAVINDRAN**

Snapshot (Page 162) is a regular feature, introduced recently, which will reproduce candid, offbeat black and white photographs that portray India with a touch of humour. The magazine invites photographers, professional or amateur, to send in their contributions. There is no restriction on the subject matter as long as it is Indian and the photographs are of an acceptable quality for printing. INDIA TODAY will pay Rs 1,000 for every photograph published. The print should be in the size of 21 × 33cm, in either horizontal or vertical frame. The magazine, however, does not accept responsibility for returning the photographs.

Send entries to

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Carbon monoxide. Nicotine. Nitric oxide. Nitrogen dioxide. Hydrogen cyanide. Arsenic. Tar. Just a few of the many toxins in cigarette smoke. They cause high blood pressure, hardening of arteries, heart attacks. And cancer.

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And, if you're a heavy smoker, try to give up — or at least cut down.

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Early discovery, early recovery

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■ From the "ill conceived though generally well-intentioned" actions of the Rajiv Gandhi Government, it is very clear that 'the Government that works faster' works, in fact, no less incompetently than the Government that worked slower.

G.S. CHANDY
Bangalore

SATHE'S SALVO

I am glad you have put forward a most glaring and obvious truth ("The Challenge of Change", August 31). If Vasant Sathe is taken to task for being morally upright and outspoken, a characteristic conspicuous by its absence in Indian politicians, it would be a shame for this country and its new, "forward-looking" leadership.

SANJAY MADGAVKAR
Calcutta

■ You have showered bountiful praise on Vasant Sathe for his so-called forceful articles on the functioning of the public sector. But why did it take so long for it to dawn upon Mr Sathe that all is not too well with the public sector? He is obviously shrewd enough to gauge his master's mood and wrest the initiative.

V.S. KULKARNI
Sawantwadi

RESERVATION ROW

The move of the Andhra Pradesh chief minister to raise reservation for the backward classes from 27 per cent to 44 per cent ("Reservation Ruckus", August 31) represents yet another illogical and whimsical decision by him, and he is becoming increasingly famous for such decisions. Reservation for backward classes is no doubt, a noble gesture. But, in the hands of our politicians, it has become a vote-catching gimmick.

K.A ANANTHARAM
Bombay

■ All my sympathies are with the "forward" communities of Andhra Pradesh, who have so rudely been shaken by the new reservation policy of the NTR Government. Let us hope Andhra Pradesh does not become another Bihar or Gujarat over this issue.

PARUN KUMAR
Madras

UNHOLY FATHER

The Christian church administration in India would only lose credibility if it tolerates malpractices like those of Father Puthenpurakal ("The Nun Runner", August 31) within the church. The 'priest' should have been expelled from his office forever in the early 70s, as he was found involved in the 'export business' of Keralite girls to western Europe. I doubt whether he would have been in a position to repeat the same mischief in 1986, without the indirect consent of the authorities.

DR GEORGE THODUKA
Bangalore

■ Your article reveals a definite lack of knowledge of the Christian and human values existing in convents. You say that girls are treated "like domestic servants", but who, among us, can survive without doing a certain number of domestic chores? Work becomes an object of ridicule when we dislike it. Also, by saying that "the market rate in Europe for a Malayalee nun is $2,000 per person", do you mean that Malayalee nuns are a product for sale and not a dedicated lot serving humanity?

LISSY KURIAN
Bombay

NO, MINISTER

The manhandling of the bank manager by A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdhury should be condemned strongly ("Tough Tactics", September 15). Instances of our ministers throwing their weight around are nothing new in this country. However, a minister stooping to physically assault a public official is something which cannot be condoned.

P.G. MENON
Bombay

■ Apropos your report we have to point out that it is not Union Bank alone but all the bank branches as a whole which have consistently achieved or overshot the targets in respect of IRDP and other government programmes. Further, the credit deposit ratio in Malda district is around 56 per cent and not 80 per cent as quoted. Also, we regret that you have failed to pronounce on the misdemeanour of Ghani Khan Chowdhury at Sujapur.

J.P. MISHRA
Malda

GORKHA GROUSE

Your report ("Gorkhas: A New Belligerence", August 15) was well-balanced. Jyoti Basu has failed to recognise the Gorkha movement in Darjeeling as a political one. His charges against the GNLF as anti-national and secessionist cannot be justified under the framework of the Constitution of India. Guns are no solution to every problem—they make too much noise.

DINESH GURUNG
Gangtok

HARSH CRACKDOWN

Your article ("Bihar: Church vs the RSS", August 31) is quite objective. The harsh crack down by government officials on Christian leaders in Ranchi is poor testimony for a secular, democratic country like India. The Christian leaders were only cautioning their own flock, for what they thought was an onslaught on their religion. They were not inciting violence or hatred.

CHHOTE BHAI
Kanpur

■ I was surprised to come across such a partial and one-sided write-up. While your correspondent had taken all the pains to clarify the stand of the Christians vis-a-vis publishing the views of the Archbishop of Ranchi, he did not find it necessary to check up details of the growing religious tensions with any of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) functionaries in the area. Perhaps he would have received actual proof of the anti-national activities of the so-called service-minded "Fathers".

A.N. KANITKAR
Nagaland

WRONG DESIGNATION

With reference to your article on Telecommunications ("Importing Trouble", September 15), my designation has been mentioned as chairman instead of advisor, Centre for Development of Telematics.

SAM PITRODA
New Delhi

The error is regretted.

—Editor

SHARE PRICES

In your article on the markets ("Bearish Phase", August 15), your correspondents say that the prices of shares of several companies have lost even more heavily than of Reliance over the fortnight. Among them were SPIC, Vulcan Laval, Ingersoll-Rand, and Hind & Dorr Oliver, which are now quoting ex-bonus. The post bonus price of Hind & Dorr Oliver and Ingersoll Rand as on July 23, 1986, were even much higher than the price as on July 1, 1986. Hence the chart which was showing the percentage decline of share prices is not at all correct for the first four scrips.

PARMOD KUMAR
Chani

The error is regretted.

—Editor

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POLL 3 RESULTS—SPORTS

A Unanimous Choice

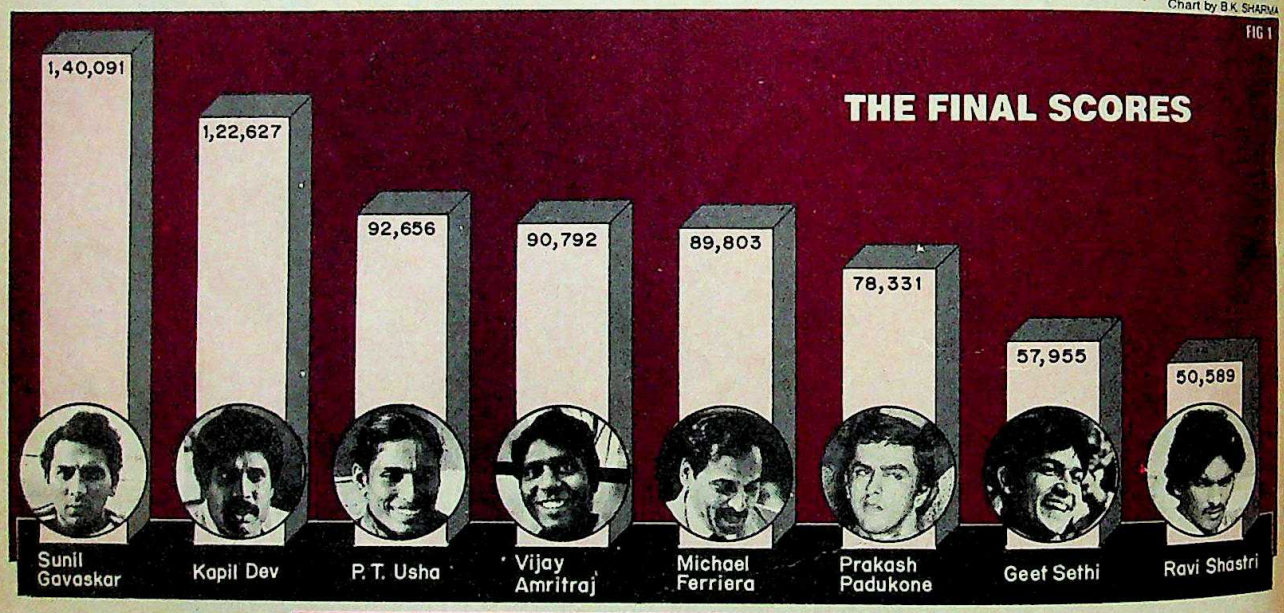
IN this, the third in the series of opinion polls, INDIA TODAY invited its readers to nominate the sportsman or sportswoman who, in their opinion, has contributed the most to Indian sport from a list of eight contenders. Slightly over 20,000 readers responded to the poll. For an independent assessment of the results, INDIA TODAY commissioned Dr V.L. Mote, a founder professor of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. Professor Mote also holds a doctorate in statistical methods from the State University of North Carolina in the US. His analysis.

IN making the transition from politics to sports, it would be logical to assume that the pattern of responses would be radically different from the earlier polls on political subjects, specially with cricket and Asiad fever in the air. But the response in the poll seems to indicate that India's sporting heroes are measured on the same scale as its political luminaries. In both worlds, it is only the fittest who survive and the popularity or otherwise of any individual sport is no indication of reader's preference when measured on the overall sporting scale.

The results revealed that cricketing superstar Sunil

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

FIG 1



RANKING PATTERNS BY SEX AND AGE

TABLE 1

	% of Total	Sunil Gavaskar	Kapil Dev	P.T. Usha	Vijay Amritraj	Michael Ferreira	Prakash Padukone	Geet Sethi	Ravi Shastri	Coefficient of Concordance
National Average	100.0	6.98	6.11	4.61	4.52	4.47	3.90	2.89	2.52	0.3719
Sex										
Male	91.2	6.97	6.11	4.61	4.54	4.46	3.92	2.88	2.51	0.3733
Female	8.8	7.02	6.05	4.71	4.32	4.57	3.70	2.97	2.66	0.3608
Age										
Below 20	16.8	7.06	6.15	4.71	4.17	4.62	3.60	3.13	2.56	0.3786
21–24	19.1	7.03	6.23	4.67	4.42	4.58	3.76	2.86	2.44	0.4025
25–34	35.9	7.00	6.07	4.58	4.61	4.46	4.07	2.78	2.42	0.3855
35–44	15.2	6.93	6.00	4.57	4.75	4.36	4.01	2.82	2.56	0.3575
45–60	9.5	6.79	6.11	4.60	4.52	4.29	3.93	2.99	2.77	0.3208
60 and above	2.7	6.72	6.08	4.43	4.84	4.27	3.88	2.86	2.92	0.3130
Unspecified	0.9	6.94	5.97	4.57	4.80	4.25	3.87	2.97	2.64	0.3452

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Gavaskar, perhaps not surprisingly considering his long and invaluable contribution to Indian cricket, tops the poll followed closely by current cricket captain Kapil Dev. But the fact that the most highly rated and most poorly rated sporting personalities are cricketers indicates that the excessive popularity of the sport does not detract from the reader's assessments of the contribution of sports personalities from other disciplines. An analysis of their views is presented in Figure 1, Table 1 and Table 2

An analyis of the percentage of total respondents who ranked each candidate at the various positions together with the average scores are reported in Table 2 while Table 1 shows the ranking pattern by sex and age. In this table we also report a ratio, which in statistical terms is known as "coefficient of concordance". Stated briefly, this ratio is so computed that it takes a value between zero and one: zero when there is no agreement amongst the respondents and one when there is perfect agreement.

Four salient features emerge from the data. These are:

► In Bombay and Calcutta, P.T. Usha ranks number 5 while on the national level she ranks third. In Delhi and Madras she ranks fourth. Much of her backing it seems, comes from non-metro areas.

► Women give P.T. Usha a slightly higher score than what she obtained from men as well as on the national average. However both women and men rank her an overall third.

► As far as the cricketers are concerned, Sunil Gavaskar seems to have an edge over his nearest competitor Kapil Dev as far as scores from women participants are concerned.

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

TABLE 2

The figures represent the percentage of total respondents who ranked each candidate at the various positions

Average Score*	Candidate	Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
6.98	Sunil Gavaskar	1	53.3	22.7	9.8	5.5	3.9	2.3	1.4	1.1	100.0
6.11	Kapil Dev	2	22.7	28.4	18.1	12.9	8.4	5.4	2.8	1.2	100.0
4.61	P.T. Usha	3	11.2	12.5	15.5	12.5	12.7	15.3	11.8	8.5	100.0
4.52	Vijay Amritraj	4	5.6	13.1	16.1	19.3	14.4	11.6	9.5	10.2	100.0
4.47	Michael Ferreira	5	2.8	13.6	17.5	17.2	16.7	14.6	10.2	7.3	100.0
3.90	Prakash Padukone	6	1.9	5.6	11.9	17.8	21.3	17.7	13.2	10.6	100.0
2.89	Geet Sethi	7	1.4	2.9	6.3	8.5	11.1	17.1	28.3	24.3	100.0
2.52	Ravi Shastri	8	1.1	1.2	4.7	6.3	11.5	15.9	22.8	36.7	100.0
		Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

*Maximum average score attainable is 8.

A total of 42 readers sent in entries that corresponded with the final national score. To select the three winners, a panel of four judges assessed the reasons they had given for ranking Sunil Gavaskar first. The judges selected the winners on the basis of their assessment of the contribution made by Sunil Gavaskar to Indian cricket and Indian sport as a whole.

First Prize: Lt Col. Digvijay Singh Goel
155 Base Hospital, Care 99 APO.

Assessment: "His sterling performance has taken him to the pinnacle of world cricket and he holds the largest number of individual records. He has led the Indian team with distinction and is probably the best known Indian sportsman in the international arena."

Second Prize: Aditi Raja
94 E Cross No. 9, RMV Extension, Bangalore.

Assessment: "Cricket's superstar, the Little Master, the world's most durable opening batsman, holder of world records for maximum test centuries and appearances; admired internationally for his superb technique and exemplary batting discipline; India's most cerebral captain; he lives cricket, never losing his cool and aplomb. Unquestionably India's international hero."

Third Prize: Samuel Thomas
Department of Zoology, University of Delhi, Delhi.

Assessment: "In his long career, he has put India in the record books umpteen times, making our country a force to reckon with in cricket. He gets the vote because of his persistent and sustained effort, unlike many others who were only meteoric in their performance and came and went in a flash."

Consolation Prizes:

Anoop Bhaskar (New Delhi), Rajesh Kumar Yaduvanshi (New Delhi), Krishna Sharma (Delhi), Raghavan (New Delhi), Atul Bhardwaj (New Delhi), Rajeev Choudhari (New Delhi), Ashok Rao (Bangalore), Shetty Harishchandra (Bangalore), Jiwan Sharma (Bangalore), Emmanuel Ezra (Calcutta), R.K. Agarwal (Madras), Ramakrishnan Vaidyanathan (Madras), Antony Andrews Cubelio (Cochin), Ajay Sahai (Varanasi), Kusumakar Vilok (Varanasi), Manoj Verman (Nagpur), Joseph Thomas Parel (Thiruvalla), Kannotharavindaksh Menon (Udyogamandal), Vishwa Bhushan Wadhwa (Jaipur), K. Chandran (Coimbatore), Vijay Kumar Khanna (Amritsar), Mukund Deo Agarwal (Jaipur), Ravindra Singh (Chandigarh), Dilip Kumar (Dehradun), Anurag Khanna (Ranchi), Hashim Raza Zaidi (Aligarh), Dr Jyoti Shanker (Allahabad), Rakesh Rawat (Cuttack), Prodeep Bose (Srinagar), Neena Sooch (Shimla), Virendra Kumar Tyagi (Dehradun), K. Shamsunder Lakundi (Hyderabad), Anil Gorani (Indore), Prabhakaran Nair (Trivandrum), Imranul Abedeen Siddiqui (Pipariya), C.P. Bhatnagar (Nawalgarh), Vijay Kumar Loknandi (Visakhapatnam), Iqbal Gilani (Adilabad), Rajeev Sharma (Jagadhari), Anil Vayyavanat Kizhkepat (Rajgiri), K. Nagendra Udupa (Kanpur).

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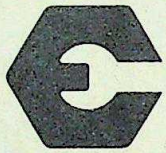

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According to statistical tests, the values of the ratios show that there was an agreement amongst the respondents on the rankings they have given.

It was perhaps somewhat inevitable that Sunil Manohar Gavaskar would be the unanimous choice among the respondents for the number one ranking, even though fellow cricketer Kapil Dev came in a fairly close second on the basis of his exceptional ability as an all rounder and as the current captain of the Indian side. For the last 15 years, Gavaskar has been the indestructable pillar on which the fortunes of the most popular spectator sport in the country has rested. In that period, he has broken virtually every batting record there is and, at an age (37) when most sportsmen are taking out retirement plans, he is still going strong. The recent uproar over his exclusion from the Indian team for the one day internationals against Australia which led to his hasty re-inclusion, offers adequate proof of the legendary, colossus-like domination he continues to exert on international cricket.

The computerised analysis of the results shows that a wide gap exists between the first two choices, Gavaskar and Kapil, and the rest of the candidates, though the fact that the last-ranked, Ravi Shastri, also happens to be a cricketer would indicate that the popularity of the sport in India has not been taken into account by the respondents in their individual assessments. Most of the respondents, in their reasons for selecting a particular candidate, laid considerable emphasis on the contribution made by the candidates towards placing India on the international sporting map and also what they have given back to the sport. Thus, tennis star Vijay Amritraj scored heavily in being placed fourth for his sportsmanship, his contribution to the Indian image in the international arena and his efforts to encourage and help younger tennis players improve their performances.

Similarly, cueists Michael Ferreira and Geet Sethi and badminton star Prakash Padukone have been ranked highly by some readers for their success in elevating a sport which has limited following in the country, to international levels. All three have won world titles in the course of their careers. However, the most significant finding in this poll is the exceptionally—and deservedly—high ranking given to P.T.Usha who figured third in the overall rankings. Indian athletes, specially women athletes, have traditionally been ignored when such comparisons are made and it is a tribute to Usha's phenomenal talents and her outstanding performances in the international and Asian athletic arena that she has been given a consistently high ranking by the respondents.

Samples of the respondents' comments on the seven candidates other than Sunil Gavaskar gives an indication of the reasons why they rate some prominent sportsmen ahead of others in terms of their individual contributions to Indian sport.

KAPIL DEV

His explosive performance on the playing field supported by good fortune has put India on the world cricketing map.
Ranchi — **Kedar Nath Laldas**

● Kapil's status as one of the top all-rounders in the game puts him in the number one spot.
New Delhi — **Piyush Agarwal**

● It was under his leadership that India proved a champion side in instant cricket and now with a convincing series win in England.
Faizabad — **Kumar Heramb**

P.T. USHA

Her training has been largely indigenous. She consistently continues to further improve on her performance.
C/O 56 APO — **Ranjit Virk**

● Usha has consistently proved that besides having players of distinction in specific games, India can also produce world class athletes.
Lucknow — **Diwakar Bhatt**

● Usha has broken a lot of barriers and inspired a new generation.
Calicut — **Unni Govindan**

VIJAY AMRITRAJ

Vijay has distinguished India through his exemplary sportsmanship and is grooming youngsters for the future. He has given back his gains to the game and the country.
Thane — **Venkatesh Manthri**

● Vijay has been keeping the Indian flag flying by his sportsmanship. With him, it is always the country which comes first.
Calcutta — **Ananth Ramachandran**

GEET SETHI

By beating stalwarts like Michael Ferreira at a young age he has brought to the fore the hitherto little known game of billiards.
New Delhi — **Vinesh Tanwar**

PRAKASH PADUKONE

He is the epitome of courage and determination.
Bombay — **Ganesh Prabhu**

● Padukone was the first Indian to take India to the top in world badminton.
Mangalore — **Mahaveer Padival**

MICHAEL FERREIRA

India can be proud of the fact that he earned a prominent position in international sports even though billiards has not been a popular event in the country.
Chandigarh — **Ayesha Banerjee**

● By winning the world's billiards title thrice, Michael Ferreira has done the most to put India on the world sports map.
New Delhi — **Lalit Magazine**

● Michael Ferreira is to billiards what Edwin Moses is to hurdling.
Cochin — **Sandeep Joseph**

RAVI SHASTRI

Kapil, Sethi and Usha form the cake but Ravi Shastri is the attractive cherry atop the cake.
Madras — **John Varghese**

● Ravi is an accomplished all rounder who is non-controversial and has shown maturity seldom seen in one so young.
C/O 99 APO — **Surjit Singh**

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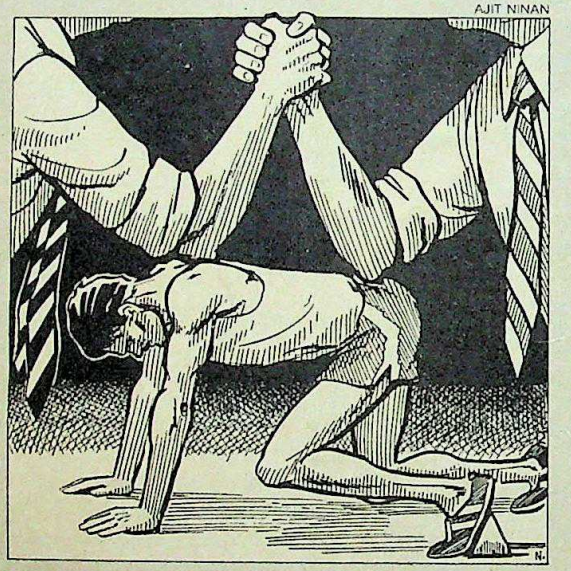
SPORTS

The Burden of Politics

FOUR years ago, at this time, the people who matter today—Rajiv Gandhi and his men—had only one concern uppermost in their minds: the holding of the ninth Asian Games at Delhi. Even as doubts were raised about the expenses involved—the Government continues to claim that a modest amount of Rs 70-odd crore was spent though the real figure was in excess of Rs 1,000 crore—Rajiv Gandhi's whiz kids had laboured away unfazed to stage a spectacular that did the nation proud. The protagonists for the games argued, and quite correctly, that not only would the Asiad leave a legacy of stadia of international standards in Delhi but would spread consciousness about sports in the country and end the country's famine in international laurels in all other Olympic sport apart from hockey. Now with the Seoul Asiad upon us, the time has come to ask: have the hopes been realised? Or is colour television the only lasting legacy of the Delhi Asiad?


AJIT NINAN

The answers, unfortunately, must be 'no' and 'yes'. Delhi's impressive infrastructure of stadia emboldened the Indian Olympic Committee to entertain dreams of bidding for the 1992 Olympics but has not been utilised for what it should have been: taking sports to the people. Thanks to the Delhi Asiad, India's sportspersons have been initiated into—and habitually use—the best of international equipment but the environment and sports consciousness necessary for laying the basic foundation is still missing. Government restrictions on officials clinging to positions of power in the various federations have resulted in a lot of heads rolling but Tweedledum has been replaced by Tweedledee and their whims still ruin the careers of many a talent. A plethora of agencies have been created to spot and train sportspersons but the Sports Authorities and the Olympic Committees are too busy sniping at each other to have time for anything else. The need of the hour is to 'catch them young', give them the best of facilities and incentives, train them to be the best in the world but talent spotters have yet to come up with anything.

The bane of Indian sport are the politicians who dominate the various federations, using them as an extension of their sphere of political influence and fighting their political battles through the organisations they head. And nothing has changed there. We thus have the unedifying spectacle of the Indian Olympic Committee President Vidya Charan Shukla, a political castaway, ramming through amendments extending the tenure of officials in direct defiance of the Government's directives and the Government responding by denying patronage to such officials for the trip to Seoul. Vis-a-vis Shukla that is not all that has happened. Union Minister for Human Resources Development, P.V. Narasimha Rao, who surely has his hands full with such a crucial charge, has replaced Shukla as the head of the Society for the National Institutes of Physical Education and Sports, which controls the affairs of the various sports institutes in the country. As the crowning insult, Shukla has been excluded from the official government delegation to Seoul.

Constitutionally, sports is a state subject—and Kerala has shown the way to unearth talent. But the Central Government controls the purse strings—and, most importantly, doles out foreign exchange—and is clearly not keen to loosen its control. The Ministry of Sports is now over four years old and "has promised to translate into action the newly adopted Resolution on National Sports Policy by giving high priority to the development of infrastructure and facilities for sports and games at grass-root levels" (so says the seventh plan document) but the words continue to sound hollow. The achievements of nations like East Germany may be difficult to duplicate but models are not lacking closer to home. China has schools for physical culture all over the country which train youngsters between the ages of 15 and 18. There is one school for each province and nine out of 10 China's international athletes come from these schools.

Or take the case of South Korea which will illustrate in the tenth Asiad that long-term planning is the only way to get the golds. Also hosts for the 1988 Olympics, South Korea started its preparations for the two events in 1982 itself, selecting a lakh children around 12 years of age from out of six million for further tests. After further screening, the figure was narrowed and still later pruned to 5,000. These 5,000 will form the core of the country's challenge in the Asiad and the Olympics and South Korea, which finished ahead of India at Delhi, is bound to run China and Japan close for the top spot this time.

Even today, the success of any Indian athlete—a P.T. Usha or a Prakash Padukone—is a matter of an individual's commitment to excellence with little or no help from the system. Again, it is pointless to talk about a nation with a population of over 700 million failing to get a single Olympic gold in an individual event when three out of four Indians have neither the time nor the inclination nor the facilities for sports. Those who do, are inspired primarily by examples—witness the revolution a Bjorn Borg has wrought in Sweden's tennis—and that's where we get back to the classic chicken and egg situation. India's sports planners have to get their act together fast or we will be entering the 21st century not only sans an Olympic champion but without mass participation in sports.

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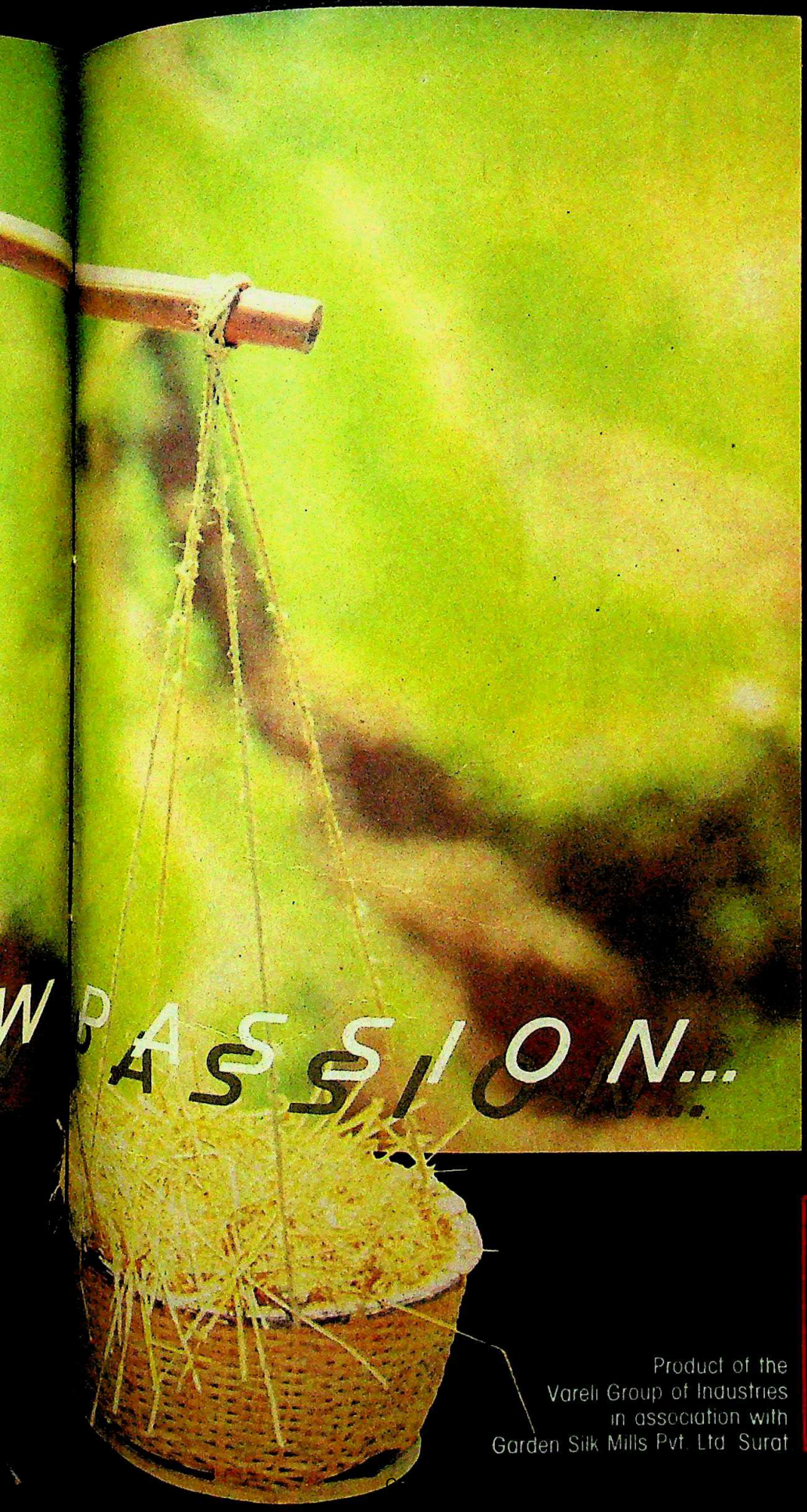

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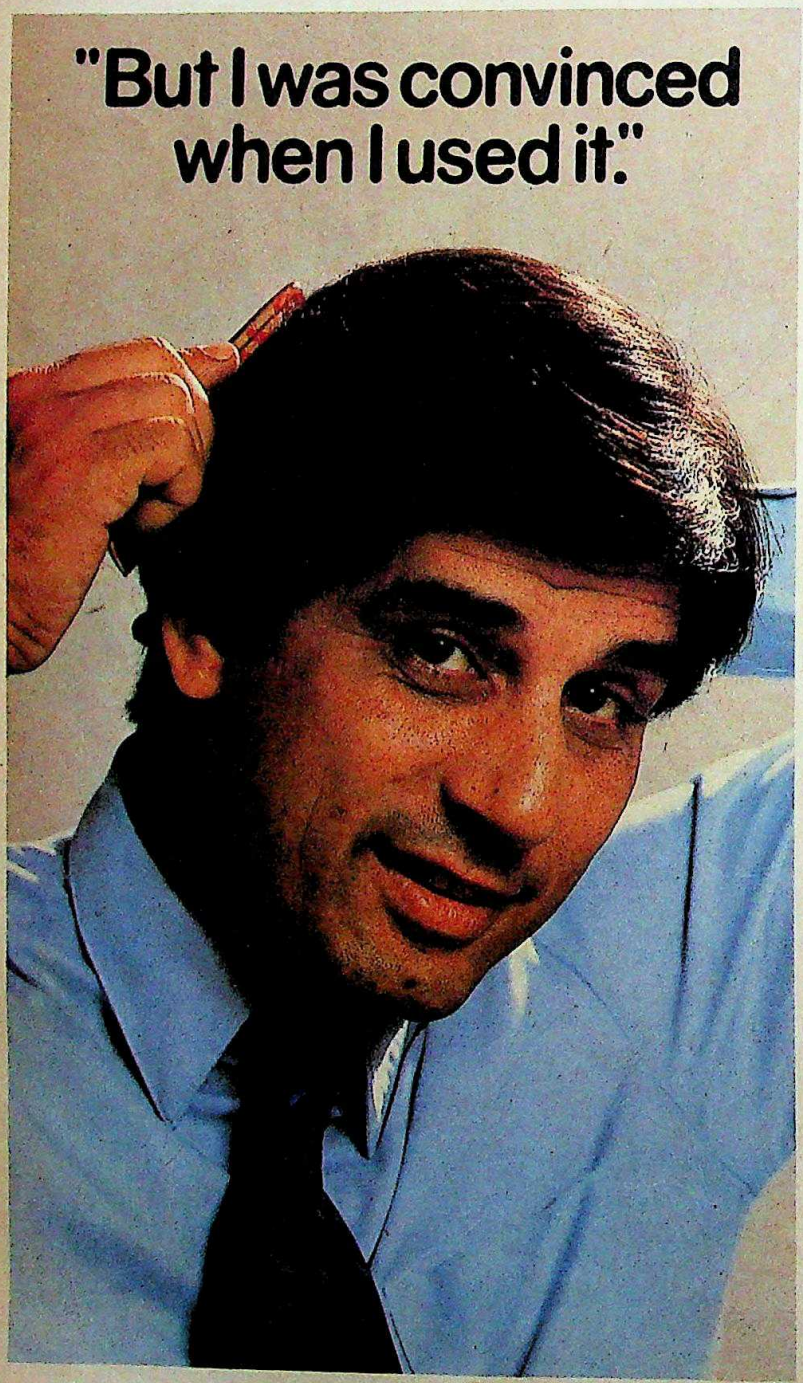

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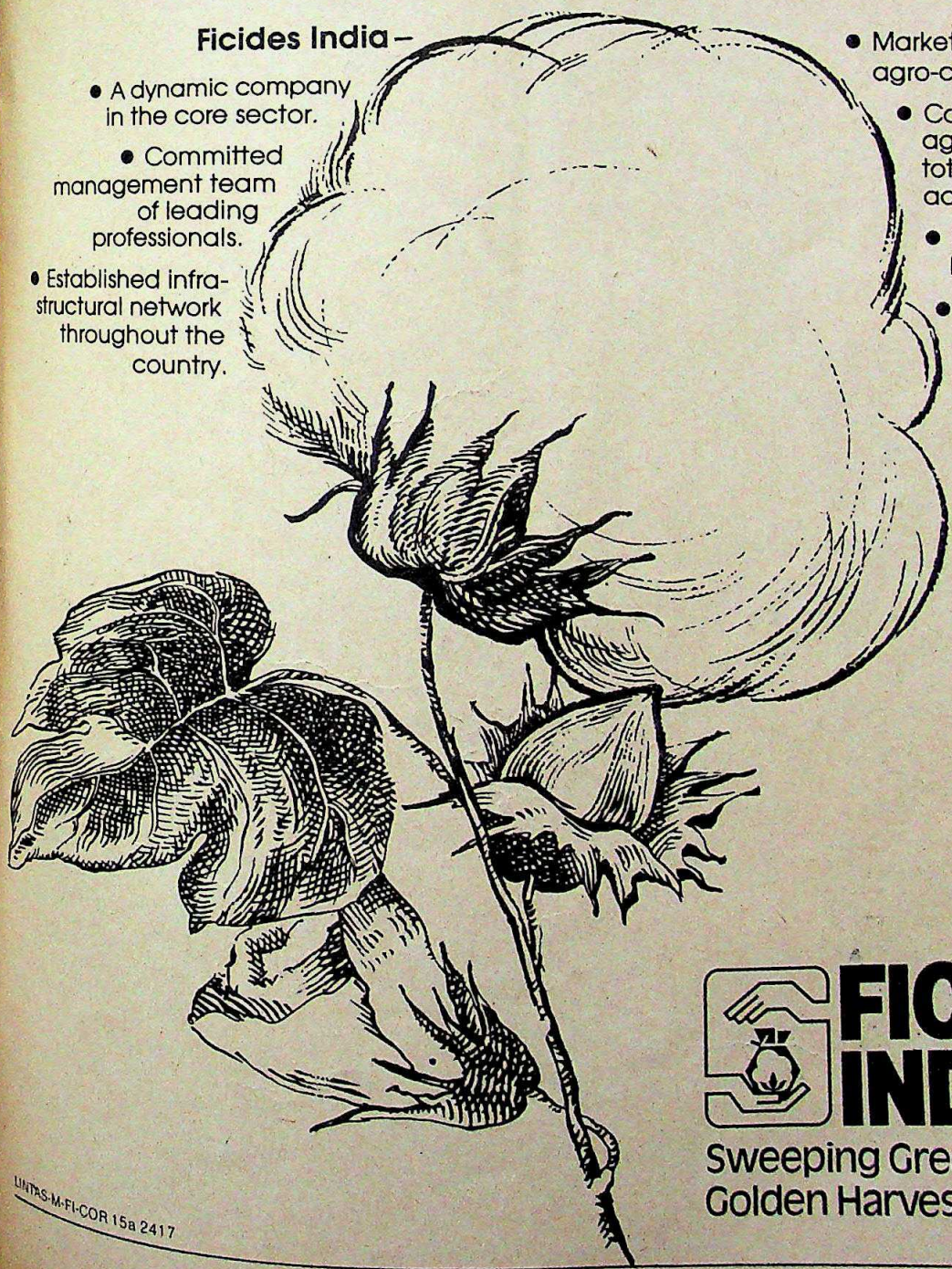

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SINGAPORE
SOUTH AFRICA
SPAIN
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SUDAN
SWITZERLAND
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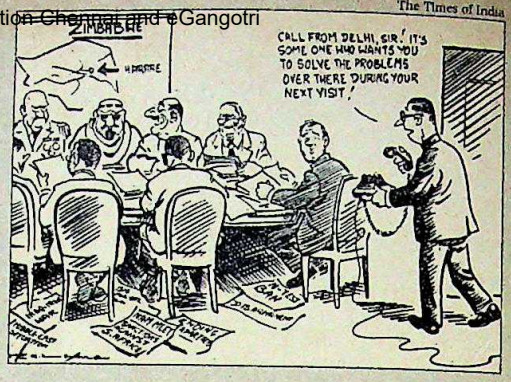
The Times of India



● *Yes, they sometimes fist each other. But attacks with arms like what happened in Das Munshi's case are not frequent.*

■ ASOKE SEN, Union law minister, on being asked if infighting among West Bengal Congressmen often turned physical, in *The Sunday Observer*

● *Question: Why didn't an Indian team manage to enter the World Cup football tournament?*
Answer: Because each time they were given a corner, they built a shop on it.

■ M.J. AKBAR relating a local joke about expatriate Indians in Harare in *The Telegraph*

● *I am neither a secessionist nor an anti-national....If I wanted a separate country I would have gone the Khalistan way and set up a government in exile.*

■ SUBASH GHISING, president, Gorkha National Liberation Front, in *Sunday*

● *All Delhi telephones needs are periodical visitations by some high-minded citizens in high dudgeon to keep them on their toes. Sethiji, you have set a very noble example.*

■ KHUSHWANT SINGH on former Union minister P.C. Sethi in his syndicated column

● *My father was an idealist, with a clear vision and single-minded passion. He set very high standards which were difficult to achieve and maintain. My problem is that, invariably, I am judged by his standards.*

■ DR FAROOQ ABDULLAH in *The Sunday Statesman*

● *Baba Amte's efforts in Punjab were an exercise in futility. Khalistanis have no respect for Gandhian philosophy. Non-violence has failed to face up to the Sten gun.*

■ BAL THACKERAY in *The Hindustan Times Sunday Magazine*

● *If you are going to be a politician dependent on someone's mercy, your fortunes will fluctuate according to the changes in that person's moods. That is what is happening to her (Jayalalitha).*

■ CHO RAMASWAMY in *Probe India*

● *All dissidence is for the sake of power. If the Congress(I) high command is ready to call the dissidents and if they're given some position of power...they will jump at it.*

■ SHARAD PAWAR in *Gentleman*

● *The State is both preoccupied and enfeebled. As a consequence it does not heed a demand so long as the group is civil. But the moment the group takes to the streets, the moment it threatens to take to arms, the State caves in. Each round reinforces the lesson: militancy pays.*

■ ARUN SHOURIE in *The Illustrated Weekly*

● *Why this notion that the (film) industry girls get married only when they discover that they are pregnant? Can't we like all other women, get married and in a natural, normal sequence of events, bear a child later?*

■ JAYA PRADA in *Filmfare*

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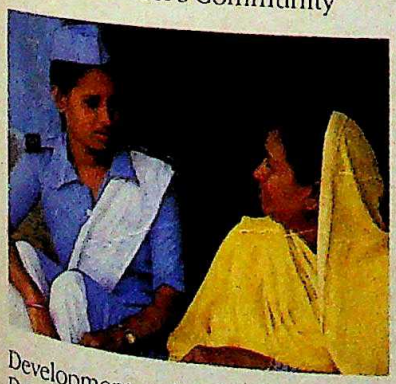

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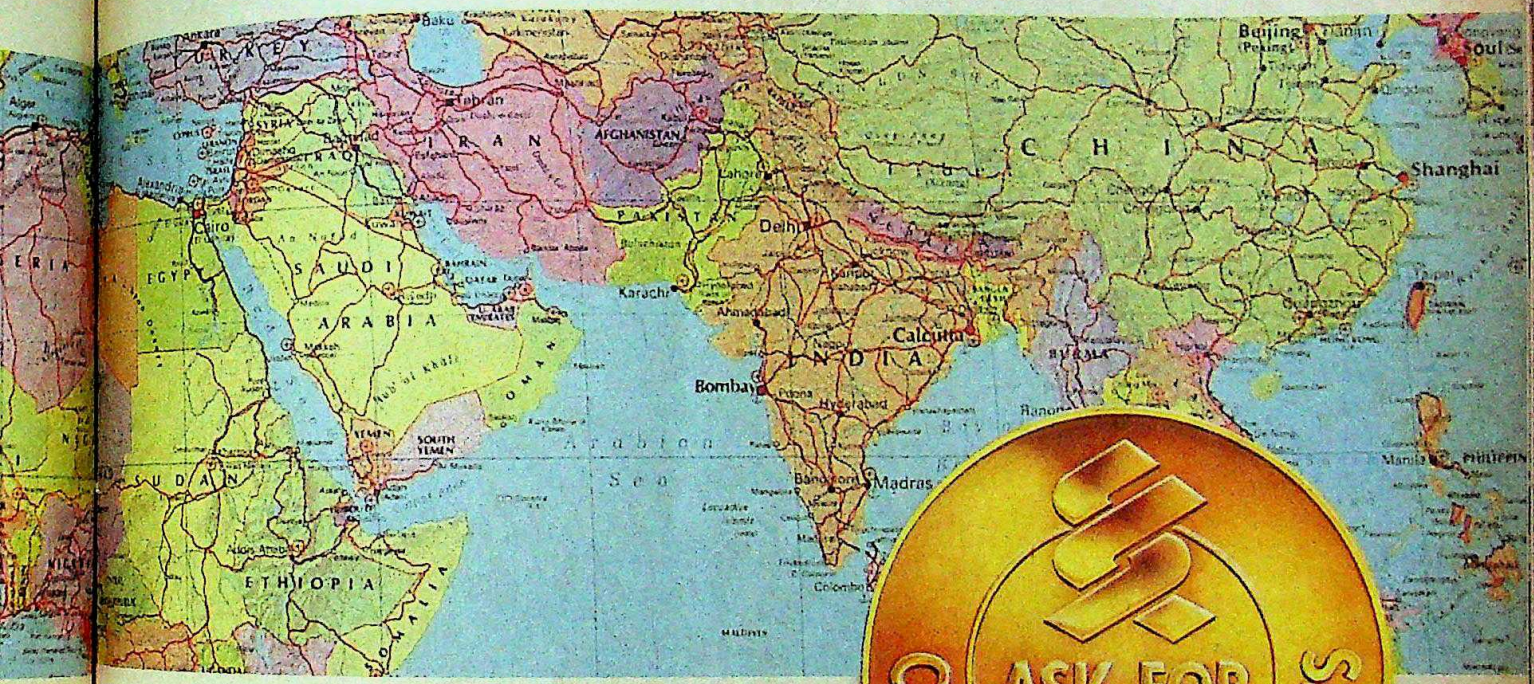

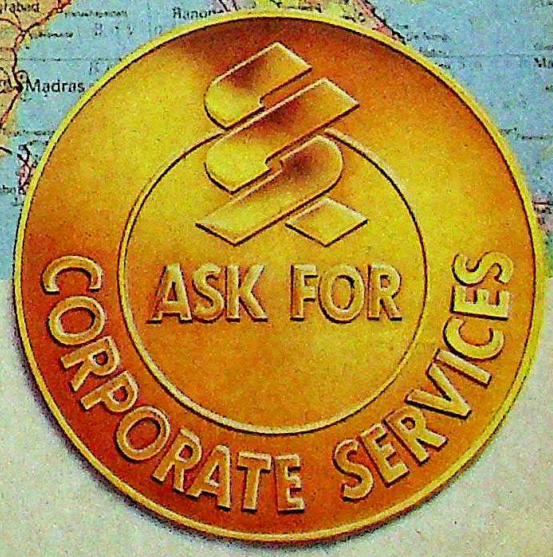

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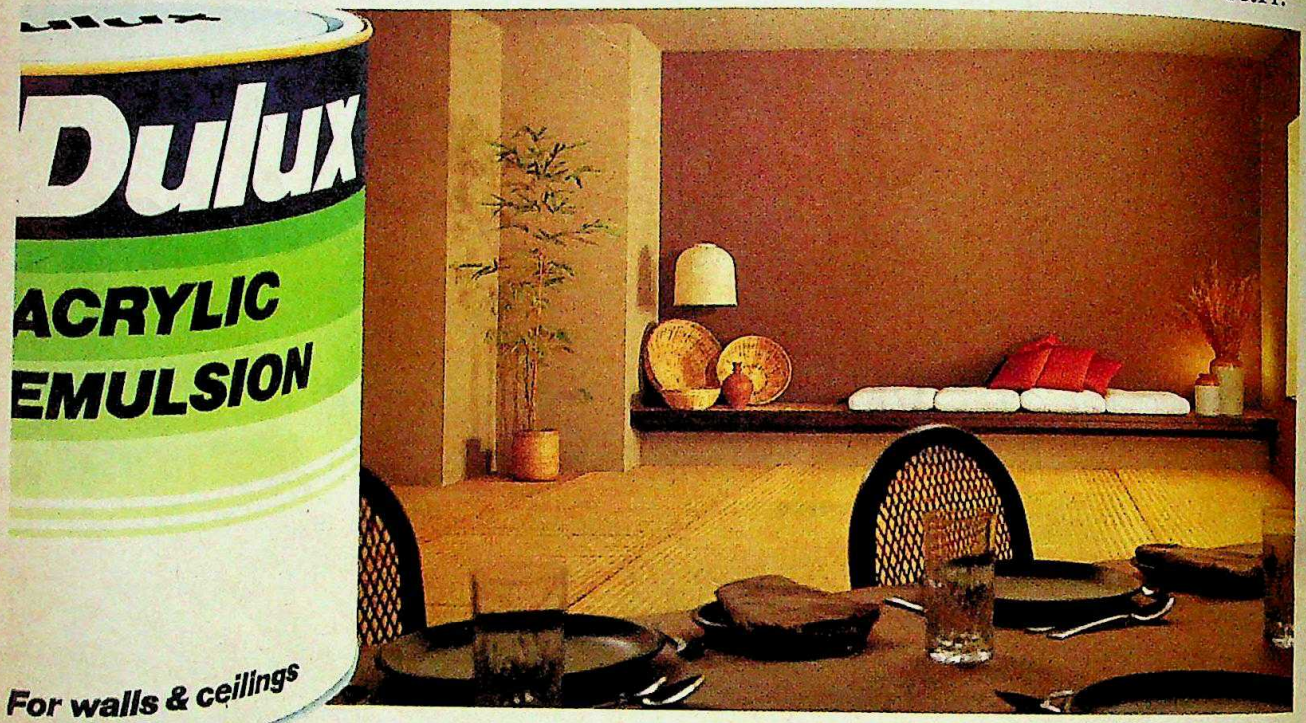

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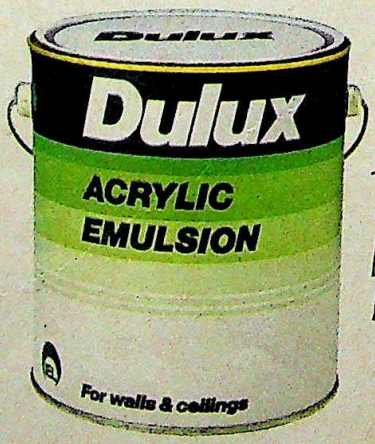

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TRAM STOP

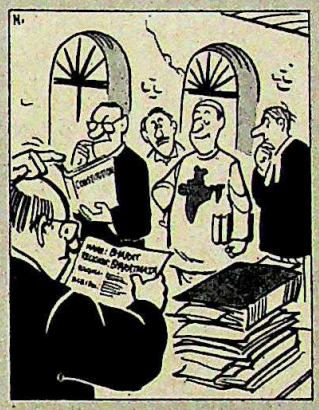
■ With Calcutta's Metro still streets away from completion, the city's commuters are at the mercy of other means of transport, like the twin-car tram service that rattles through various parts of the city—power permitting. The trams are operated by a driver with a conductor in each of the cars. A string leading through the cars attached to a bell in the driver's

compartment signals the driver to start moving again.

Last fortnight, during rush hour at a tram terminus, one particular driver, seeing his cars crowded, hopped nimbly into his booth and set off with undignified haste. He rattled past the potholes for a good distance till the first stop where he waited, and waited, for the bell to ring. Determined to get to the bottom of things, he got down from his perch and peered into each cab till he realised that, in the rush, he had left his conductors behind. Ignoring the howls of protest, he announced his intention of retracing his tracks till he found the missing conductors. Rules, he stated, were rules. Fortunately, just when the passengers were contemplating the first tram hijack in history, the missing conductors arrived puffing and panting and the chaotic caravan set off for the next stop.

NAME GAME

■ At a time when communal and religious bonds are gradually garroting the unity of the country, the example of a Muslim youth, Alimuddin, from Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh, would stand out like a torch of hope—were it not for the sad fact that the batteries would have to be supplied by the bureaucracy. The youth, a student in a local government college, submitted an application to the college authorities requesting a change of name and religion. He also filed a similar application in the district court. His new name was given as Bharat and his religion as Bharatmata. The reasons he gave were uncomplicated enough—that he did not believe in any other religion except in the religion of humanity and the community



of the country.

But such soul-stirring sentiments cut little ice—or red tape—as far as the bureaucracy was concerned. The court, going by the fact that 'Bharatmata' is not listed as a religion, has avoided giving a decision and the college has cleverly followed suit by awaiting the court's decision before taking action. Latest scores: Bureaucracy: 2; Patriotism: 0

GRAVE ISSUE

■ For residents of the Harijan Colony in Malappuram in Kerala, it was an extremely grave issue. An old man had died and his last wish was that he should be buried alongside the grave of his father. But this was easier expressed than executed. The site had changed ownership and therein lay the rub—it was now owned by the state Government. Under local

law, Harijans were given a special cemetery plot in the colony itself. But the sons of the dead man dug in their heels and insisted that their father's last wish was sacrosanct and the entire colony promptly staged a satyagraha in support.

But it was a different kind of support that was the problem. Under local Harijan custom, once a dead body was lifted from its last place of repose, it could only be put down in the grave. The first day, the dead man's sons held up the body, then the relatives took over and so it went for three days—with the Harijans raising a stink while the local administration engaged in heated negotiations. The issue was finally settled when the administration agreed to let the old man's body be finally lowered to the ground he wanted. For the victors, it was a case of better late than never.

COP CAPER

■ The long arms of the law often end up clutching the wrong end of the lathi. The case of one Delhi constable illustrates the point. Intent on busting a local racketeer dealing in dollars and dope, he asked his superior for permission to approach the man as a customer and lay his hands on the evidence required to nab his target red-handed. Permission given, he slipped into civvies and set off.

The sting proceeded smoothly and the constable, his pockets loaded with evidence, emerged from the alley waiting for his back-up team to rush in and wrap up the case. The police posse duly obliged, but grabbed him instead and charged him for possession of narcotics and foreign exchange. As it transpired, a rival police officer had heard of the operation and sent his own team instead, hoping to earn some bonus points. They knew the location of the alley but not the description of the peddler. Our hero was emerging furtively from the alley, his pockets bulging with illegalities. Moreover, his back-up team was delayed because the bus they were in broke down. So he copped it instead.

—Compiled by DILIP BOBB

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YEAR	OWN FUNDS	DEPOSITS	RECEIVABLES		TOTAL ASSETS
			H.P.	LEASING	
1960	49.58	49.90	322.64		336.64
1970	157.15	708.24	1210.92		1531.19
1980	426.70	2627.92	4705.15		5620.60
1985	1083.77	8649.06	11757.61	3201.81	18085.68
30.6.86	1083.77	9408.94	12982.02	3852.44	19619.00

Number of Accounts

	1980	1985	30.6.86
Deposits	26946	85589	91516
Hire Purchase	6976	11699	12869

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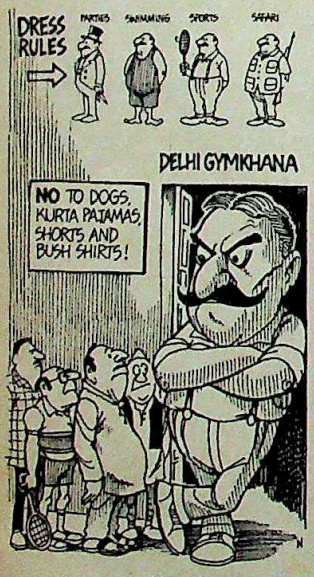
Dressing Down

● Just about every senior minister in the Government, by virtue of his sartorial attire, would probably be bounced from Delhi's prestigious Gymkhana Club. The Gym has recently gone in for a tailor-made dash of the old Raj—through posters and private circulars reminiscent of puritanical Cromwellian edicts, the Gym has asked its members to dress up or ship out. Strict dress codes have been drawn up for the bars, dance floor and bridge rooms. No shorts or jogging suits. And tuck that shirt in please. The club's earnestness became evident last fortnight when some senior government officials, who have been members for more than a decade, loitered in for a round of beer dressed in crisp kurta-pyjamas. To their zipless bewilderment, they were told by the club bouncer that they could not enter. At the Gym safari suits are in. Kurta-pyjamas out. And some

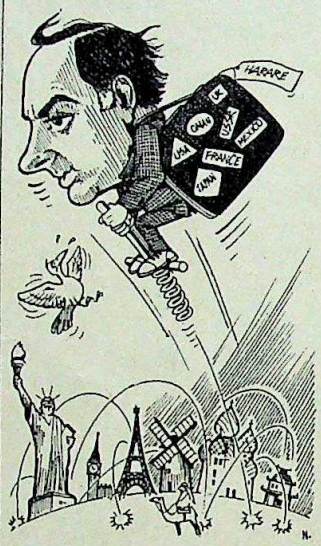


Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

of the members, now hot under the collar, have decided to roll up their sleeves and needle the club's management on the issue because the new regulations would bar the entry of anybody—including the prime minister—sporting the national dress. A committee has now been appointed to iron out the differences. Looks as if some scissor work will be necessary.

Prime Mover

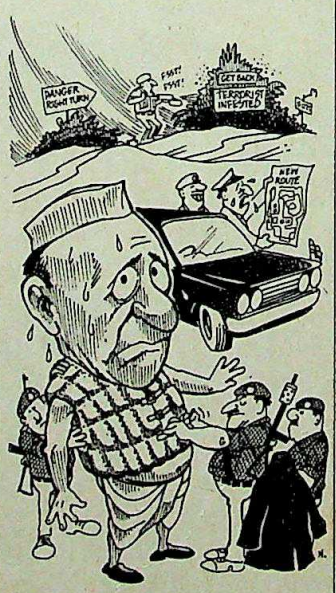
● Rajiv Gandhi has obviously been smitten by travelmania. He is emerging as the most peripatetic prime minister the country has ever had—except that his naviga-



tors seem to have a marked preference for foreign airports. Last fortnight when Rajiv returned from his nine-day trip to Harare, the former airline pilot had globe-hopped 180,000 km in a total of 12 trips. The prime minister and his staff have spent the equivalent of one day every week abroad, remaining out of the country for a total of 77 days out of 559, since March last year when Rajiv began his high-profile diplomacy with his first official visit to Moscow. He has since visited every major capital including Washington, Paris, Moscow, Tokyo, Amsterdam, Geneva, Mexico, London and Havana. During the total of 11 weeks spent abroad, he visited 25 countries. The cost of these frenetic forays is—and now hang on to your seat-belts—Rs 20 crore so far. Next stop is the land "Down Under", millions and millions of kangaroo hops away.

Vested Interest

● The trials and tribulations of being a minister on the terrorist hit-list must make politicians wish that they had never entered the profession. Many of them say that more annoying than even the death threats is the day-to-day drudgery of having to take careful precautions. Security guidelines prescribe, for example, that the ministers must regularly change the routes they take from office to home and back as well as make detours of as many as five km. Several VIP's, as a result, find themselves at sea almost every day in the capital, because their drivers lose their way on unfamiliar routes. They find it difficult to keep appointments or even to socialise with friends. But the real cropper is the bullet-proof vest that all these ministers are required to wear. The ones provided by the Government weigh a tonne—well 10 kg to be exact. The weight is not the only



burden. Wearing the vests in this weather is like being in a sweater in the middle of summer. One minister confided that he unburdens himself of this gear any chance he gets. But security men have strict instructions to check on these VIP's to ensure that they are properly vested. If they are not they are politely asked to comply, which sometimes entails a trip home.

Suite Surrender

● Even in real life Amitabh Bachchan always wins. The super-MP has his favourite spots and one of them is the Taj Coromandel hotel where he likes to stay when he is in

Madras. And Bachchan has a favourite suite on the fifth floor. But last fortnight he had competition. In Madras briefly during that period, Bachchan was told by an embarrassed management that the President of Male, then on a visit to Madras, also had his eye on the suite. In a gesture of diplomatic magnanimity, he agreed to stay in another room until his departure. After the president left, Bachchan asked to be shifted to the coveted suite. Again, there was an embarrassed silence—Jagdish Tytler, minister of state for civil aviation, had just booked the suite for himself. When a hotel official quietly informed Tytler of the dilemma, it was the minister's turn to make a diplomatic gesture. The suite, Tytler said decisively, should go to Bachchan, and he would simply move into another room. And there the matter ended, sans a single unnecessary *dishum*.

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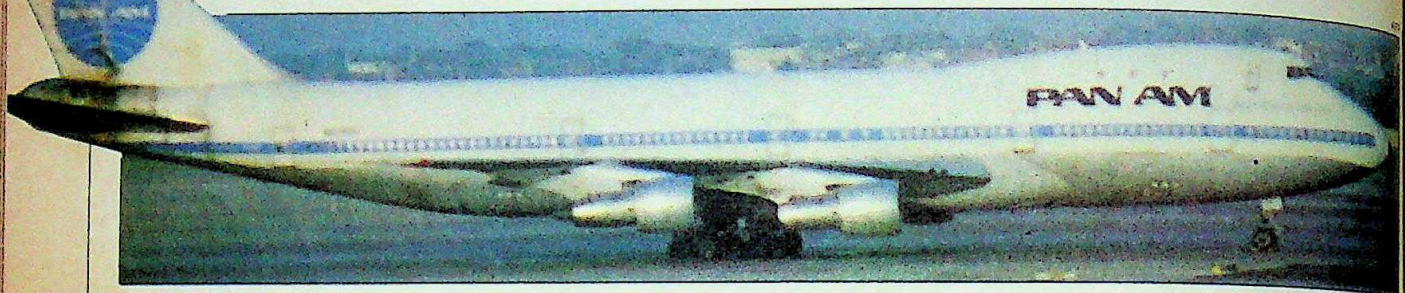
PAN AM HIJACK Pakistan's



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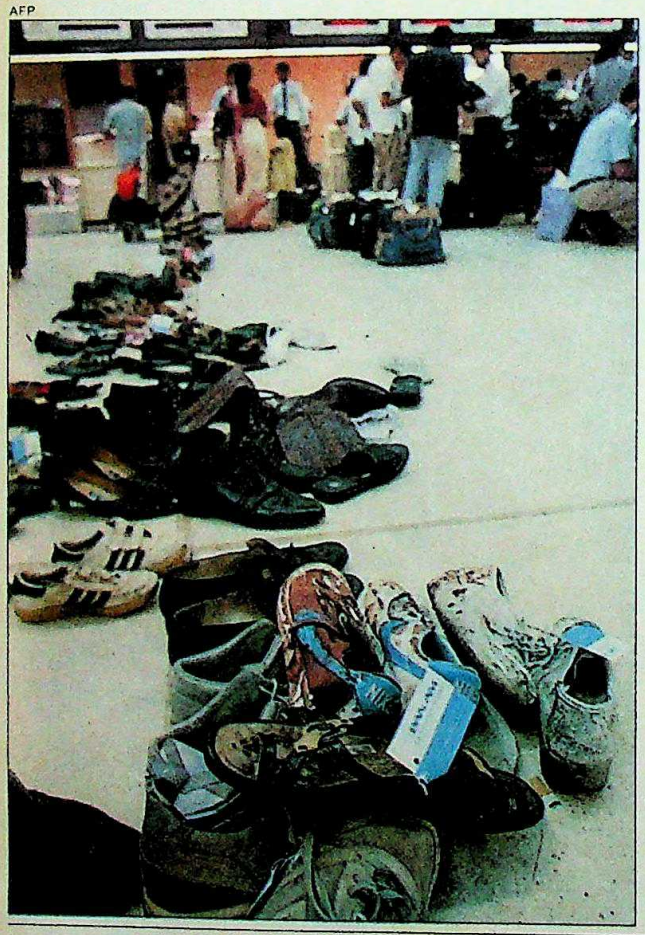

REUTER

Passengers' shoes recovered from the aircraft (left) and one of the hijackers

ALMOST two weeks after the September 5 hijacking of a Pan American Boeing at Karachi airport reached its grisly climax, the welter of confusion that has made it the most intriguing hijack in aviation history continues to cast a lengthening shadow over the tragedy. The contradictions in initial statements made by Pakistani officials handling the crisis; the obvious bungling by security forces that led to the death of 23 passengers and grievous injury to another 130; the glaring loopholes in the security set-up at Karachi airport that allowed the hijackers access to the parked aircraft; the predictable mechanical failure that provoked the massacre; the unconvincing stand taken by Pan Am officials regarding the flight crew's unprecedented action in abandoning the passengers and, above all, the actual motives and origins of the hijackers themselves.

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Bloody Blunder

NAMAS BHOJANI

NAMAS BHOJANI

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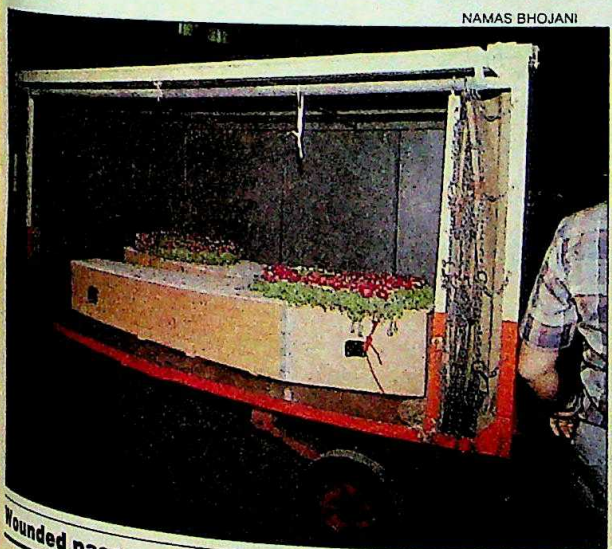

AFP

Wounded passengers at Karachi and Bombay and the coffin carrying the body of one of the victims

have all added high-octane fuel to an event that threatens to balloon into a major international controversy.

The fact that a majority of the passengers—and the 23 people who were killed in the bloodbath—were of Indian origin has added another hostile element to Indo-Pakistan relations, best symbolised by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's strong condemnation of Pakistan's "bungling" of the hijack in the middle of the Non-Aligned summit in Harare, where President Zia-ul-Haq was also present. Despite the unstinting praise for Karachi's handling of the crisis from US President Ronald Reagan and Pan Am officials—which would have been highly unlikely were American passengers among the dead—the Indian Government, international aviation experts, eye-witnesses and the passengers on board the ill-fated aircraft who survived the 16-hour nightmare are convinced that the bloody denouement was exacerbated by a series of unforgivable blunders on the part of

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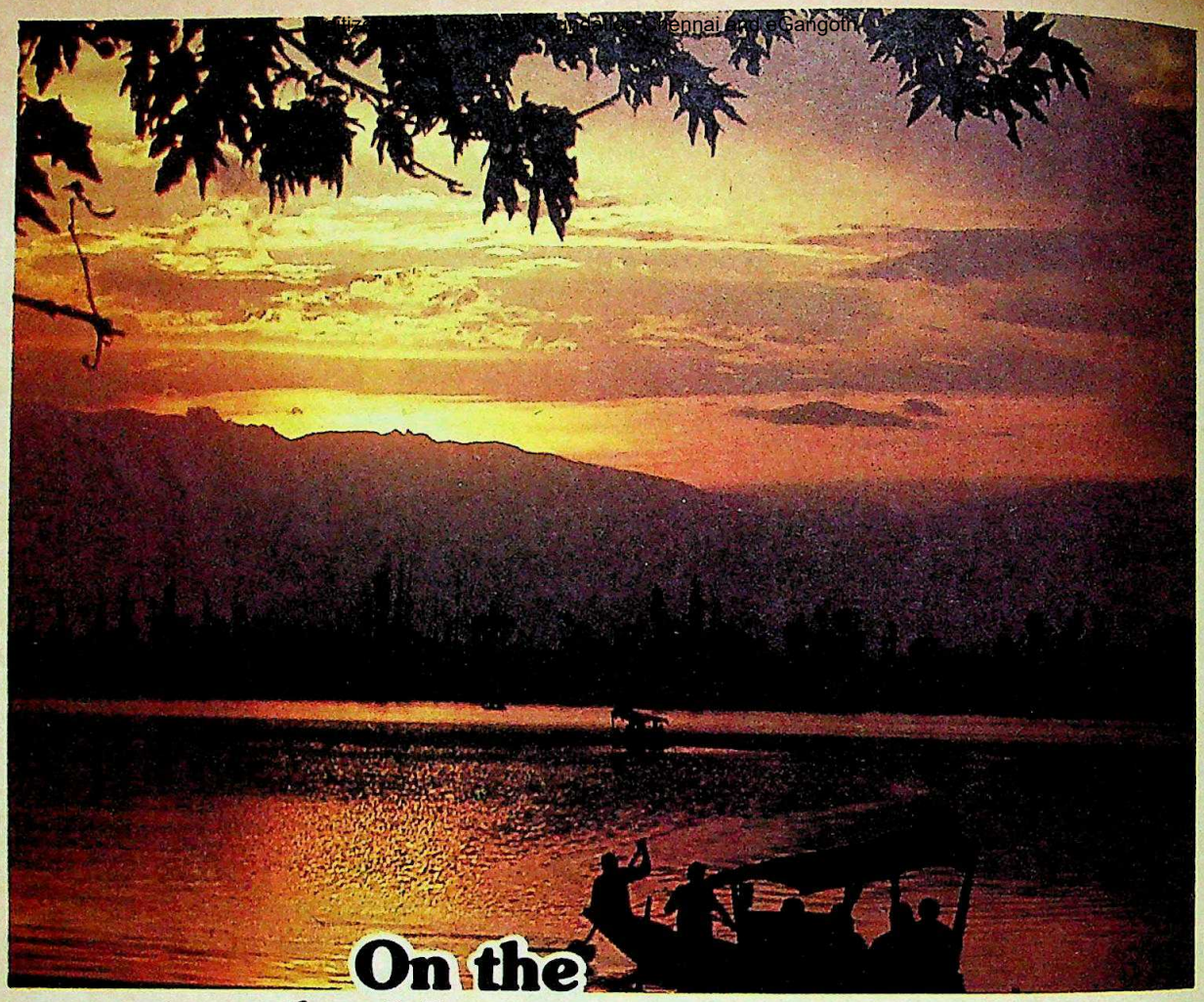

On the placid waters of the Dal the only ripples are the lapping of the waves against the shikara

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authorities managing the crisis at Karachi airport.

Right from the moment the hijackers, dressed in the sky-blue uniforms of Pakistan's Airport Security Force (ASF) and driving a Suzuki van fitted with a siren, flashing lights and antennae on the roof raced up to Pan Am flight 73 at Karachi airport and commandeered the stationary aircraft, it was evident that local authorities had little control over the subsequent tragic sequence of events. What is more glaringly evident is that, contrary to Pakistan claims, the anti-hijack commando force was nowhere near the scene of action till long after the gruesome drama ended in a hailstorm of bullets and the hijackers had been hustled into custody.

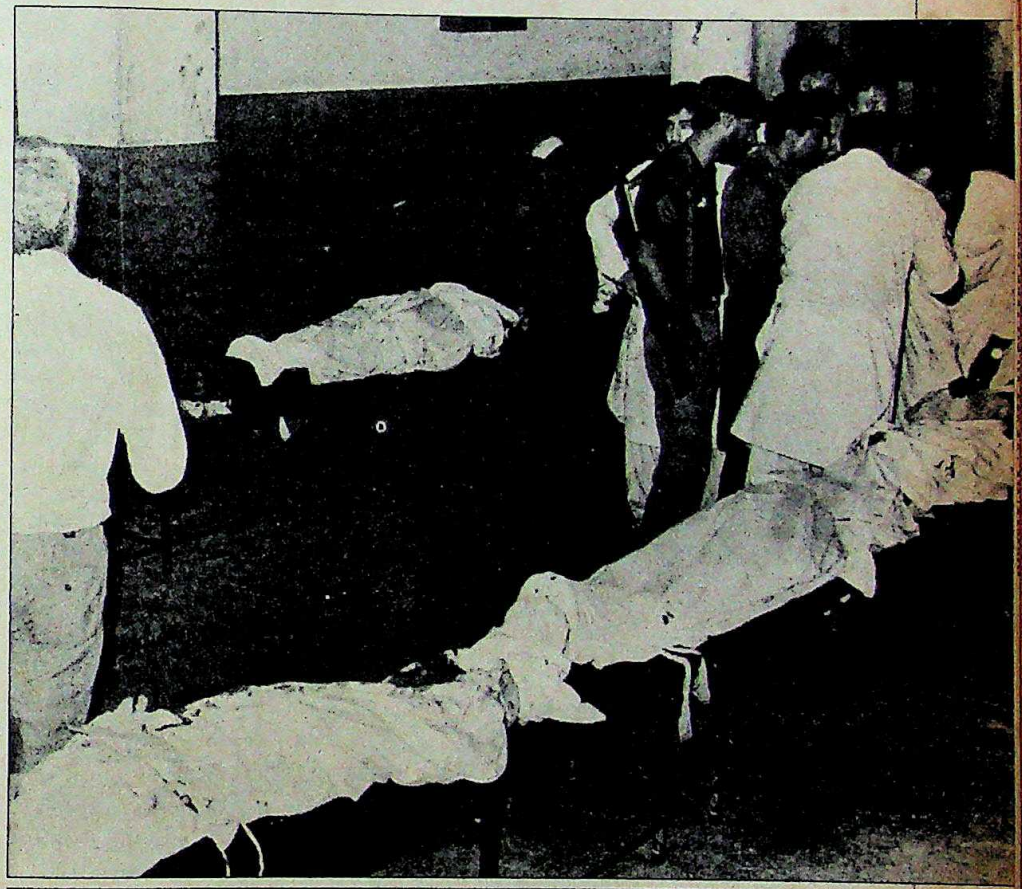
Now that the cloud of confusion surrounding the hijack has cleared sufficiently, the actual sequence of events pieced together from passengers and crew members leaves no doubt that senior Pakistani officials blundered fatally in their handling of the crisis. The Pan Am flight landed at Karachi airport at 5.25 a.m (4.55 a.m. local time) from Bombay, where it had originated, for a one hour scheduled stop-over. On board were 394 passengers and nine infants apart from the 13 recently-hired Indian flight attendants and the American flight crew. There were 207 Indian citizens, 85 Pakistanis, 44 US citizens and 58 other passengers of European and other nationalities. Over 50 of the US and British passport holders were of Indian origin, returning after holidays in India.

A total of 109 passengers disembarked at Karachi and the first bus-load of passengers boarding at Karachi had barely reached the aircraft when two heavily-armed hijackers jumped out of the security van and rushed up the ramp leading to the left front door where Neerja Mishra, 23, a flight purser with six months experience, was waiting to welcome boarding passengers. Showing admirable presence of mind, Mishra rattled off the special code number over the intercom which alerts the cockpit in case of a hijack. By this time, a burst of gunfire outside the aircraft—which wounded two airline staff members working on a Kuwait Airline aircraft nearby—had already sounded the alarm. The two hijackers were joined by two others, one dressed in the traditional Pakistani salwar kameez and carrying a brief-case loaded with grenades. The time was 6.05 a.m.(Indian Standard Time), 40 minutes after Flight Pan Am 73 had landed.

"Most of us were asleep and at first we couldn't figure out what was happening," says Manoj Seth, 58, a businessman from Surat who was taking a package tour of Europe and the US along with his wife. Most passengers mistook the hijackers for Pakistan security personnel because of their uniform. The passengers were also unaware that the captain and his cockpit crew had already abandoned the aircraft through the Inertial Rail Escape Device, a metal cable attached to the roof of the cockpit which enables the crew to open the emergency hatch of the cockpit and slide down to the ground 36 feet below.

The passengers only realised it was a hijack when the leader, attired in Pakistani dress and speaking English, grabbed an air hostess by the hair and holding his gun to her head, ordered that the aircraft doors be closed, the window blinds pulled down and passengers from the first and clipper class move into the economy section and crouch down with their hands behind their heads.

That the hijackers were deadly serious was soon tragically evident. Rajesh Kumar Patel, 28, a naturalised American citizen and a prosperous motel owner from Huntingdon Beach, California, mistaking the hijackers for Pakistanis, rose up from his seat and shouted: "I am an American citizen." The hijackers pushed him into the vacated front section, shot him and threw his body out onto the tarmac. Patel's 82-year-old grandmother who was accompanying him to the US, was one of the 21 passengers who died in the bloody carnage 16 hours later.



Bodies of victims lined up at Karachi airport

Patel's death had a sobering effect on the rest of the passengers. By now, it was obvious that the hijackers were Arabs. The flight attendants were asked to collect all the passports and separate the American ones. The air hostess who was handed the passports managed to conceal the 44 US passports under a seat. At first, the leader of the hijackers was infuriated by the absence of American passports but the air hostess succeeded in convincing him that all the passengers on board were Indians or other nationalities. "We are not against you. Today is my birthday and we want the US Government to know that the Palestinians are against them," said the leader, whose false passport gave his name as Bomar Hussein, later

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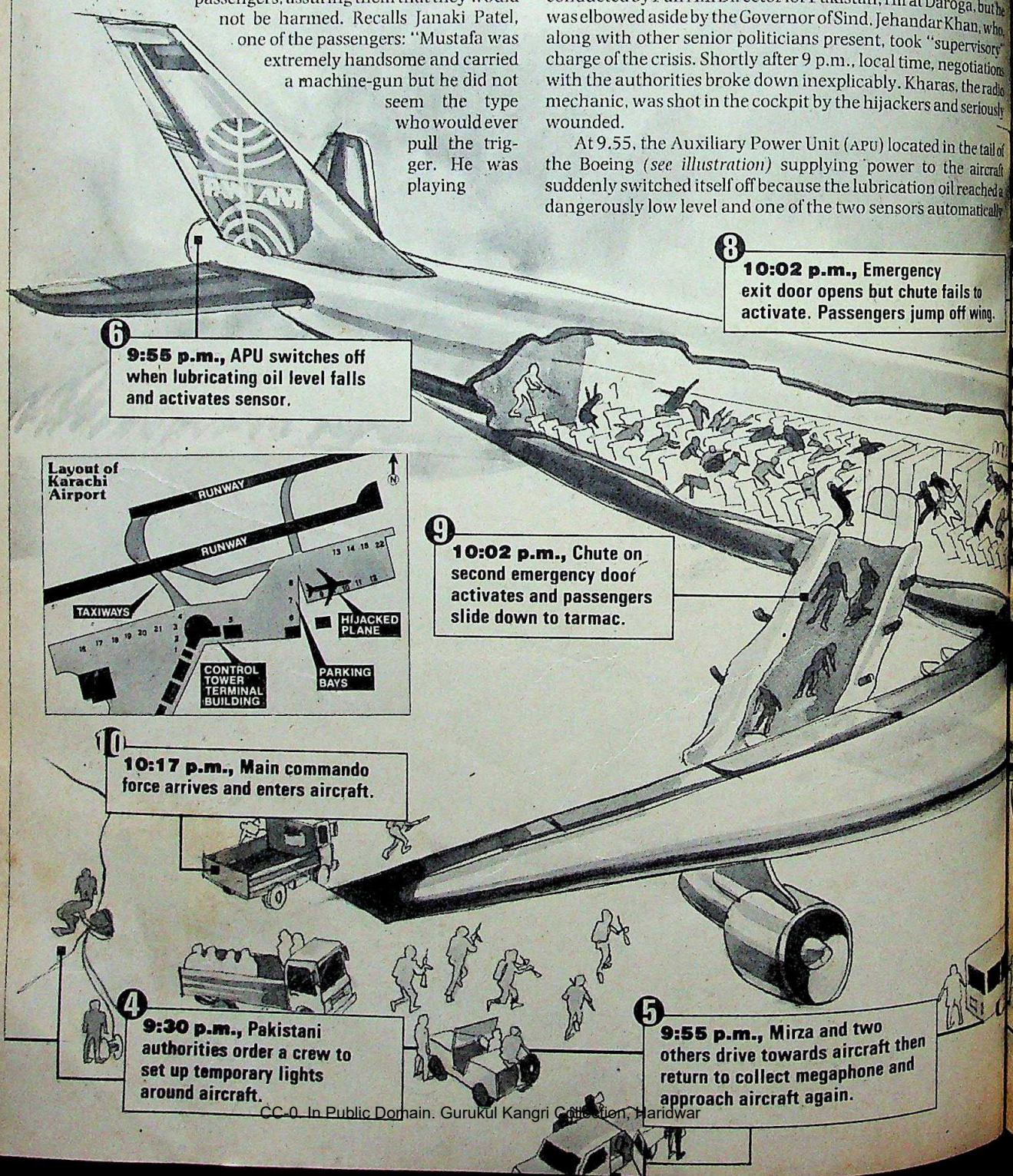
identified as Mustafa. They then asked a stocky man reportedly an Britisher, to come to the front section. But as he was being led away, he started chanting: "Allah. Allah." The terrorist leader smiled and said: "Okay, you're not an American. You can sit down."

Two hours after the aircraft was commandeered, the passengers were allowed to relax and sit back in their seats. The next 16 hours were a long and agonising ordeal as negotiations with Pakistan authorities began. At first, the hijackers set a 7 p.m. deadline and demanded a relief crew to fly them to Larnaca, Cyprus. They also demanded the release of three of their comrades imprisoned in Cyprus. The deadline was later extended to 11 p.m. when the hijackers were informed that a relief crew was being flown in from Europe. Inside the aircraft, the initial fear had evaporated and the hijackers even joked with passengers, assuring them that they would not be harmed. Recalls Janaki Patel, one of the passengers: "Mustafa was extremely handsome and carried a machine-gun but he did not seem the type who would ever pull the trigger. He was playing with the boy and even allowed the boy to touch his gun." The hijackers even asked a flight attendant to announce on the public address system that they did not mean any harm since the passengers were all behaving well.

THEN began the series of blunders and misfortunes that triggered off the blood-bath. It took the Pakistani authorities over two hours to establish radio contact with the hijackers. At first, they tried communicating with a portable loudspeaker. When there was no response, they hunted around for someone who could speak Arabic. Finally, a Pan Am mechanic, Meherjee Kharas, who was already on board checking the cockpit radio and was trapped inside the aircraft when the hijackers took over, was asked to establish communication links with Karachi control tower. The initial negotiations were conducted by Pan Am Director for Pakistan, Hirat Daroga, but he was elbowed aside by the Governor of Sind, Jehandar Khan, who, along with other senior politicians present, took "supervisory" charge of the crisis. Shortly after 9 p.m., local time, negotiations with the authorities broke down inexplicably. Kharas, the radio mechanic, was shot in the cockpit by the hijackers and seriously wounded.

At 9.55, the Auxiliary Power Unit (APU) located in the tail of the Boeing *(see illustration)* supplying power to the aircraft suddenly switched itself off because the lubrication oil reached a dangerously low level and one of the two sensors automatically



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switched the APU off. The lights flickered and the battery-powered emergency lights came on and quickly started dimming as the battery power ran down. Shortly after, the Boeing was plunged into pitch darkness. The hijackers, in a panic and evidently fearing a raid, shouted to each other in Arabic and sprayed the aircraft with automatic fire and flung their grenades. Six grenades exploded and turned the inside of the aircraft into a charnel house. One of the first to die was Neerja Mishra, who was standing next to one of the hijackers and took the first burst from his Kalashnikov across her waist.

The killing spree lasted barely 30 to 60 seconds. It was later established that two of the hijackers had Kalashnikov automatic weapons and fired one clip each but, in that enclosed space, even that limited fire caused havoc. Finally, one of the flight attendants managed to open the door over the wing on the left side of the plane. But since she had put the door on manual rather than automatic, the chute did not open. Most passengers, in panic, risked the 14-foot drop to the tarmac, suffering major fractures and broken legs. Another attendant opened another door and the chute popped open, allowing the remaining passengers to slide down to safety.

The terrorist leader was apparently injured in the cross-fire between the hijackers but the other three, having run out of ammunition, joined the passengers running towards the terminal building. They were arrested by airport police after passengers pointed them out. Passengers are unanimous in their conviction that there was no warning given to the hijackers about the power failure—a fact that could have saved many lives—or that there were commandos anywhere near the aircraft when the lights in the plane went off, indicating that security forces were preparing to storm the aircraft.

The three captured hijackers were whisked off to a top-security military base in Karachi and were later identified as Abdullah Khalil, Nazir Hussain and Fahd. The leader, Mustafa, is in hospital, surrounded by armed guards. All four were travelling on false or forged Bahraini passports. Regardless of the nationality of the hijackers, however, or their motives, the manner in which the hijacking was handled has raised a number of serious questions that demand urgent answers.

IT is now quite clear that the hijackers could not have carried out what appears to be a well-planned and well-executed operation without local help. Pakistani authorities have arrested the tailor who stitched their uniforms but have made no mention of the man who actually drove the van onto the tarmac and escaped in the subsequent confusion. Investigations have established that the first of the terrorists arrived in Pakistan barely 18 days before the hijacking which meant that they would have had no time to acquire weapons, including grenades and Sten guns, the uniforms, fit the hired Suzuki van with the police-type additions on the roof, and most important, to familiarise themselves with airport security procedures, which they seemed to know intimately, without some local collaboration.

According to senior Pakistan security officials, it is probable that the hijackers arrived at the airport around midnight and parked in the unguarded cargo area. Investigators later found packets of potato chips and half-eaten sandwiches in the van which indicated that they had spent some hours inside the vehicle. They then raced up to the gate where the security guard was just about to close the unwieldy, wheeled gate after letting through an airport baggage vehicle. Rather than reopen the gate which was malfunctioning because of two broken wheels, the guard waved the hijackers through.

More vital, the security breach came just one week after a high-

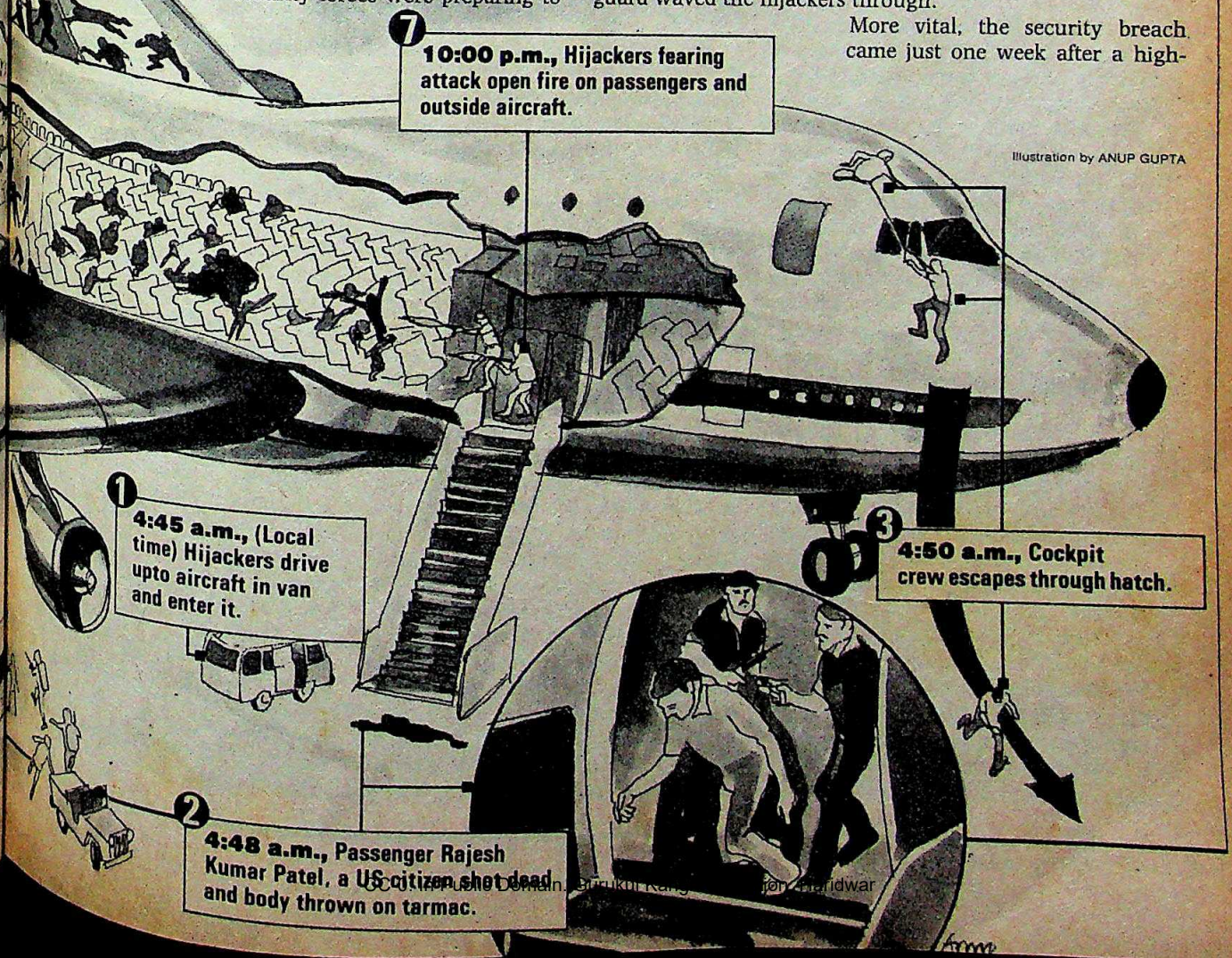

Illustration by ANUP GUPTA

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security alert had been declared at all airports in Pakistan following a warning from Washington that a Palestinian suicide squad had entered Pakistan. Brigadier Tariq Rafi, commander of the ASF, accepted blame for the breach: "I offer no excuse for the serious security lapse."

The second obvious blunder was in not anticipating that the APU was going to switch itself off due to lack of lubricating oil. Initially, Air Marshal Khurshid Mirza, director-general, Civil Aviation Authority and the chief Pakistani spokesman on the hijacking, stated in his first press briefing on the night of the hijack that they knew that the lights inside the aircraft would go off at around 9.30 p.m. when the fuel ran low. He also said that the tarmac lights were put off to facilitate the commando action. But in his very next briefing—which took place the following

AHMEDABAD

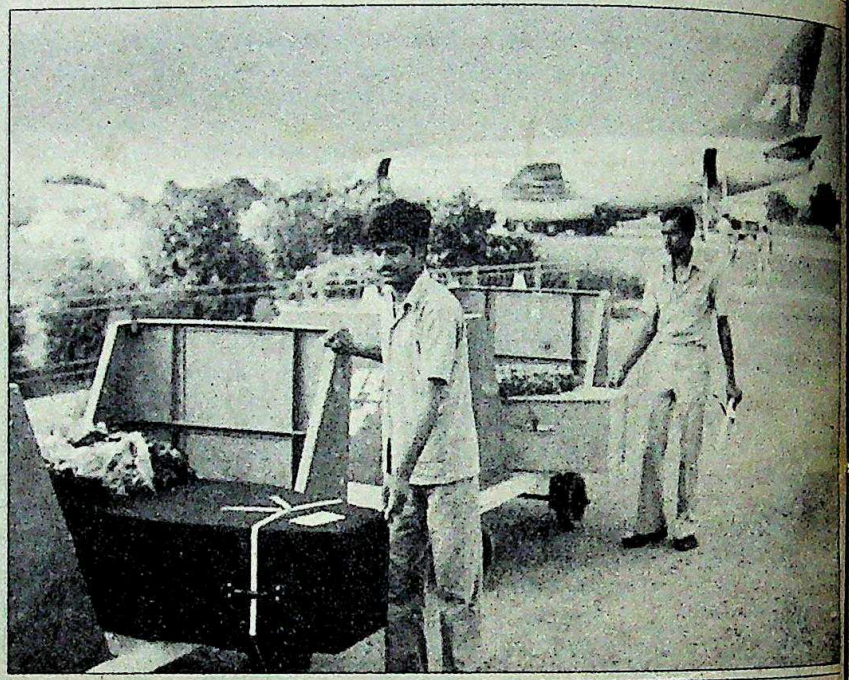
Cruel Fate

FATE can be agonisingly cruel at times. *Avishkar*, the 22-member dance troupe from Ahmedabad, were not scheduled to board the ill-fated Pan Am flight since they did not have confirmed reservations. But shortly before the scheduled take-off, they were informed that their seats had been confirmed. Janaki Vyas, daughter of former Gujarat health minister, Kokila Vyas, had a strange premonition and was reluctant to board. But since the rest of the troupe had been looking forward avidly to making the trip, she boarded the aircraft with the rest. They were to give performances in a number of American cities.

The US visit had been conceived only after the birth of *Avishkar* in June this year. Trupti Dalal, director of *Avishkar* who died in the hijacking, was an upcoming young dancer and singer. Tragically, this was their first visit abroad. With the death of Trupti and Rupal Desai, another dancer, and injuries to 10 others, the trip was abandoned. Rupal was to get married in December.

All the dancers, in their early 20s, were quite excited about going abroad. Since their tickets were confirmed at the last minute, their seats were not together. It was just another quirk of fate. Shirin Kureshi, a law student from Ahmedabad, who was one of the troupe members was persuaded to change her seat by Rupal as she wanted to sit and chat with another friend with whom Shirin was sitting. Shirin readily agreed. Today, she realises that it was changing the seat which saved her life as the new seat was behind the service cabin which shielded her from bullets while Rupal was caught in the line of fire and died.

When the hijackers took over the aircraft at Karachi, none of the dancers took it seriously. At first, they thought they were just security men as they were dressed in uniforms which even had badges on it. It was only after one of the hostesses was dragged by her hair and a pistol held to her head that they knew it was a hijack. One of the hijackers was patrolling the aisle with grenades in his belt. One of the grenades was in his hand and he was playing around with it like a ball. As the hours passed, the atmosphere had relaxed a great deal and the air hostess had even come on the public address system saying that the hijackers never meant any harm as all were behaving well. There was also another announcement at the behest of the hijackers that any movement would invite death.



Coffins of Trupti and Rupal at Ahmedabad airport

That was till the air-conditioning went off and then the lights. The window shades had been pulled down and it became pitch dark. The hijackers started shouting commands to each other in Arabic. One of the hijackers standing next to Trupti removed the pin from his grenade. Within minutes, panic gripped the troupe with their screams echoing in the aircraft as firing started. Shirin, for one, still thought that these were only crackers to frighten them. But when warm-blood from different directions soaked into her kurta she knew that the worst had happened. She clung to an air hostess sitting next to her and both of them were saved from bullets and grenade splinters by the cabin in front. One grenade exploded near Trupti and her clothes were soaked with blood. Rupal also was hit by bullets and splinters. As she lay in a pool of blood, another dancer, Urmi Parikh, kept calling out "help my friend, please help". But in the rush and desperation to save their own lives, people panicked. Travelling along with the troupe was Trupti's son, Khanjan, 12. One of the dancers, Utpala Desai, braved the bullets to save him. She grabbed him and shielded him with her body as bullets passed over her. A bullet grazed her arm and splinters hit her forehead, but she remained crouched over Khanjan in the seat. Janaki says that no commandos were seen. Shirin insists she did not see any either.

After the shooting, 11 of the troupe members lay injured. Two were dead. The others miraculously escaped. One of

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morning—he totally denied what he had said earlier in front of a number of correspondents. Mirza took another turn-about when he denied that the tarmac lights were turned off by Pakistani authorities for the commandos to move in. He also denied that Pakistani authorities knew approximately when the APU was going to switch off. However, Frederick Reid, representative for Pan Am's president, stated in Bombay: "Pan Am was aware of the likelihood of the APU breaking down and had advised the Pakistan authorities in charge of negotiations well in advance. We made every effort to inject this understanding to the negotiating authorities."

But what has caused intense debate in aviation circles is the unprecedented evacuation of the cockpit crew, leaving the passengers stranded and in the hands of an inexperienced, 23-

Photographs by KALPESH DUDHIA

Relatives of Shirin break down on seeing her at the airport

them, Parita Patel, was sitting on the front row but as the hijackers were standing and firing the bullets flew over her head. As soon as the firing stopped, she managed to rush to the emergency exit and slide down the chute. Shirin panicked and as one of the emergency doors opened over the wing, she jumped on the wing. The wing was at a height, but she just closed her eyes and jumped fracturing both legs. Another troupe member, Daramendra Shah, also jumped and fractured his left leg.

IN the panic, the troupe got scattered. It was total chaos. Even after some had managed to run to the lounge, they were still scared as one of the hijackers who was running with them was overpowered by security officials as passengers pointed him out. Though Shirin could hardly walk she did not want to go to the hospital as she was too shaken. But Pakistani officials cajoled her and other members of the troupe into going to the hospital. "From then on it was such a soothing experience," recalls Janaki. "The doctors, nurses and visitors who came to see us never knew us but were so kind and embarrassingly hospitable." One of the visitors told Janaki: "We are Pakistanis, but we care and respect Indians. After all we were part of the same country." At no point during her stay in Pakistan did she experience any hostility.

Shirin feels the same. Says she: "Some of the doctors were so helpful. They kept giving us courage, helping us overcome pain and grief." One doctor went out to buy a pair of slippers for a troupe member while others bought clothes as most of the girls had blood-stained clothes. The *Avishkar* members were touched by the little gifts brought by Karachi residents. Conspicuously missing were officials from the Indian Embassy. "At least a word that they are around to ensure that we got safely home was what we expected from the Indian Embassy," said one of the girls adding that they all came only when Jagdish Tytler and K.C. Pant arrived.

"The injuries of Janaki have not hurt me as much as the official insensitivity that I witnessed when the hijack took place. It was a friend from New York who rang me up saying that she had seen my injured daughter on television and that she was looking fine," says an embittered Kokila Vyas. In fact, in the first list that arrived at Bombay airport, the name of Janaki was missing in the survivors list. It was the New York call that calmed her and her husband Hariprasad Vyas. Pan Am was evasive in their replies and worse still, was the fact that the Indian Government was not coming out with adequate information even though nearly 24 hours had passed after the hijacking. Though she was a former Gujarat minister, she could not prod government officials into action. "What then is the condition of those who are commoners and have no contacts?" she asks angrily.

After struggling for 72 hours to get some concrete information of the plight of the troupe members, K.S. Modi, one of Trupti's relatives, rang up the prime minister's office in desperation and minced no words complaining that no government source had yet contacted *Avishkar* and they were totally in the dark about who the survivors were. Worse still was the misleading information which mentally tortured the already harassed relatives. Asked Kokila Vyas: "What is the Indian Embassy in Pakistan doing? Is it not their duty to ensure speedy flow of information in such an emergency? It is the Pakistanis who looked after our wounded Indians."

Symbolic of the general confusion was the incident at Bombay airport where Narendra Desai, the ailing father of Rupal, was handed a coffin containing another victim's body. The coffin had Rupal's photograph on it but Desai wanted the coffin opened before he took charge of it. The officials refused to open it saying that there was no need to verify the body. After a heated argument the officials relented. Discovering their mistake, they launched a frantic search for Rupal's body and finally handed it over to her sobbing relatives.

—RAMESH MENON

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year-old air hostess. Pan Am has claimed that the evacuation was standard operating instructions to their flight crew. In terms of immobilising the aircraft and buying time for negotiations, it can be argued that the absence of the flight crew would be in certain situations, an advantage. But in this particular case, it proved a questionable decision. "It is totally unacceptable practice for the commander of an aircraft to escape with his crew when there is a hijacking," says Air-India's Captain V.P. Raol, president of the Indian Pilots Guild. "My prime concern as captain is the safety of the 400 passengers. Only the presence of the commander can instil confidence among demoralised and panicky passengers who would expect him to take decisions in an emergency in a calm manner."

Airline pilots also question why, even if the pilot and co-pilot escaped to ensure that the plane stayed on the ground, the flight engineer was not left behind to ensure that a senior officer was present in case of emergencies. All the 13 Indian flight attendants, 11 women and two men, had been selected by Pan Am last December for a three-month training stint in Miami. They started flying only in March. The absence of the cockpit crew meant that there was nobody in the hijacked aircraft to provide technical guidance. The lack of technical guidance proved fatal in at least two crucial areas. By leaving the cockpit unattended, the flight crew caused a crucial breakdown in communication between the hijackers and airport authorities. There was nobody to operate the radio and communicate with the control tower.

PRESIDENT ZIA

"Mr Gandhi's comments are unfair"

RARELY has the prime minister of India lashed out at the handling of affairs in another country in the manner that Rajiv Gandhi did at his press conference in Harare; and the brunt of the attack was on the Pakistani authorities for their handling of the hijacking of a Pan American jetliner at Karachi airport. Striking an unusually tough note, Rajiv referred to the security operations as 'hamhanded', 'not competent enough', and 'bungling'. He charged the Pakistan Government with encouraging hijackers, and added that he did not believe the power failure aboard the aircraft had been because fuel suddenly ran out. Instead, he said, this was due to the 'concerted action' which was taken by the Pakistani security forces. Finally, and very emphatically, he pointed out that the hijackers spoke Urdu, and that this language was spoken on the subcontinent of India—leaving it to the journalists present in large numbers at the press conference to draw their own conclusions.

Pakistan did not help its case when an official briefing the press in Karachi first claimed that the security forces had switched off power to the aircraft in order to board it, but later said the power failure was not planned and that the security forces stormed the aircraft only 15 minutes after the hijackers started shooting.

Executive Editor T.N. NINAN *got an exclusive interview with Pakistan's President, General Zia-ul-Haq, then in Harare for the summit, during which it became clear that the Pakistan President had been stung by Rajiv's comments. Excerpts:*

On Rajiv Gandhi's comments at the press conference:

Mr Gandhi's comments are unfair, unfriendly, uncalled for and unbecoming of a prime minister of India. I was personally briefing Mr Gandhi every half hour yesterday, and I told him through your foreign secretary at midnight last night that the security forces had carried out their operations, and about the casualties.

On the delayed trial of past hijackers caught in Pakistan.

"Can the prime minister of India speed up a civil case in court?"

After his press conference this morning, I wanted to meet him and explain to him what happened. But he has been busy.

On whether the security forces bungled:

How? Not a single passenger died from security bullets. All those who were killed or injured were hit by the hijackers' bullets.

Put yourself in the hijackers' shoes. The punishment for an aircraft hijacking in Pakistan is the death penalty, the pilot and co-pilot had escaped, they couldn't go anywhere. So they had two options: one was to surrender. As for the other option, they had already declared their intentions by killing one passenger. So when the power failed, the security people had to move in.

On why he didn't inform Rajiv Gandhi in advance about the security operation:

How could I? He is here (in Harare), I am here, the decision is being taken somewhere else.

On the identity of the hijackers, and their speaking Urdu:

They are Palestinians. Three of them are alive, the fourth is wounded. As for Urdu, this is what I told Mr Gandhi last night, that the leader spoke Urdu with an accent. Now, information that I give him is used in this manner, and charges are made against Pakistan:

On the delayed trial of past hijackers caught in Pakistan.

You tell me, can the prime minister of India speed up a civil case in court?

On the delay in bringing the case to trial in the first place:

Pakistan was initially under martial law. I didn't want this to go to a military court, and wanted a civil court. This took time.

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More important, the pilot or even the co-pilot would have been able to offer a credible explanation to the hijackers regarding the failure of the APU which plunged the cabin into darkness and provoked the hijackers into believing that the sudden power failure was a prelude to a commando attack.

MOREOVER, Pan Am crew members who received elaborate training in emergency procedures in Miami insist that they had never been told that the cockpit crew would evacuate in the event of a hijack. All they were instructed to do in the event of a hijack was to inform the captain immediately over the intercom by using the special code which is what Neerja Mishra did. "When we were training we were told that the captain would always be there. That is why we were shocked when we learnt that the captain and his crew had evacuated," says a Pan Am crew member. Even John Testrake, the captain of the Trans World Airlines airliner that was hijacked to Beirut last year and hailed as a national hero in the US, stated in a Channel Four TV interview in New York last week that what the captain and flight crew of Pan Am 73 did was unforgivable and against all norms of established aviation procedure.

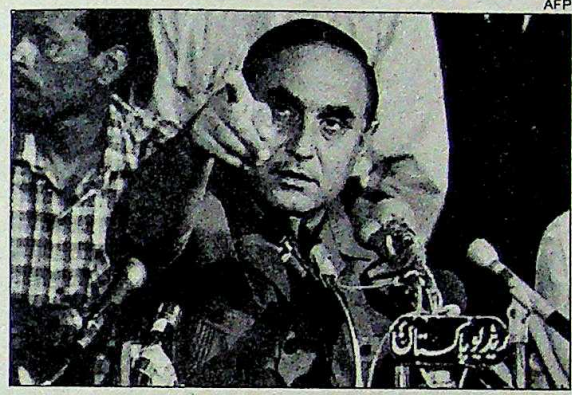
The Indian team headed by K.C. Pant, minister of steel and Mines, and Jagdish Tytler, minister of state for civil aviation, which flew into Karachi on the afternoon of September 6 under orders from Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi have detailed a number of other discrepancies in the official statements made by the Pakistan authorities during their briefings. These include:

- The Pakistan authorities claim that the hijackers had wired explosives inside the aircraft at four places. Every single passenger questioned has stated that no explosives were evident in the aircraft nor were any of the hijackers seen placing explosives at any point.
- The exact number of hijackers still remains unclear. On one occasion, Pakistan authorities spoke of a driver plus four hijackers and on another they claimed that only four hijackers were involved.
- Passenger accounts are unanimous in their view that between the time of APU switching off and the time they reached the terminal building, some distance away, no commandos were in evidence. The total time elapsed was as much as 15 minutes. The passengers also insisted that the hijackers, apart from Mustafa, had been arrested by local airport police.

In fact, on-the-spot reports from Pakistan say that the much-talked-about commando rescue operation, if there was any, came only too late. The commandos only entered the aircraft when the killing spree was already over and the passengers had all left the aircraft. The commandos were not even able to find any of the hijackers inside the plane except Mustafa, who had been wounded and was found with a belt of plastic explosive wired to a detonator strapped to his waist. The other three hijackers were later caught on the tarmac and in the lounge when passengers identified them. In the face of 23 dead and 130 gravely injured, Pakistani claims of having done a "good job of overpowering the hijackers" appears to be a crude attempt at covering up a series of fatal bungles.

Consequently, events showed that Pakistan security forces had no clear plan or preparation for action should events take an unexpected turn. In the total absence of a plan and coordination between the negotiating officials and the commandos, it was inevitable that the heavily-armed hijackers would over-react when the lights went off.

AFP



The ultimate provocation for the hijackers to open fire was supplied by the man in charge, Air Marshal Khurshid Mirza who, by his actions, panicked the hijackers into believing an assault was imminent.

MUJIB

Brigadier Tariq Mahmood, who led the 20-member commando operation says: "It took two or three minutes for the commandos to enter the aircraft," a claim refuted by all passengers and eye witnesses.

What has not so far been publicised but is now confirmed by senior Pakistan security personnel is that the provocation for the hijackers to open fire was supplied by the man in charge of handling the crisis—Mirza himself. At around 9.30, Pakistan authorities took the fatal decision not to switch the tarmac lights on but instead, set up a ring of temporary lights around the hijacked aircraft. Without warning the hijackers of their intentions, a crew of 10 or 12 electricians were sent out in the darkness to set up the lights around the aircraft.

While the shadowy figures were moving around the plane with equipment and wiring in their hands, Mirza, Daroga and an Arabic interpreter recruited from Saudi Arabian Airlines raced off towards the aircraft in a sedan to find out, Mirza later said, why the hijackers had broken off communications. But before they could reach, the aircraft lights went off. The three men then raced back to the terminal, collected a megaphone and rushed back to inform the hijackers that the APU was an internal fault and not a deliberate act. By the time they reached to within 150 yards of the aircraft, the hijackers had already started shooting and the passengers were sliding down the chute. Senior Pakistani security sources say that the sight of shadowy figures moving around the aircraft (the crew setting up the lights) and the car racing up twice to the aircraft must have panicked the hijackers into believing that an assault was being launched since the

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KARACHI SECURITY

Fatal Flaws

IMMEDIATELY after the hijack drama at Karachi airport came to an end, a Pan Am spokesman in New York squarely blamed Pakistani security men for allowing armed hijackers to enter the sterile premises of the airport. Ironically, a few months earlier, another Pan Am official Daniel Sonesen, systems director, security, had given the airport a clean bill of health.

Sonesen was a member of a three-man inspection team from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), that visited Karachi International Airport between February 21 and 23 this year and spoke of the airport security in glowing terms. INDIA TODAY managed to obtain a copy of the IATA report signed by Sonesen, Anthony Lowndes, IATA security adviser, and Munir Hussain, facilitation manager, Pakistan International Airlines. The main points of the report:

► "The team was pleased to see a properly trained aviation security force which is obviously disciplined, well motivated and well supervised. The security systems and equipment are efficient and adequate contingency plans have been prepared."

The reality turned out to be quite different. The indifferent security detail guarding the gate of the airport carelessly allowed a van load of armed hijackers to drive onto the tarmac.

► "The aircraft parking areas are very well controlled, protected and lighted. All aircraft are protected by Airport Security Force (ASF) personnel who physically and carefully search staff entering aircraft. There is also an armed presence on aircraft parking areas."

But when put to the test, Karachi security was found wanting in all these areas. The armed guards on the tarmac and those assigned for guarding the parked plane obviously did nothing to prevent the hijackers from rushing into the aircraft. And the lighting failed or was switched off panicking the hijackers into shooting indiscriminately.

► "Nobody is allowed airside (of the terminal) or to other restricted areas without the appropriate identification which is issued and controlled by the ASF. This identification is worn by all staff and is checked at all access points."

None of this happened. The hijackers were wearing only security uniforms. According to reports from Karachi they were not carrying identification papers. If papers had been checked they may not have been able to enter the airport.

► The IATA team had noted the presence of "sufficient security personnel patrolling and available at strategic points to deal with unlawful interference with civil aviation."

No such intervention occurred. The commandos arrived on the scene too late to intervene.

► The team made a crucial recommendation. It suggested that an alarm button be installed at the vehicle entry gates so that a warning could be sent to the control centre.

Even if it was installed, the alarm was never activated on the day of the hijack.

Having commended the most crucial aspects of the airport's security, the team went on to pinpoint some minor shortcomings. Passengers checked-in baggage was X-rayed, the report said, but passengers were not required to identify their baggage before its loading onto the plane. IATA advised the Karachi authorities to adopt this precaution.

The team also recommended shorter shifts for staff scanning the X-ray machine's TV monitors as long shifts affected concentration. Even if these defects were rectified, it mattered little because the Karachi airport authorities had failed in the more crucial areas, leading to the hijacking and killings. And Pan Am, which had months earlier praised the state of security at Karachi airport, was forced, in the wake of the hijacking, to cancel its Karachi flights.

—RAMINDAR SINGH

REUTER

Karachi security and airport staff carrying injured passengers after the hijack ended

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hijackers fired inside as well as outside the aircraft.

The officials also have no answer as to why the hijackers' earlier demand for putting on the tarmac lights was not complied with. According to Mirza, the demand was conveyed to the control tower from where the provincial governor and chief minister of Sind were supervising the operation. As against this version, the chief minister contended that contact with the hijackers had already been cut off at about 8 p.m. There was no mention of the hijackers' demand for putting on the tarmac lights in the chief minister's version. It was quite apparent that the authorities were totally inexperienced with handling an emergency of this nature and took the wrong decisions.

Similarly, it is also not clear whether there was any serious effort on the part of the Government to provide a flight crew so that the plane could have been flown to Cyprus as was demanded by the hijackers. The hijackers had agreed to release the women, children and some elderly passengers when this demand was complied with. According to the government spokesman, the hijackers' request was fully communicated to local Pan Am officials. But authorities avoided answering the vital question as to what the Pakistan Government was doing in the light of the demand? The chief minister's answer to this question was revealing: "It is not our airline. Our job was to just convey the demand to them (Pan Am). We could not force Pan Am to comply with it," he stated. Reports from Pakistan, however, indicate that the difficult decision to not allow the aircraft to leave Karachi airport was taken jointly by Pakistan and American officials some time in the afternoon.

PAKISTAN officials dealing with the hijacking issue were obviously caught completely unaware when the hijackers started shooting. The official agencies conducting operational exercise since noon that day, were totally at sea when the crunch came: neither were the commandos, who were posted near the tarmac, told what exactly to do in case the hijackers started killing people. In fact, when the time came to act, the commandos did not even have a ladder to board the aircraft. Pakistan officials have stated that the reason the commandos were delayed was because they had to wait till all the passengers left the aircraft before they could board—from the same escape chute. It seems incredible that an anti-terrorist force would be without access equipment when, as Pakistan claims, they stormed the aircraft "and overpowered the hijackers".

In fact, the commandos took well over 15 minutes to move from where they were stationed some distance from the tarmac, to the aircraft, and that too after the passengers had already left the plane through the emergency chute. And, as Mirza admitted, it took them several minutes just to find a ladder. Naga Toli, an Indian residing in West Germany, who was the last to leave the aircraft, says he saw the commandos coming up the gangway when he was sliding down the emergency chute. Brigadier Tariq Mahmood, who led the 20-member commando operation, however, gave a totally different version. "It took two or three minutes for the commandos to enter the aircraft," he said.

Clearly, senior government officials, the governor and the chief minister of Sind and the two other ministers present, Zain Noorani, minister of state for foreign affairs, and Haji Shamimuddin, provincial minister, who were in charge at Karachi, bungled miserably in their handling of the crisis and in coordinating their efforts. Instead, there was utter confusion.

Initial reports stated that there were two dead hijackers. The following day, the chief minister said that one hijacker had been killed while the other who had appeared to be dead was in fact, alive, "and the credit for this goes to our doctors", he added. Addressing a separate press conference at exactly the same time at the airport, Mirza was silent about the number of hijackers, dead or captured. Later, the official Pakistan media came out with a statement saying that all four hijackers had been captured alive. The actual reason for the confusion was that radio mechanic Meher Kharas, was lying wounded in the cockpit. Since he was dressed in a uniform that resembled the ASF one worn by the hijackers, the commandos shot him by mistake.

What is also obvious in all this welter of conflicting claims and contradictions is that American officials were very much involved in the entire hijack drama and the negotiations. Reports from Pakistan categorically state that American officials from the US consulate in Karachi were present in the control tower throughout the hijack crisis. It is also highly likely that it was under US pressure that Pakistani officials broke off negotiations, informed the hijackers that no relief crew was available to fly them to Cyprus, and generally responded in the manner they did and with such tragic consequences.

A special team of US intelligence officials arrived in Pakistan after the hijack and are now assisting in the investigations. Sources in Pakistan say that they are pressurising the Pakistan Government to allow them to interrogate the hijackers so that they can establish exactly which group or country they belong to and perhaps take retaliatory action. The US Government has reportedly also asked that the hijackers be extradited to the US to stand trial there. But Pakistan has not agreed fearing that the US might retaliate against a fellow Islamic state and the blame could indirectly fall on them.

That the hijacking of the aircraft, and the massacre of innocent people, was a despicable and evil act deserving the strongest condemnation, there can be no doubt. But even if the confusion over the hijacking and its perpetuators does eventually clear, the families of the victims will be no closer to knowing why their relatives had to die on strange soil, gunned down in a hail of bullets triggered off by the tragic blunders of those responsible for saving their lives.

—DILIP BOBB with M. RAHMAN in Bombay, ZAHID HUSSAIN in Karachi and RAMINDAR SINGH in New Delhi

REUTER

Neerja Mishra fights for life at Karachi

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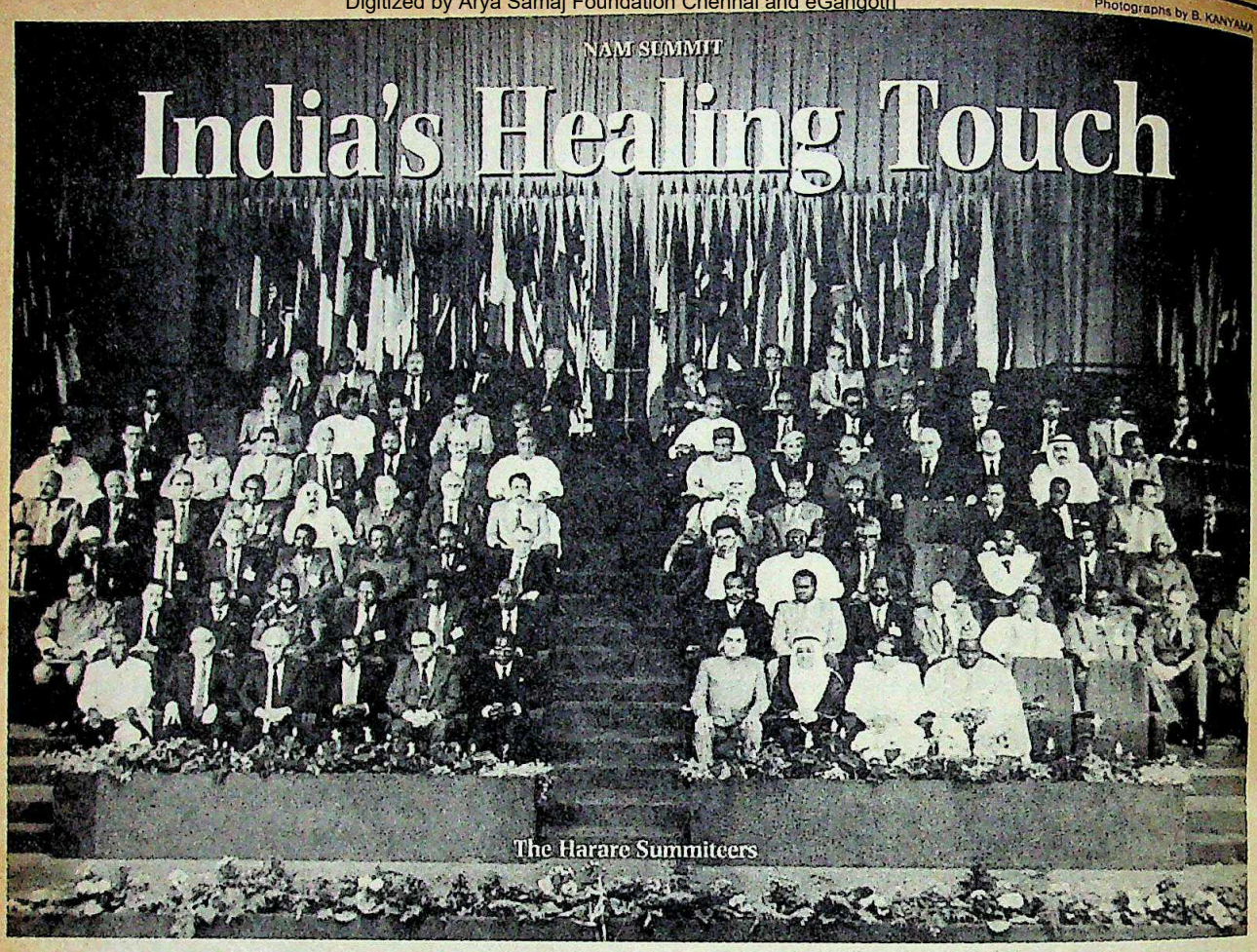
Photographs by B. KANYAMA

NAM SUMMIT

India's Healing Touch



The Harare Summiteers

AT HOME, Rajiv Gandhi's constant forays to distant lands are a subject of criticism. But in international fora, his overseas initiatives certainly seem to be paying dividends in terms of a strong Indian presence and clear diplomatic mileage. All this was in evidence during the non-aligned summit in Harare last fortnight, with summiteers acknowleding India's leadership on issues that matter to the world's largest body outside the United Nations. Executive Editor T.N. NINAN's report from Harare:

ON the drive into Harare from the airport, the Zimbabwean flag and the faces of the host country's president (Canaan Banana) and prime minister (Robert Mugabe) were predictable sights atop lamp-posts. What was not expected along the route was the sight of the Indian tricolour atop the lamp-posts too, along with Rajiv Gandhi's face. Both were also abundantly visible all over Harare, along the main Samora Machel Avenue and Julius Nyerere Way, and also at several points near the Harare International Conference Centre. No other country or visiting summiteer was similarly honoured.

The Indian presence was equally palpable inside the conference venue, amply reflected in the repeated pictures of Rajiv Gandhi on the front page of Harare's main newspaper, the *Herald*, and underscored by the fact that India's was the only 'country pavilion' at the local agricultural show, Harare's main annual event. Rajiv also had the honour of opening a hall named after him.

Mugabe had a 90-minute one-to-one session with Rajiv on the eve of the summit, Zimbabwe TV ran a prime time interview with him the same day, and (since such signals matter in the world of diplomacy), while other heads of state and government were put up in special summit villas, Rajiv had pride of place in the state guest-house.

Some of the special treatment was almost certainly because India was the outgoing chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), but there was more to it than that. The Cuban flag and President Fidel Castro's face, for instance, weren't the only things publicly visible at the 1983 New Delhi summit, although Cuba was the outgoing chairman then. The simple fact—noted with quiet satisfaction by Indian diplomats at Harare—was that India now enjoyed a special status in the non-aligned fraternity.

Before the 1983 summit in New Delhi, NAM had been a badly fractured body, with the then chairman Castro pushing the line that the Soviet bloc was NAM's "natural ally". In contrast, 1986 sees NAM a more united body, the movement back in the mainstream. Mugabe paid handsome tribute to this achievement in his inaugural address by referring to India's "healing touch"; Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda said in his speech that India had brought NAM back to the correct path; Singapore Foreign Minister S. Dhanabalan told INDIA TODAY that "the Non-Aligned Movement is more non-

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aligned today because of India": Yugoslav President Sinan Hasani said India had preserved NAM's unity, and Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom said in an interview: "NAM is more united now than before, a great deal has been achieved because of India's leadership."

If that was one measure of achievement, there were several others. Said N. Krishnan, India's permanent representative at the UN in New York and the most active man behind the scenes at Harare: "Most of the formulations on critical issues at Harare are a repeat of what had been hammered out at the New Delhi summit in 1983 and at the NAM foreign ministers' meet that preceded this summit, under India's chairmanship." This included such contentious issues as leaving Kampuchea's seat vacant at the summit, and the paragraph in the final declaration on Afghanistan. India had once been criticised virulently for its stand on Afghanistan; yet, at Harare, India was asked to chair a sub-committee on Afghanistan. Even Pakistan had no complaints on this score. Pakistan President Zia-ul-Haq told INDIA TODAY: "We are quite happy with what was decided in New Delhi. We neither wanted nor would have liked a change." Said an Indian diplomat: "India has emerged as a consensus-builder, not just on Afghanistan but also on such issues as the venue for the next NAM foreign ministers' meeting."

India's diplomats recalled that things weren't always quite as comfortable. Havana in 1979 marked a low point, with S.N. Mishra, the foreign minister in the short-lived Charan Singh government, putting in a sorry performance (prime minister Charan Singh did not go) and not even opposing Pakistan's application for joining the non-aligned club (a point on which the foreign office mandarins still have strong feelings). But Mrs Gandhi retrieved the lost ground and Rajiv has carried it on from there.

BOTH, of course, had the advantage of building on the status bequeathed by Jawaharlal Nehru. But, as was obvious at Harare, virtually all the other founding fathers of the movement have lost in stature over the years. Yugoslavia has not found a leader of adequate stature to replace Josip Broz Tito and was rarely heard of at Harare. Its repeated bid to host a NAM summit again has made no headway. Indonesia's Suharto has chosen to stay away from NAM summits, and Egypt's Mubarak was another absentee at Harare. India, in contrast, is seen as having contributed enormously to the very survival of NAM over the last three years. Said President Zia: "Some of the credit and stature that come to Mugabe today is because of Rajiv Gandhi's leadership of the movement in the past." Non-summiteers echoed that comment. Mugabe's one-time political rival and soon-to-be political ally, Joshua Nkomo, said, when contacted: "The success of Harare is a tribute to India's leadership since 1983."

Rajiv, of course, has built on the country's inheritance, and the comments of several leaders at Harare made it clear that his contribution has been recognised. Bangladesh Prime Minister Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury told INDIA TODAY before the summit got under way: "Rajiv has shown more initiative than many other leaders, especially on the nuclear issue and in talking to Thatcher about sanctions against South Africa."

It seemed almost natural, then, that Rajiv should be perhaps the most sought-after person in Harare, after Mugabe himself. Anyone who mattered came calling, or was called upon: Kaunda, Castro, Yugoslavia's Sinan Hasani, Libya's Gaddafi, Iranian President Khamenei, Mozambique's Samora Machel and Botswana's President Masire among the frontline states, Arafat of the PLO, Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega and Algerian President Chadli Benjadid, among several others. Said a senior Indian diplomat: "I don't think the prime minister wants such a busy schedule. But the others won't leave him in peace." Added Foreign Secretary A.P. Venkateswaran: "He seems to be in his metier over here."

Rajiv's speech at the special session to commemorate NAM's silver jubilee was marked mostly for its moderation—at a time when a hostile western press was counting the number of critical references to the United States and the absence of such references to the Soviet Union. But this moderation itself became a point of criticism, with observers pointing out that Rajiv made no mention of the US attack on Libya. But a senior Indian diplomat explained that it was the Indian style to be moderate in tone, and that there was no reference to Libya because this had been dealt with during the last foreign ministers' meeting and there had been no fresh developments since then. Nevertheless, Rajiv is reported to have developed belated doubts about having struck too moderate a tone, but by then it was too late to make changes in the prepared text.

Things weren't always tickety-boo, then. And there were a couple of occasions when Indian diplomats blanched at potential gaffes that would have compromised the Indian stand. In one case, a stand that Rajiv took might have meant closing the door to the option of another 'peaceful nuclear explosion'. And as one Indian diplomat said: "Don't forget that Rajiv in France declared India was willing

Both inside and outside the conference venue, India and Rajiv were singled out for special mention. Rajiv also had the honour of opening a hall named after him.

PIB/D. SENGUPTA

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to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty." But another argued that the prime minister was still in a learning phase, that he couldn't be expected to be aware of all the nuances in India's diplomatic postures and that in any case no serious damage had been done.

It also seemed at one stage that Pakistan would make some headway in its bid to embarrass India on some key issues. But President Zia's reference to Kashmir in his speech was studiously ignored, and Pakistan eventually got nowhere with its renewed proposal to have South Asia declared a nuclear-free zone. The proposal was opposed by countries as far apart in the political spectrum as Cuba, Algeria and Argentina. And Zia himself admitted that: "We raised it, but didn't make much headway". Pakistan also opposed India's

SIDE-SHOWS

Amusing Fare

LARGE conferences can be endless exercises in diplomatic inanities. And so it was that one debate at Harare centred on revising a reference on Antarctica to substitute the word 'agreement' with 'understanding'. A second prolonged wrangle resulted over an equally innocuous amendment on 1986 as the UN Year of Peace. Endless debate followed and the meeting was adjourned before peace prevailed on the subject of peace.

But Nepal won the prize hands down for the most innocuous piece of diplomatic idiocy. It proposed an amendment to the final political declaration to the effect that the heads of state and government reaffirmed "their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations" and "stressed the necessity for strengthening further the important role played by the non-aligned countries within the UN."

In the final analysis, therefore, much of the diplomatic roundabout at Harare was a forgettable feast—except for some corned beef. At the Indian pavilion which won the first prize at the Harare agricultural show, one citizen pertinently noted in the visitors' book that while the pavilion was very good, he was distressed to see corned beef on display, because while India was secular it had to respect Hindu religious sentiments and not give the world a wrong impression.

Inevitably, then, the side-shows were more interesting than the main bill of fare. Perhaps the most curious event concerned the telephone lines between Zimbabwe and Liberia. Phone connections from Harare to the rest of the world were excellent. But when a coup seemed imminent in Liberia its delegation called home to find out the latest situation, the lines kept getting cut. Enquiry showed that the phone line had been deliberately snipped. Was there a fifth columnist in the Liberian summit team?

In the Indian camp, the man most talked about apart from Rajiv Gandhi was Minister of State for Fertiliser K. Natwar Singh. Among those in the running for sitting up on stage for the inaugural session, behind Rajiv was External Affairs Minister P. Shiv Shanker. But Natwar Singh pipped him to that honour.

PIB/D. SENGUPTA

Natwar Singh explains a point to Rajiv: asserting himself

Singh, however, was not quite as successful in other skirmishes over the pecking order. Indian delegates housed at the Harare Sheraton were located on two floors: the 14th and the sixth. Shiv Shankar was up on the 14th floor, and another room was for a minister of state. K.R. Narayanan got primacy since he is the minister of state for external affairs. Result: Natwar had to be content with being on the sixth floor, along with foreign office officials.

Unhappy with being edged out on account of being termed MOS(F)—minister of state (fertiliser)—Singh asked officials to drop the (F) in papers that referred to him, so that he would be just MOS, which might convey to those interested that he belonged to the external affairs establishment.

For all practical purposes, of course, he does. He was the only minister whom Rajiv took with him for the meeting with Cuban President Fidel Castro, and in the main conference hall Rajiv tended to consult Singh constantly, far more than Shiv Shanker or Narayanan. Foreign office mandarins say that this is because of Natwar's past experience, and guess that he might even be made MOS—without the (F).

Shiv Shanker may have had his high points at the summit, but once when he had helped draft and clear a note, it came back from Rajiv with the cryptic query: "Who drafted this?"

Rajiv was also impatient with the constantly delayed start to proceedings, and told his officials that the Indian delegates should be in their seats on time. But it was Rajiv's turn to be hopelessly late for a meeting with the Sri Lankan Prime Minister, R. Premadasa, who was kept waiting for over an hour while Rajiv listened to Castro's speech. No one thought it necessary to inform Premadasa.

However, other diplomatic niceties were correctly observed. When Muammar Gaddafi finished his theatrical speech—delivered in an underplayed tone punctuated with good effect by long pauses—and left the podium after wishing NAM farewell, Rajiv smiled and clapped twice perfunctorily. But after Mugabe's immediate and excellent response, Rajiv joined eagerly in prolonged and enthusiastic clapping. Back at his seat, Gaddafi unwound his nervous energy by twirling an unlit cigar.

But at least one Indian delegate spoke his mind on Gaddafi. Mohammed Yunus, forthright as ever, simply declared him "mad".

—T.N. NINAN

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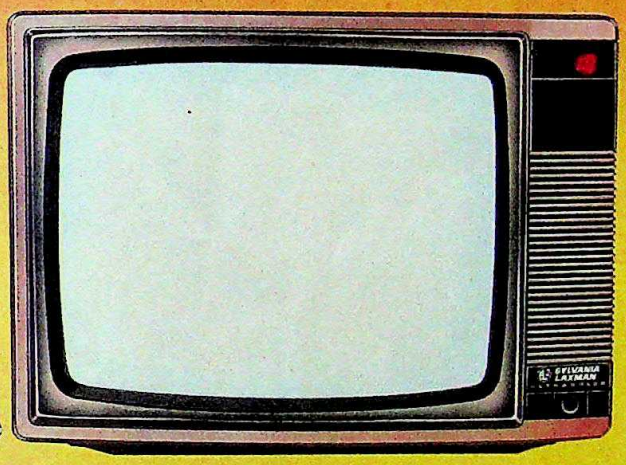

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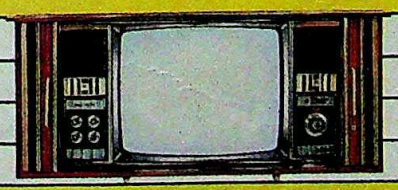

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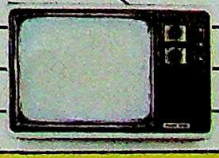

Ankur

There's one just right for you

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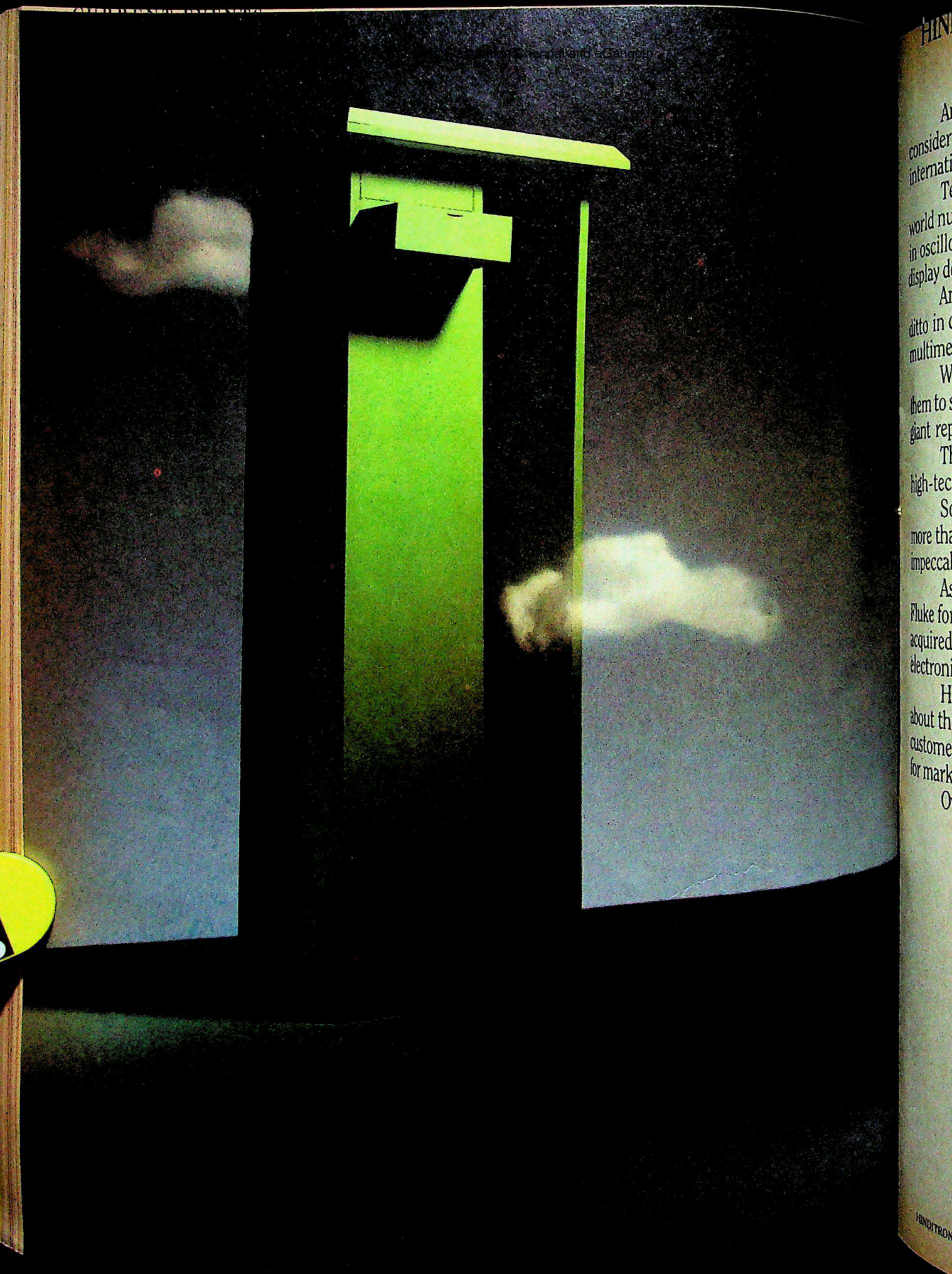

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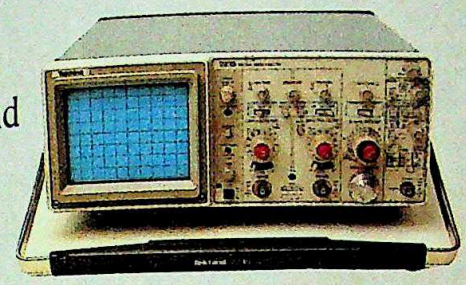

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proposal to set up a standing ministerial committee on economic coordination, as did countries like Tunisia, Morocco and even Botswana. But, as N.P. Jain, secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs noted with satisfaction: "The proposal has finally gone through."

India did, however, find the going rough in continuing to oppose the inclusion of trade in services in the next round of negotiations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), with even Argentina deserting the Indian camp. That virtually leaves India and Brazil as the only major countries still taking such a stand, and difficult battles will have to be fought on this in the future.

There could also be potential trouble in the move by the Maldives to arrange a minister-level South Asian discussion on the question of a nuclear-free South Asia. Indian diplomats reacted to this with some concern, since the Maldives seemed to be veering towards the Pakistan line on this question. But the Maldives President Gayoom argued that, "there has been no shift in the Maldives stand on this question. We have all along stood for a nuclear-free zone in South Asia, and what we have proposed is that we discuss and harmonise our views. All the South Asian countries have said they are willing to discuss the matter." But the view on this from South Block was not quite so sanguine.

In the final analysis, however, the momentary flaps that occasionally consumed the Indian contingent at Harare will be forgotten, for they didn't really amount to anything very significant. Both the prime minister and his men did well by the country, the Indian position on substantive issues remained secure, it had taken the initiative to help the frontline states get ready to tackle economic sanctions against South Africa, and the country's three-year term as chairman was viewed with general approval. If Havana in 1979 had marked a low point, and New Delhi in 1983 had helped to retrieve lost ground, Harare in 1986 consolidated India's position in what Mrs Gandhi had once called "history's biggest peace movement."

FRONTLINE STATES

Hopelessly Hamstrung

ANTI-Aircraft guns ringed the gleaming Harare International Conference Centre, and trucks with machine guns did their constant rounds along the perimeter. The guns pointed south, towards the South African border 500 km away, even as the delegates inside the sparsely-filled 4,000-capacity conference hall trained their oratorical fire on Pretoria. And though Robert Mugabe talked of disarmament and other issues before he finally turned to South Africa in his inaugural speech, there was little doubt that the eighth non-aligned summit was going to be judged by what it decided on steps to end the apartheid regime.

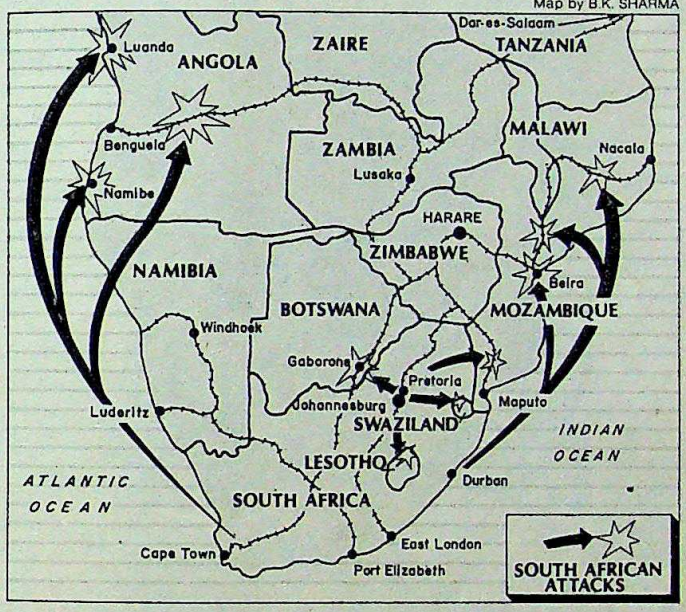
There was talk of defence aid and a self-defence force, but the main buzz phrase was 'economic sanctions'. Rajiv Gandhi talked of it in an interview shortly before he left for Harare, and again in an interview to Zimbabwe television on the eve of the summit inauguration. Harare's principal newspaper, the Government-controlled *Herald*, carried some report or the other on the subject almost throughout the summit, which had been preceded by a Commonwealth mini-summit on the sanctions issue, and then by a summit of the frontline states at Luanda in Angola that was convened to discuss sanctions.

But the mountain of words on the subject finally produced a mole-hill. The final call for selective sanctions left enough loopholes in it for almost everything to be traded with South Africa, the Africa Fund is only a beginning, and the delegations that are proposed to be sent to Washington, London, Bonn and Tokyo to convince the governments there can have little immediate impact. Although the movement had for the first time adopted a clear action programme, it was clear that Pretoria was under no immediate threat.

The odd thing about this is that it should have been expected. Just a week before the Harare summit, the frontline states' meeting in Luanda clearly showed that they were not ready to declare economic war or, more accurately, commit economic suicide. For the simple fact is that the frontline states and their neighbours—Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania—are in no shape to take any serious economic action against South Africa. They are hopelessly subject to Pretoria's economic clout, military superiority and strategic control of economic supply lines to almost all of southern Africa; Harare itself provided many instances of this dependence.

The Monomatapa Hotel, where journalists registered to cover the summit and Rajiv Gandhi hosted a dinner for heads of state, has South African parentage. The press kits had letter-heads, envelopes, writing pads and pens from the Delta Corporation—also South African-owned. The villas on Gun Hill built to house the heads of state were designed in South Africa. And the *Herald* imported special quality newsprint from South Africa for reporting on the sanctions proposed against it. Every bottle of beer

Map by B.K. SHARMA



The frontline states are hopelessly subject to Pretoria's strategic control of economic supply lines.

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that delegates drank was manufactured by a South African-owned brewery with monopoly in Zimbabwe.

That was not all. Air Zimbabwe operates regular flights to South Africa, and the South African airline was busy advertising its services on Zimbabwe TV during the summit week. Virtually all the imported goods that delegates bought from Harare's shops would have reached there via South Africa.

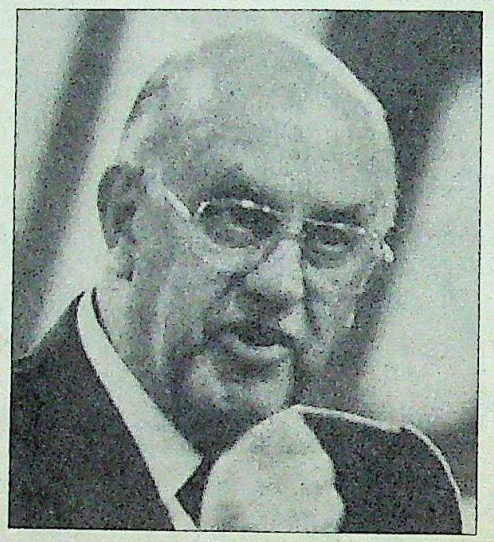
Indeed, far from the frontline states imposing sanctions on South Africa, it is Pretoria's Botha who has been using sanctions against them. By one estimate, these sanctions have already cost the frontline states $20 billion (Rs 25,000 crore). Sometimes the price is political: South Africa recently blockaded the movement of goods into Lesotho (a mountain country encircled by South Africa) to force a hungry populace to accept a change of government to one more amenable to Pretoria's wishes. Result: Lesotho now adopts a different stance on South African refugees belonging to the African National Congress (ANC).

In another instance, South Africa blocked fuel supplies to land-locked Zimbabwe, causing mile-long car queues for petrol, and provoking Prime Minister Mugabe to step up his country's fuel stocks from three weeks' requirement to three months.

SANCTIONS also make little sense when Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland are part of a common customs union with South Africa, with South Africa collecting the customs duties and parcelling them out to member states. Both Lesotho and Swaziland use the South African rand as their own currency. Some of the states have their electricity grids linked to South Africa's, and hundreds of thousands of migrant workers from the states work in South Africa and earn foreign exchange that is repatriated home.

Economic dependence on South Africa has been ensured through military action as well. South African-backed commandos have blown up railway tracks and oil pipelines running through Mozambique and Angola, forcing the frontline states to increasingly transport their goods through the only available trade routes—in South Africa. The Benguela line through Angola has not functioned since Angola's independence in 1975. Result: Eighty per cent of Zimbabwe's foreign trade goes through South Africa. And 10,000 Zimbabwean troops guard the pipeline and railway track to Beira port on Mozambique's Indian Ocean coast against attacks from the Pretoria-backed Mozambique National Resistance (MNR).

Military destabilisation has accompanied economic sanctions. South African-backed rebels control parts of Angola, whose government survives only because of the presence of Cuban troops. In fact, two years ago a militarily hard-pressed Mozambique was forced to sign a controversial non-aggression pact with South Africa. And one of the frontline states—Malawi—even has diplomatic ties with Pretoria.



Botha has been using sanctions against the frontline states. These have already cost the frontline states $20 billion (Rs 25,000 crore).

The frontline states are fully conscious that enforcing of economic sanctions would have a terrible backlash on themselves. Rajiv Gandhi stood out among the people who perceived this clearly, and it is to his credit that he was one of the few summiteers to keep stressing the need for steps aimed at reducing the dependence on South Africa, so that the frontline states would be in a position to impose credible sanctions at a future date. A good deal of the oratory at Harare ignored this, and amounted to putting the cart before the horse.

Thus, Rajiv pushed for spelling out what precisely the new Africa Fund would do in terms of helping the frontline states, and if he was promptly made its chairman, it was with good reason. Rajiv also presented a detailed plan on how India's railway experts could help restore the damaged, disabled and inefficient railway lines so that transport dependence on South Africa could be reduced. India has also said that it is increasing its aid commitments to the region.

For, if South Africa is to make an economic exit in the frontline economies, someone has to step in or help develop local capabilities. As an Indian diplomat at Harare explained, there are only a handful of non-aligned states with the capacity for doing this, and among these India has taken the lead.

Thus, South African companies have contracted to run copper mines in Botswana and Zambia, but India may step in when some of the contracts run out. India has offered to build an oil refinery in Angola, and is gifting a Rs 20-crore hospital. In Zimbabwe, India will help small-scale industrial development and sericulture, and encourage cooperation in agricultural research. Aid under technical cooperation is being doubled. The total financial package, according to one official, could be in the region of Rs 100 crore.

The prospect of an increased Indian presence in the region promptly fuelled talk of a grand economic design to penetrate southern Africa, but an official in the Prime Minister's Secretariat scoffed at this: "We are not in Harare on a Marwari mission." Rajiv himself talked of the subject in terms of helping the southern African states face counter-sanctions by Pretoria, saying at his Harare press conference that "when the frontline states start applying sanctions, they will have problems, including from retaliatory measures. In that situation, we will try and help them."

Nevertheless, there are limits to what India can do ("We are not *Kubera*, said Foreign Secretary A.P. Venkateswaran). And unless other countries chip in with money and economic help, and perhaps arms too to neutralise South Africa's overwhelming military superiority, the frontline states will continue to remain more dependent on South Africa than it is on them.

—T.N. NINAN

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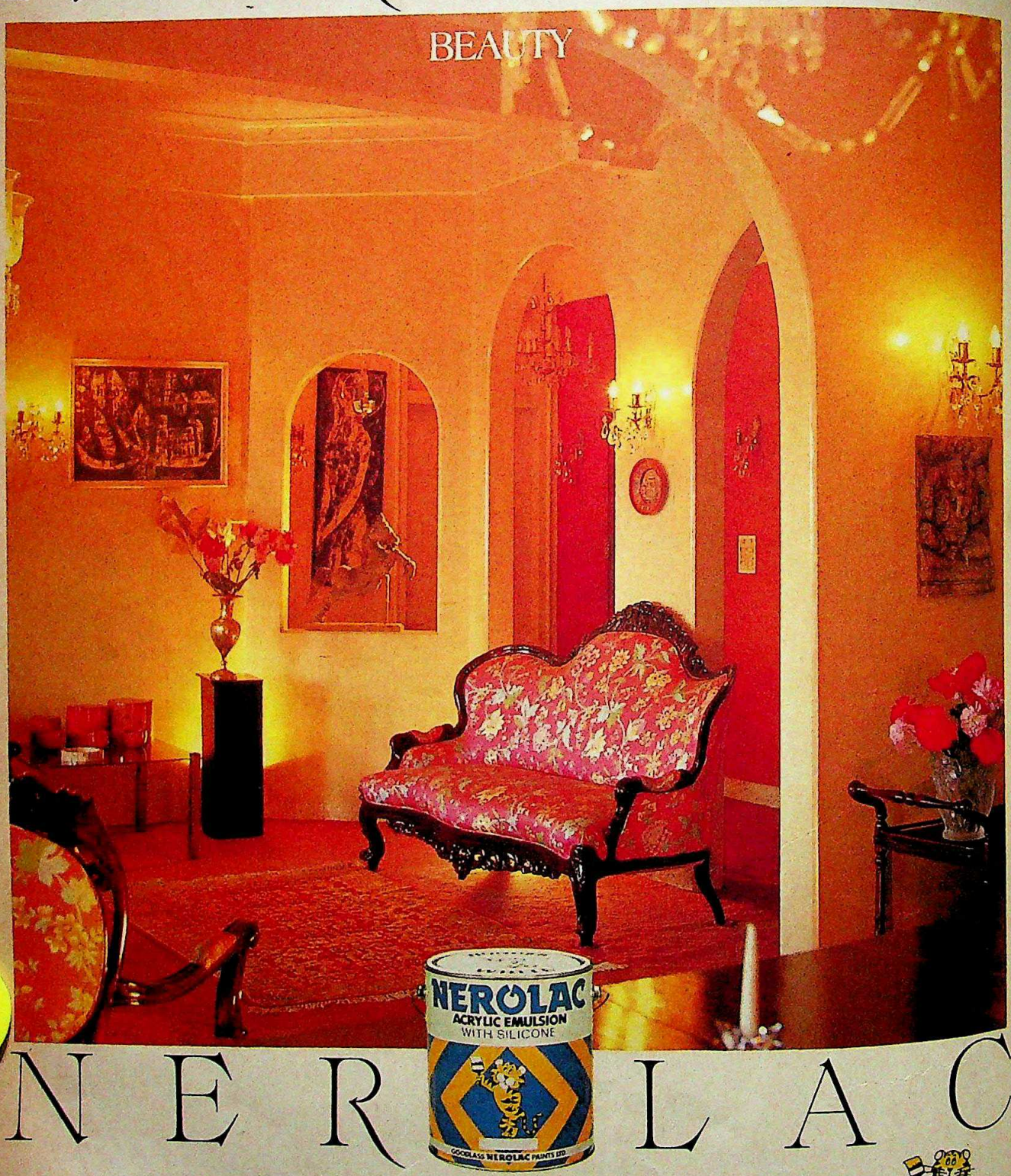

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JAMMU & KASHMIR

Home Rule

HISTORY was made in the state of Jammu and Kashmir last fortnight when, directly against the sentiments of the Opposition and the Kashmiri leadership, the state was brought under President's Rule for the first time since Independence under Article 356 of the Constitution. As police began rounding up local Kashmiri leaders including Abdul Ghani Lone, the People's Conference chief and others, Home Ministry officials and state bureaucrats huddled together to iron out the details for the Central take-over.

The action, based on a Home Ministry notification that the state Government "could not be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of India," ended temporarily the suspense over the political set-up in the troubled region. It also signalled a setback for Governor Jagmohan who had been arguing forcefully for the continuation of Governor's Rule. Prevailing over him was a political troika of Kashmiris—Union Tourism Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayed, Union Minister of State for Home Ghulam Nabi Azad, and M.L. Fotedar, the prime minister's political secretary—that will exert its influence on the state Government through the Home Ministry.

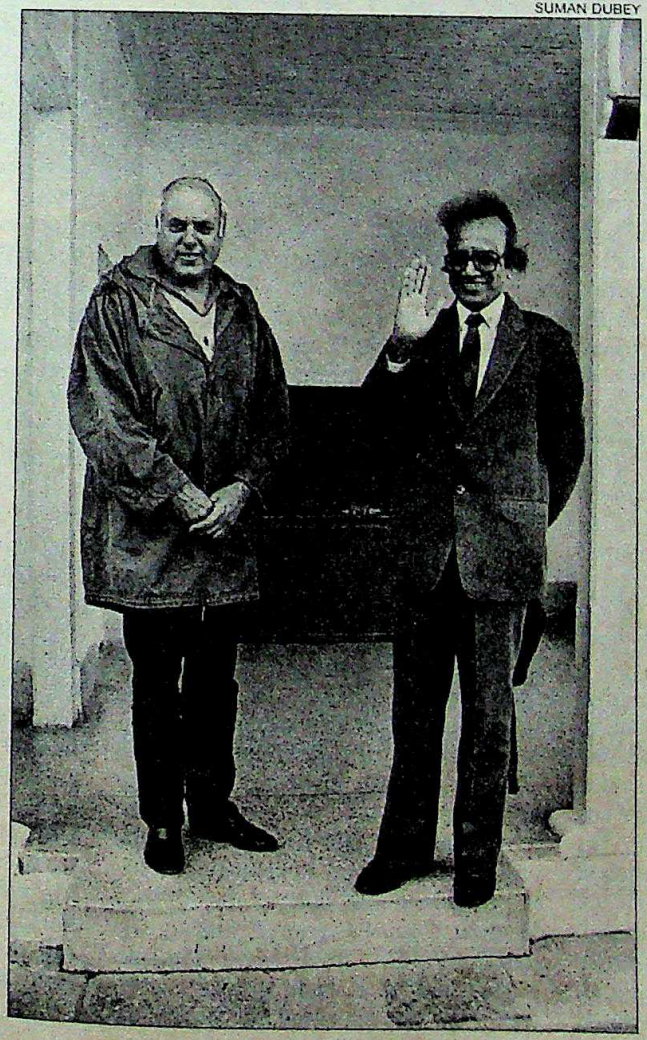
For several weeks, the Congress(I) and Farooq Abdullah's National Conference had been haggling over how to restore popular government. Each side had taken rigid positions about the mode of the transfer of power. Extending Central rule is considered to be an interregnum during which the two sides can, hopefully, work out an arrangement for a smooth return to democratic government. As expected, the Central action was greeted with a bandh and condemnation from the Opposition, including the fundamentalist groups. While Farooq himself refrained from comment, a team of his former ministers, led by former law minister G.M. Handoo issued a strongly-worded statement: "President's Rule will provide breeding ground to extremists and divisive forces which should be to no patriot's liking.... To keep the Assembly under suspended animation would enable detractors to continue the sordid game of political perversion."

But what has made the restoration of popular government difficult is the division and infighting within the Congress(I). Its leaders opposed continuation of Governor's Rule but were also unwilling to support elections because they feared that their arch-enemy Farooq would trounce them.

According to Congress(I) sources, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had favoured either dissolving the state Assembly and calling for fresh elections or handing over the Government to Farooq with support from outside. But his own partymen, led by Mufti and Fotedar, favoured a coalition government with Farooq as chief minister. And Rajiv had made a public commitment that the Assembly would last its full term till 1989. Caught between a rock and a cleft, he toyed with the possibility of a coalition as an interim measure. But Farooq himself was under pressure from his own party not to accept anything short of a fresh assembly election.

Farooq Abdullah (left) with Jagmohan: waiting game

SUMAN DUBEY



Several senior advisers had told Rajiv that while he and Farooq negotiate, it would be politically wise to continue with Governor's Rule because the party would be able to improve its image in the valley. During the last six months Jagmohan had significantly improved the law and order situation and had streamlined the administration—developments which even Farooq was compelled to admire publicly. The Jagmohan administration never resorted to the imposition of curfews which had become a trademark of G.M. Shah's government though Jagmohan is known to be ruthlessly efficient. It was in the course of this efficiency drive—during which *netas* were devalued—that Jagmohan annoyed powerful local Congress(I) politicians. Ignored and politically impotent, they ganged up to lobby for President's Rule in order to have a greater say in state affairs through their allies in the high command and the Home Ministry.

Ultimately therefore, because of the continued infighting within the Congress(I), the end gainer has been Farooq Abdullah. He has been able to prove that time and the people are on his side. The massive welcome which he received on his return from the Haj last month was a clear testimony of his swelling personal popularity. Resigned to be patient, however, he said: "I have full faith in the prime minister and will give full support to whatever is in the better interests of the country." Now the ball is squarely in Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's court. Rajiv cannot afford to continue to display indecision. The Kashmiri psyche itself is hostile to the very idea of being ruled over by the Central Government. And the highly-sensitive state simply cannot be indefinitely governed without popular support, no matter how efficient the administration.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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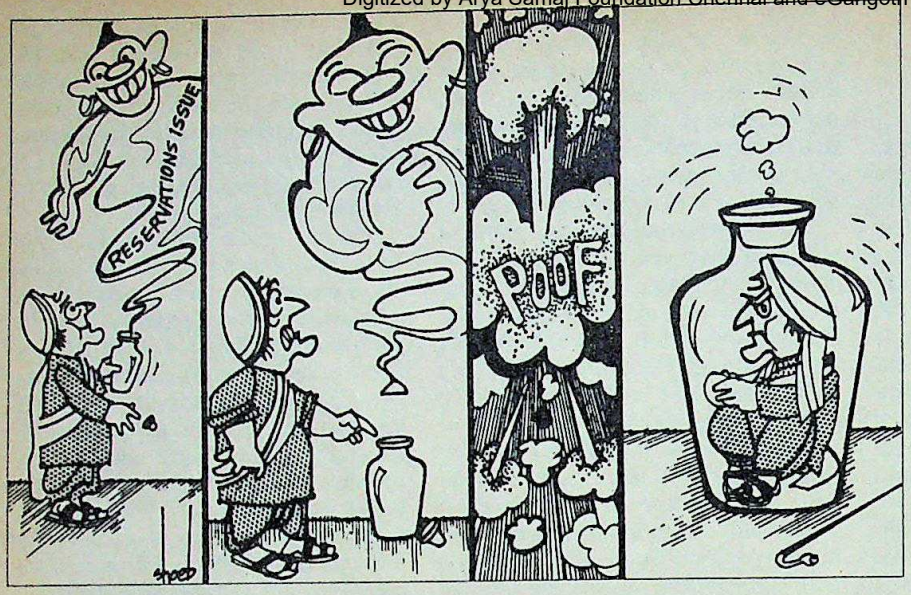

ANDHRA PRADESH

Caste Row

NO devil can drive me away and no deep sea can sink me because I am dedicated to the welfare of the people." So said the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao when he was asked last fortnight if the two-month old controversy over the reservation issue had placed him in a spot where he had to choose between the devil and the deep sea. But NTR's brave words can hardly mask the dilemma he faces on the socially sensitive and worsening reservations row.

While the agitation of the anti-reservationists and an adverse high court judgement have forced him to back out of his earlier decision to increase reservations, he now faces the wrath of the backward classes. Says state Janata Party President P. Babul Reddy: "For the first time NTR feels really shaken."

It was in early July that NTR, mainly to pre-empt a Congress(I) move to unite the backward classes under its fold, had hastily increased the reservations in jobs and college admissions for the backward classes from 25 to 44 per cent. On September 5, a three-judge full bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court struck down the increase as unconstitutional. NTR had increased reservations from 49 per cent to a staggering 71 per cent—44 for backward classes, 15 for Scheduled Castes, 6 for Scheduled Tribes and 6 for special groups like handicapped persons. The high court cited a Supreme Court judgement that total reservations cannot exceed 50 per cent as a precedent.

Emboldened by the high court judgement, Telugu Desam MP's and MLA's openly spoke out against the July decision at a specially convened party meeting, labelling it as one taken in "undue haste". A Telugu Desam MP described the ham-handed way in which NTR had decided on the sensitive issue as "a classical example of political hindsight". NTR seemed to agree, telling journalists later: "We will discuss with all concerned people. We cannot act in haste."

On September 9, the chief minister sent word to the Andhra Pradesh Nava Sangarshana Samithi (APNSS), the students' organisation which was threatening to intensify its agitation against the increase until he gave a commitment that he would not go on appeal against the judgement, calling for a truce. After a five-hour meeting, NTR struck a deal with the APNSS. While the APNSS agreed to call off the agitation, he committed himself to withdrawing the Government order on the increase—thus restoring the earlier 25 per cent reservations for the backward classes. There is now no question of going on appeal to the Supreme Court.

Predictably, the deal enraged the organisations of the backward classes—the rival students' body of the Andhra Pradesh Sama Sangram Parishad, the Andhra Pradesh Reservations Parirakshana Samithi of radical leftist youth and the Andhra Pradesh Backward Classes Sangham headed by Congress(I) MP T. Bala Goud, who had coincidentally called for a state-wide bandh on the same day. Although the bandh was not total, their protest took a militant turn when two buses were put on fire in Hyderabad and sporadic violence erupted in the districts. In Warangal, agitating pro-reservationists burnt the effigies of the three high court judges, B.P. Jeevan Reddy, K. Ramaswamy and Y.V. Anjaneyulu. Backward classes' leaders have been touring the state intensively, criticising the Government's turn around and preparing the ground for an agitation which will be more difficult to contain since, unlike the APNSS, their support is not just confined to the students alone. Says G. Ramamurthy, general secretary of Bala Goud's Sangham: "Our agitation will begin in the villages because we are in larger numbers there."

Stuck for a solution, NTR even approached all the other parties—including his former electoral allies and the Congress(I)—to suggest a way out. But since he had not consulted them when he took his initial decision, they turned down his appeal for help on the plea that he must first get a consensus from his own partymen. He is now reported to be toying with the idea of appointing a three-member commission to go into the reservations issue afresh but the organisations representing the backward classes may not agree to this move unless he can find a way of placating them.

Such flip-flops on major issues, which are characteristic of NTR, are beginning to cost the state dearly. If the reservations issue is not sorted out by the end of the month, this academic year might have to be written off for students. The state transport corporation has already suffered a loss of over Rs 4 crore in damaged and destroyed buses. More ominous for the Telugu Desam, the about-turn on a decision which NTR had described as "historic and momentous" is sure to cut into his personal popularity and give his party's image a major setback. Admitted a party MP: "This turn around will prove costly for us in the coming mandal elections." The elections are due in January but the backlash of the backwards issue could hit the N.T. Rama Rao Government even earlier.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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SRF POISED FOR FURTHER GROWTH

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Introducing new products and the latest technologies to India.

Shri Ram Fibres Ltd., the undisputed leader in the field of industrial nylons in the country, is now embarking on a major diversification and technology upgradation programme. This programme envisages the modernisation of current operations and diversification into new lines of business. It had at one stage doubled its production capacity through innovations alone, without resorting to any major investment. Now it's all set to touch international scales of operations with a production capacity of over 12,000 tonnes. The Company will now set forth with the latest technological advances into areas as diverse as outboard motors and refrigerant gases. It has already made its mark in the fields of industrial fabrics, automotive electricals and financing.

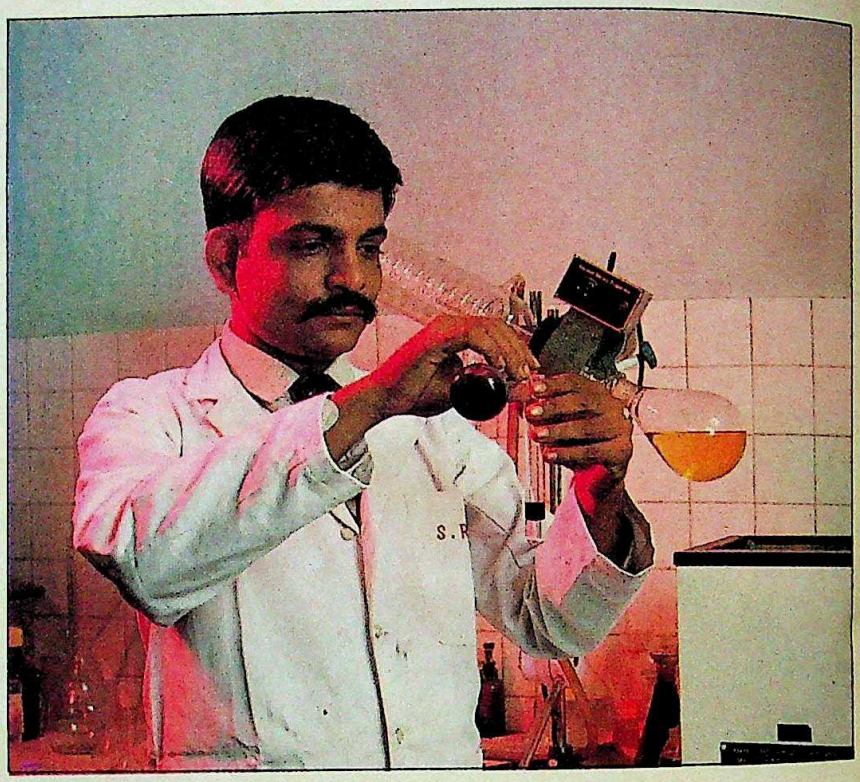
The Company's track record is an enviable one. Over the past 5 years alone, SRF has registered a phenomenal growth rate of 300% in sales. The turnover in 1985 stands at Rs. 74 crores, as against Rs. 25 crores in 1980. For its excellent performance, the Company was adjudged the Top Mini Corporate Giant by the illustrious Economic Times and Harvard Business School Association of India.

SRF's major focus was in the area of industrial nylons. The Company's nylon tyre cord plant was set up in 1973, at Manali, near Madras. This project was undertaken under technical collaboration with Chemtex of USA and Unitika of Japan.

The Company ventured into the fields of industrial yarn, nylon moulding powder and fishnet twine. These four major products of SRF bear the well-known brand names-Tufcord, Tufyarn, Tufnyl and Tuflon. Some of these are leaders in their individual markets.

To maintain its distinct edge in various fields, the Company is embarking on a massive technology upgradation and modernisation programme. This programme, estimated to cost Rs. 20 crores, will upgrade the existing technology and streamline the plant's operations. This, in turn, will lead to better quality products and increased productivity.

To this end, the latest 'Spindraw' technology is being introduced. In the first phase, production is expected to increase by 2000 tonnes. In the second phase, capacity will go up by another 2500 tonnes, touching a total of 12,000 tonnes per annum. The plant's operations will thus become far more cost-effective as the sheer economies of scale will succeed in reducing costs of production.



This programme will not only maintain the Company's leadership in the domestic market, but will also equip it to compete in the international arena.

SRF's R&D: Major breakthroughs on the anvil

Major emphasis is laid on the Company's in-house Research & Development Centre, which is equipped with the most modern facilities and a wealth of information.

The SRF scientists are engaged in some real frontline research efforts which is contemporary even to their western counterparts. The R&D Centre already has some major new products in the pipeline, which are expected to revolutionize some of the core industries of the nation.

Current operations are divided into three distinct areas—to develop new products, to discover new applications for existing products and to synthesize and develop critical raw materials which were previously being imported. In fact, some products have already been developed, which otherwise, the Company was importing at great expense.

SRF taps a high potential market: Industrial Fabrics

The management of SRF realised, as far back as the 70's, that India's industrial growth had opened up an area of great future potential—industrial fabrics. SRF entered the market with technical assistance from Val Mehler of West Germany, an acknowledged international leader in this field.

Today, SRF's Industrial Fabrics have risen to a position of prominence in this area. SRF is now equipped to produce a vast array of industrial fabrics, with a multiplicity of end-uses. These include dipped fabrics, such as dipped tyre cord and chafer fabrics used for the reinforcement of tyres.

It also makes belting ducks in heavy duty conveyor belts and other major products like filters, defence and luggage fabrics.

"Multiple applications of our products ensure a large and diverse market for us to operate in". Stating this, the Unit's General Manager further elaborated that the fabrics are converted into a range of end-products like tarpaulins for storage, covers for trucks,

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tents and parachutes for the defence forces along with material used for soft luggage.

"Most of these have been indigenously developed by our R&D Centre, saving on expensive imports", he added.

SRF Nippondenso: Tie-up with the world's No. 1 in auto electricals

Shri Ram Fibres Ltd. has entered into a joint venture with Nippondenso Ltd. of Japan, the world's largest manufacturer of automotive electricals. The plant was set up in record time at Surajpur in U.P., 35 miles from Delhi and has already commenced production.

Nippondenso, the Rs. 5500 crore Japanese collaborator, has impressive credentials. It has 14 offices in 10 countries, employing 33,000 people and is the third most profitable automobile corporation in Japan, after Honda and Toyota. The corporation supplies automotive components to major manufacturers like Daimler Benz, General Motors and Toyota and terms itself 'the world's best company with the world's best products.'

The Japanese system of better productivity through participative teamwork has also been imbibed in the unit's working culture. Nippondenso has also introduced into the local operations, its principle of 100% quality check on all items. It may be recalled that this earned them the coveted Deming Prize in Japan for adherence to total quality control. To quote the Chief Executive of the Surajpur plant, 'A new breed of automotive electricals are being manufactured for a new breed of automobiles'.

Company sources say that the products are distinctly superior to those currently available. They will be compatible with most of the Japanese vehicles that are proposed to be manufactured in India. Products like alternators with vacuum pump, reduction-type starting motors and multi-speed wiper motors will be manufactured in India for the first time. In fact, the Company is manufacturing components here, which have not even been introduced in Japan as yet. For instance, the alternators for the new Maruti models will be available only in India.

The ancillaries are being supplied to principal automobile manufacturers, like DCM Toyota and Maruti Suzuki.

SRF Nippondenso over-subscribed 25 times

Shri Ram Fibres enters the high-yield area of finance

Recently, attention has been drawn to a finance company which is faring well. The Company is Shri Ram Fibres Finance, promoted by Shri Ram Fibres Ltd. Although a fairly new entrant, it has till date disbursed over Rs. 3.50 crores, with another Rs. 2.50 crores still at its disposal. Within a few months of its operations, a gross profit of Rs. 20 lakhs has already been recorded.

SRFF issue oversubscribed five times

SRFF has not limited its sphere of operations to hire purchase and leasing alone. It has extended its expertise to other areas of finance.

These include acceptance house, guarantee facilities, bill discounting and venture capital, to name a few. The Company has also extended its skills into other channels of finance like recurring deposits and off-shore borrowings to mobilize funds in an innovative manner.

The Company has also finalised leasing tie-ups with dealers of Maruti Suzuki and Voltas Air-conditioners. Talks are on with other manufacturers of machinery and consumer durables like Bajaj and Kinetic Engineering.

In addition to other profitable areas, the Company expects business worth Rs. 15 crores from in-house resources alone. This would be done by financing DCM Computers and DCM Toyota LCV's, among other products of the Shriram Group.

Negotiations under way with global giants

SRF is negotiating with two internationally renowned corporate giants for its latest projects. The discussions are at an advanced stage of negotiations. A Company spokesman mentioned that Letters of Intent have already been obtained for the two proposed ventures.

The first of these two projects involves the manufacture of outboard motors to mechanize traditional fishing craft. The biggest beneficiaries of this Rs. 15 crore project will be the Indian fishing community.

With the installation of these outboard motors, the fisherman stands to increase his catch by as much as 300%, as the mechanized craft can penetrate deeper into the sea, even in the face of strong tides. The number of trips are also increased as the normal time taken by the fisherman in sailing back and forth from the shores is reduced drastically.

Current estimates state that there are about 2 lakh vessels in the country which would require these motors.

The second venture being negotiated between SRF and an international market leader is for the manufacture of refrigerant gases. A Rs. 20 crore plant is proposed to be set up in Rajasthan.

Refrigerant gases are used as a cooling medium in industries like Drugs & Pharmaceuticals, Chemicals and Electronics, to name a few. Appliances like refrigerators, domestic air-conditioners, water coolers and deep freezers also require them.

Presently there is no manufacturer of refrigerant gases in Northern India, which is a major market for refrigeration and air-conditioning equipment. SRF, therefore, will have a significant logistical advantage in this area.

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'Participation Circles'—A successful innovation at SRF

At SRF, two qualities are constantly stressed, in every area of the Company's operations—creativity and innovation.

Take, for instance, SRF's creative use of its human resources. The Company has set up Employee Participation Circles (EPC) at every level. Each EPC is a small group of people, who meet voluntarily and on a regular basis, for about an hour every week or fortnight. The basic objectives of these meetings are to identify problems in their work area, analyse causes, devise solutions and wherever possible, implement the solutions themselves.

This supports Peter Drucker's Y Theory of Management —give an employee a sense of worth and responsibility and he/she will rise to every challenge.

And most important, it gives each employee a sense of deep participation in the Company's functioning and a commitment to its future.

Lala Shri Ram—The vision continues

Today, SRF's track record is the logical extension of the vision and business principles of Lala Shri Ram, the illustrious founder of the Shriram group.

The origins of this industrial group go back to 1889, when India's first textile mill—the Delhi Cloth and General Mills Co. Ltd. was set up.

Under Lala Shri Ram's stewardship, the Shriram group expanded into heavy chemicals, fertilisers, sugar, engineering, vanaspati and polyvinyl chloride, amongst others.

Like Lala Shri Ram, SRF believes that a corporation's duty is to grow and embark often—and successfully—into diversified industrial areas.

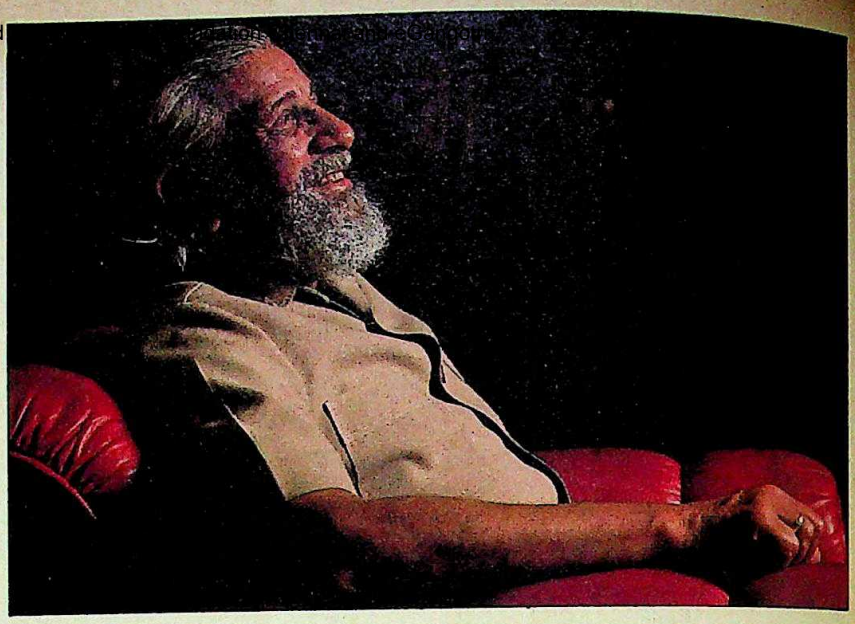
As Lala Shri Ram did years ago, SRF has succeeded because it always believed that its primary resources are not "... composed of land or building, nor even of the capital invested or patents owned but of the calibre of its people."

Today, the values held sacred by Lala Shri Ram find expression in the corporate values and beliefs of SRF, which are:

1. Growth through excellence.
2. SRF is its people.
3. Customer satisfaction.
4. Fostering creativity and innovations.
5. High standards of ethics.
6. Contributing to the development of the society.

Shareholders—

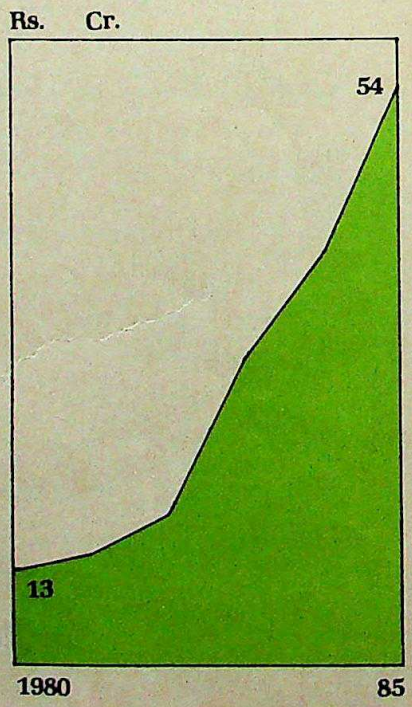
Look forward to a share in the further growth of SRF.



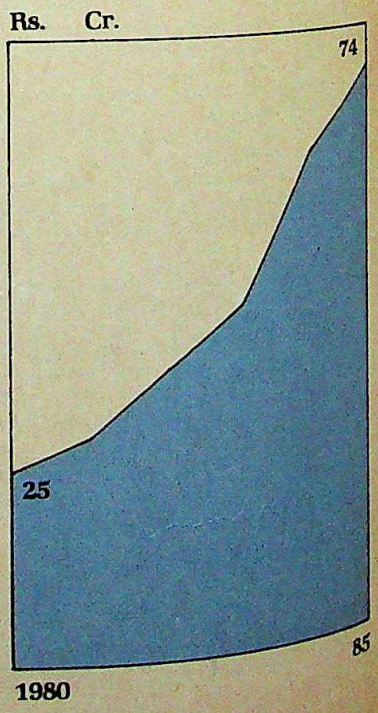
Dr. Bharat Ram, Chairman, Shri Ram Fibres

"The status Shri Ram Fibres today enjoys is the result of the drive and commitment shown by the employees, the efforts of a young, dynamic and motivated team. At this point of time, when the Company is firmly on its feet and on the threshold of exciting growth and diversification, it is appropriate to look back and thank all those who made this possible."

Rise in gross block by 400%



Sales shoot up by 300%



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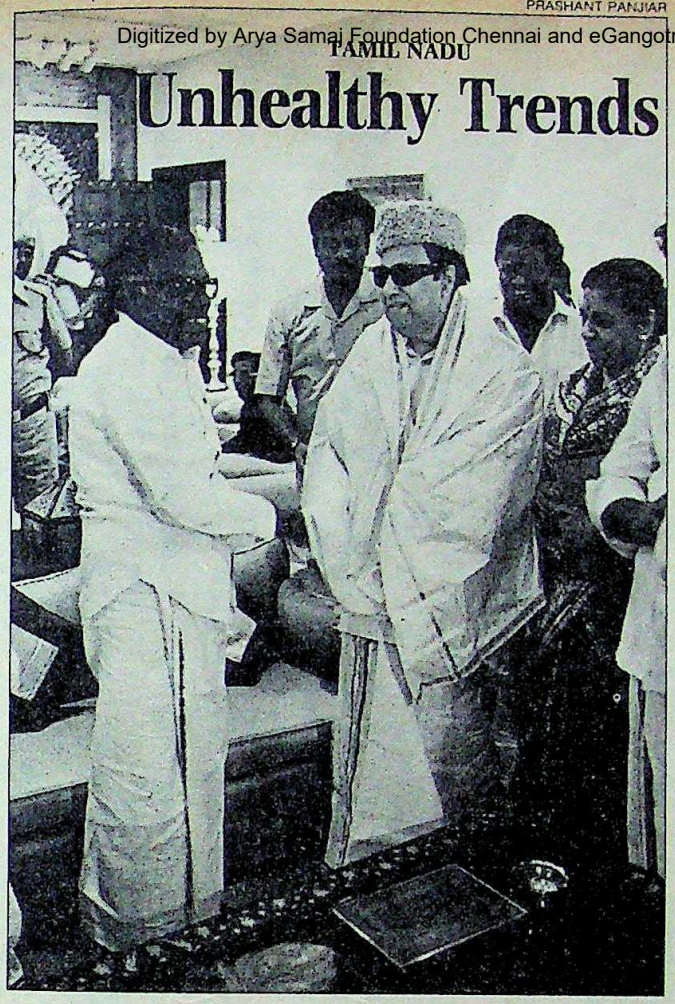
TAMIL NADU

Unhealthy Trends

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Veerappan (left) with MGR: waning hold

THE STAKES were probably the highest that Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran has played for in his protracted political rule. For the first time since taking over as chief minister in 1977, the charismatic MGR's political future—and that of the ruling AIADMK—hung by the slenderest of threads; the results of two assembly by-elections held last fortnight. Coming on top of the party's internal squabbles and the electoral reverses in the February elections to the local bodies, defeats in the poll would have been conclusive proof that MGR's near-mystical hold on the state's politics was finally waning.

Understandably, the challenge compelled MGR to pull out all the political rabbits from his famous fur hat—with the ailing leader even going on a gruelling four-day electioneering tour, the first after his speech paralysis and kidney failure in October 1984. But with both constituencies of Tirunelveli and Aruppukkoottai returning AIADMK candidates, it is evident that MGR, despite his handicaps, continues to be a better stage manager than his arch political rival DMK chief M. Karunanidhi. Said T. Nagar Murthy, an MGR manram leader and organiser of the AIADMK in the T. Nagar Division of Madras city: "Our leader has convincingly proved that he is the only person who matters in the party and that people vote only for him. The entire AIADMK is a big zero without him."

MGR addressed no less than 13 election meetings during which he managed to stutter, stammer, and occasionally read from a written speech in a heavy slur. At one such meeting, he declared: "I am one of you. You can say whatever you want of me. But the DMK politicians are heaping undeserved blame on me. They are alleging that I have amassed Rs 24 crore of illegal wealth. They should prove it." In response, women, children and men hysterically waved two fingers for the party election symbol as they shouted, cried, and cheered.

Yet, the victory's statistics also contain a warning signal for the AIADMK. While its share of votes is declining in its known strongholds, the DMK continues to do better. In the high-profile contest for Tirunelveli, where Information Minister R.M.Veerappan was the AIADMK candidate, the party had won by over 24,000 votes in the 1980 elections and over 18,000 votes in 1984 even though MGR was then in a New York hospital. This time, despite massive injections of funds and manpower, Veerappan's margin came down to 13,324 votes. More important, the DMK polled over 60,000 votes in the two constituencies, proving that it is still the only alternative to the AIADMK in the state. Said Karunanidhi: "It is not a mandate against us but a show of emotional sympathy for an ailing leader. The tide is on the wane and will disppear by the next election."

More than the DMK, however, it is his own party's problems that plague MGR. By keeping Jayalalitha indoors during the campaign he has proved that it is his personal charisma, and no one else's, that gets the votes. But the election results will intensify the infighting between the factions led by Jayalalitha and Veerappan. Veerappan had already complained to MGR about the sabotage threat from Jayalalitha and her supporters during the election campaign; now, he and his hard core Dravidian supporters are likely to demand her ouster on the ground that the party should be purged of all newcomers who favour liberal policies. Veerappan fired his first salvo against his detractors in his thanksgiving statement itself, saying: "This election result has taught a lesson to the DMK and to my enemies."

Though MGR left strict instructions on party conduct before leaving for New York for his medical check-up *(see box)*, both factions were holding secret meetings to upstage each other. According to AIADMK sources, the Veerappan-led faction has already chalked out a strategy under which they will gradually take over the party at the district level and pursue an anti-Centre course. MGR had promised during the campaign that he would draft some ministers for party work; when he returns from the US, he will, in all likelihood, face a demand for the removal of all pro-Jayalalitha ministers in the Cabinet. Significantly, it was during MGR's earlier absence that Jayalalitha was divested of her position as propaganda secretary. Clearly, Veerappan's stars are again on the ascendant, at the expense of Jayalalitha.

The election results will also have major repercussions on the already-battered AIADMK-Congress(I) alliance in the state. When it seemed that the DMK might pull off an unpleasant surprise, the Congress(I) hastened to assure the AIADMK of its total support. Said O. Subramaniam, Congress(I) leader in the state Assembly: "For us it is the DMK which is more dangerous. We can't afford to allow the DMK to re-establish itself. It is not in the national interest." But when it came to showing its support, the Congress(I) did it in such a manner that AIADMK leaders became suspicious that it was trying to stake its claim as an alternative to the AIADMK in the absence of MGR. The party first fielded its film star Shivaji Ganeshan in the campaign and

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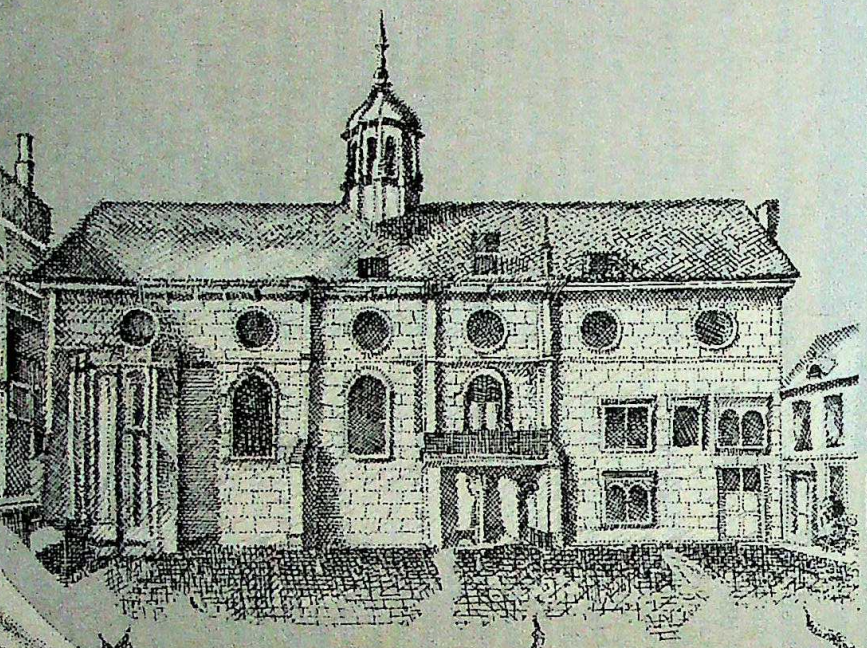
Did you know 3

The Dutch founded the great Bank of Amsterdam in 1609—this was the begining of stable banking.



It was not until the Dutch founded the Bank of Amsterdam in 1609, that a relatively stable banking system evolved. That prompted more countries to adopt the new financial system and the English set up the Bank of England in 1694. A number of private banks also commenced operating in England around then.

In India, indigenous bankers were in operation till about 1913, and thereafter western type of banking started gaining ground. The Presidency Banks were the first full fledged banks, of which the Bank of Bengal was charted in 1806 by the East India Company. Private banking companies which started around 1900 with the Swadeshi Movement grew substantially and by 1913, there were 41 Indian private banks in the field.

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later, AICC(I) General Secretary G.K. Moopanar, who spoke with MGR from the same platform. Commenting on this, an AIADMK leader said later: "The Congress(I) wants to sabotage us from within through their stooges. They are offering us lip-sympathy so that the people don't turn against them."

There are hawks in the Congress(I) ranks who advocate treading an independent path to hobbling on the crutches of the regional party. Says Rajya Sabha member Thangabalu: "Sooner or later we have to decide our role in Tamil Nadu politics. A national party cannot remain an appendage of a regional party for ever. There can always be election adjustments." Many Congress(I) leaders feel that the AIADMK's electoral success has reduced their bargaining power. Said a senior state Congress(I) leader: "We were in a better position before the elections but now we are caught between the deep sea and the devil. We must pull out before we are thrown out."

But with the elections three years away, the after-effects of the fiercely-contested by-elections will remain confined to the internal politics of all three parties as long as MGR is around.

—S.H. VENKATARAMANI
with PRABHU CHAWLA in Madras

MEDICAL HISTORY

Ill Tidings

HIS ailment is as shrouded in secrecy as are his political and administrative actions. Although Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran's departure last fortnight for the US for medical treatment appeared to be sudden, arrangements for his trip had been made some weeks in advance. It was, however, kept a closely guarded secret until he himself allowed it to be made public knowledge following his party's victory in the Assembly by-elections. Although the ostensible reason for his visit was a routine medical check-up, the fact that he was accompanied by a team of three doctors—a neurophysician, a nephrologist and a neurosurgeon—has raised fresh controversies over the exact state of MGR's health.

Further, the duration of his stay in New York, 16 days, is longer than likely to be required for a routine check-up. Obviously, this time none of the doctors monitoring MGR's health was willing to take any chances. His failure to recover fully from the damage caused to his brain by a stroke was causing concern, especially after his gruelling campaign during the by-elections. Doctors attending on him had earlier expressed the fear that although he had survived one stroke, over-exertion might cause another. And it happened in July at Trichy when, while addressing a public meeting, MGR suddenly fell down in a faint and regained consciousness only 40 minutes later.

A diabetic for eight years, MGR was admitted to the Apollo Hospital in Madras on October 5, 1984. Although Dr Pratap Reddy, the attending physician, initially announced that he was only suffering from asthma and minor breathlessness, the reality was much more serious. Detailed medical examination had established that in addition to acute breathlessness, his pulse rate was considerably heightened (120 beats per minute), his blood pressure was high, there was a drop in the haemoglobin count in the blood and there was an alarming build-up of fluid in his lungs (acute pulmonary oedema).

It soon became apparent to the doctors that these were symptoms of chronic renal failure as a result of extensive damage to the kidneys caused by diabetes. His medical history revealed that although he had been diagnosed as having diabetes eight years earlier, he had consistently disregarded the dietary restrictions strictly prescribed. Moreover, ECG readings over the previous three years showed that there was partial blockage of some blood vessels. What was worse, the records revealed that he had in fact suffered a minor stroke in July that year but had refused to undergo treatment as this would have made his condition public knowledge.

Instead of keeping the anxious public informed, MGR's personal staff and doctors kept his condition under wraps.

On October 13, he suffered a massive stroke which resulted in extensive aphasia (inability to speak) and paralysis of the right side of the body. The stroke, caused by a temporary loss of blood supply to the brain (ischaemia), damaged the nerve cells in a specific area on the left side which is associated with speech and language functions (called Broca's area in medical parlance). A brain scan confirmed brain damage and showed a patch of dead tissue (cerebral infarct) as well as extensive retention of cerebral fluid indicating continuing kidney failure.

Doctors, anxious to prevent damage to his heart, began treatment to dissolve the arterial blockages identified in earlier examinations. While daily haemodialysis and other decongestive measures succeeded in curbing the retention of fluid in the brain and the lungs, and regular insulin injections helped to control the diabetes, the failure of the kidneys was of prime concern. The doctors opined that a transplant was inevitable.

The transplant was done at New York's Downstate Medical Centre last year. And since his return from New York, following intensive speech therapy, MGR has been able to recover his speech partially. He now suffers from a condition called conduction aphasia which means that while the comprehension of spoken language is normal, he continues to have difficulty in making spontaneous speech.

The kidney transplant was expected to give MGR a new lease of life. However, doctors now feel that recent blood transfusions done at a privately-owned hospital in Madras indicate that there is some malfunctioning of the transplanted kidney—on the life and functioning of which his total recovery depends.

His physicians have announced in New York that the American doctors are satisfied with the improvement in his condition but they are unwilling to disclose the exact nature of his illness or its treatment on which the Government has already spent more than Rs 2 crore.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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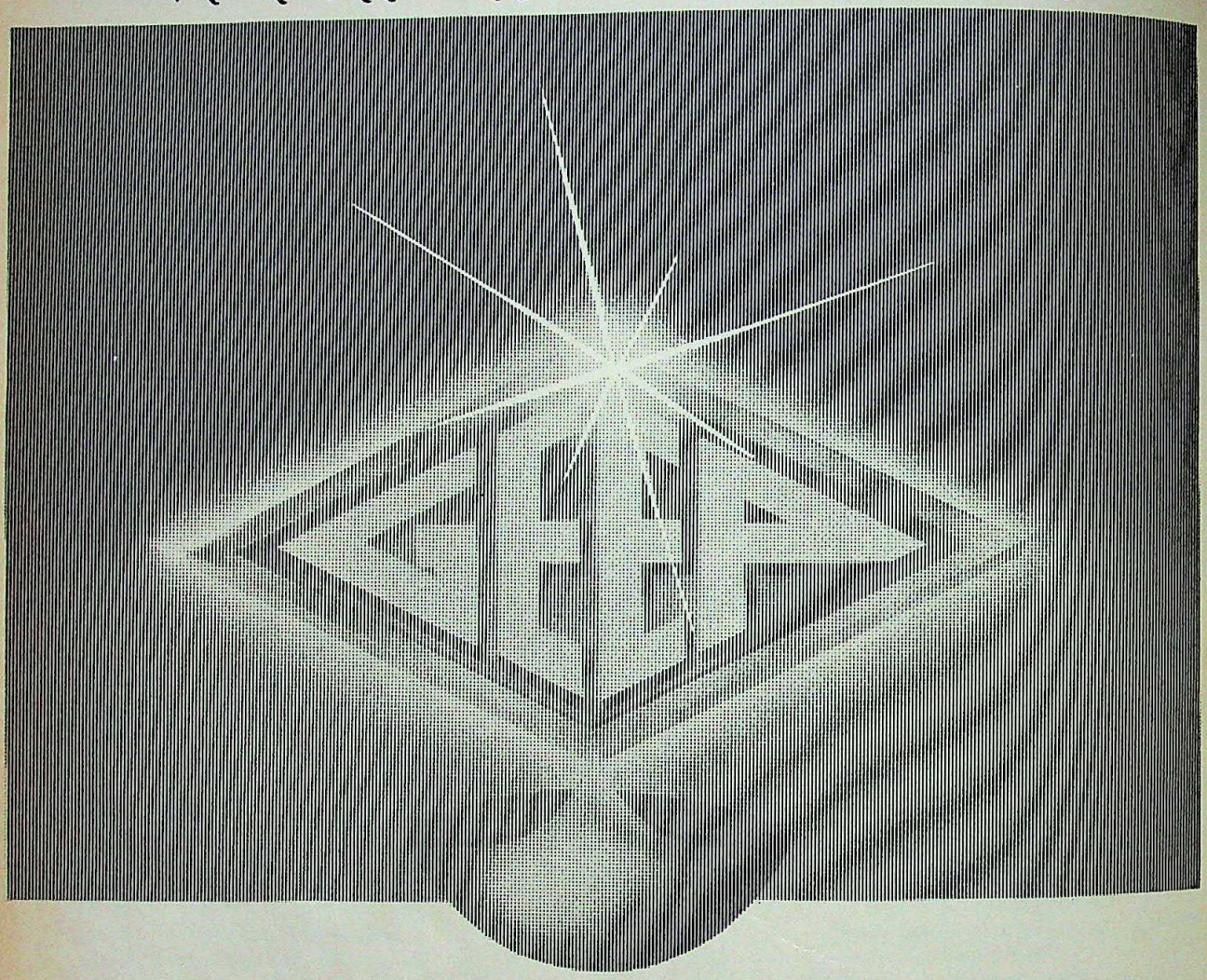

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V.P. SINGH

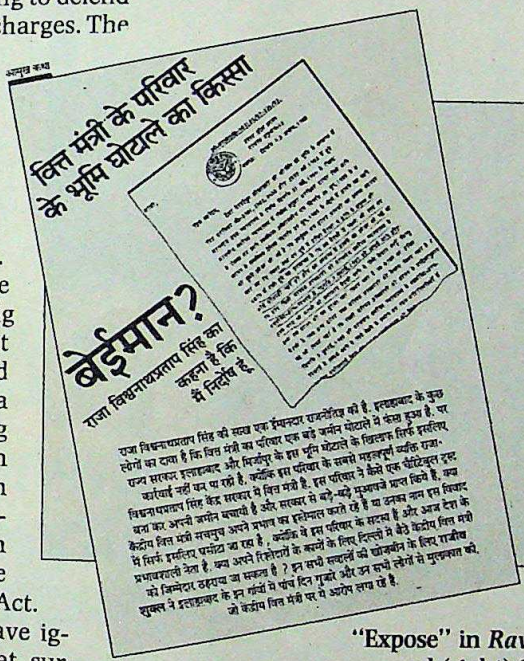
Trust Trouble

HIS political colleagues were envious of his clean image. Economic offenders and big businessmen cowered before the onslaught of his raiders. But last fortnight when *Ravivar*, a Calcutta-based Hindi weekly, carried an "expose" on alleged improprieties involving a trust fund managed by his family members, Union Finance Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh, for the first time in his life, found himself in the unenviable position of having to defend himself against corruption charges. The allegations made media headlines and the Lok Dal raised a ruckus in the Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha. The finance minister responded by asking six prominent opposition leaders to investigate the allegations. His supporters attacked the article as an example of big business vendetta against him. *Ravivar* had featured Singh on its cover with a derisive caption depicting him as a dishonest politician who helped his family in making false claims to prevent their surplus land from being taken away under the Agricultural Land Ceilings Act.

Singh said: "I would have ignored the article. But what surprised me was the fact the magazine had earlier dropped it because they could not find anything against me. Both the editor and the correspondent told me this almost a year ago. I don't know what new facts they have collected now."

Said Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Bir Bahadur Singh: "I have gone through the records and I can declare that the finance minister has in no way influenced any of the government decisions." Anand Sharma, the Indian Youth Congress president, added: "Any attempt to defame the finance minister will not be tolerated. Tax evaders, smugglers and dishonest people are out to browbeat him by spreading canards." In fact, all the 223 Congress(I) MLA's present in Lucknow on the day of discussion condemned the attack.

The controversy about Singh and the trust—the Daiya Charitable Society whose sole trustee is Singh's mother, Rani Brijraj Kumari—began over a year ago. Certain politicians from Allahabad, with representatives of a prominent industrial group from Kanpur and Calcutta, provided photostat copies of documents to journalists which purported to contain all the facts of the story. "We had the story for a few months but we wanted Singh's version so it was held up for a year," said *Ravivar* Editor Udayan Sharma. "Moreover, I don't see any reason for Singh being annoyed because nowhere in the story have we alleged that he was responsible for any violations and manipulations, and we have given his point of view as well. Had we not used it, others would have used it."



"Expose" in *Ravivar*; and (right) Singh

But the story, as written, showed Singh very poorly. The allegations were:

► The trust, by inflating the number of trees on land that belonged to it and was later acquired by the Government, was able to claim an additional Rs 25 lakh in fraudulent compensation.

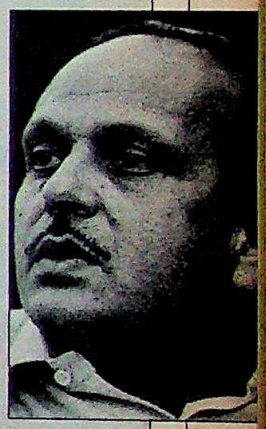
► It was due to Singh's political clout that the case for the acquisition of surplus land and payment of compensation was not aggressively contested in court by the state Government.

► In order to prevent his own surplus land from being acquired by the state under the ceiling laws, Singh donated 3,041 bighas to the trust.

Surprisingly, however, though the magazine published the allegations, it did not back them up with documented evidence. But Singh—scion of Maunda, a small princely state near Allahabad—was able to make a convincing case that no member of his immediate family could have stood to gain from the trust which was floated in 1954 when Singh had joined the Bhoodan movement. Singh was adopted by the Maunda family and inherited over 2,000 bighas of fertile land, worth more than Rs 5 crore, which he donated to the Bhoodan movement. Singh says he had no right over the land owned by his original family so he decided to part with it. "Once I surrendered ownership of the land belonging to my real parents in favour of the Daiya trust, I forgot about it."

Government records show that the high court had upheld the legality and merits of the compensation claims made by the Daiya trust. The *Ravivar* story relates to the period of the Janata regime when allegations about the controversial tree count were first raised. In fact, after Singh became Uttar Pradesh chief minister, he ordered the state to contest the high court judgement. This was done but the Supreme Court upheld the lower court's ruling.

> "The magazine had earlier dropped the article because they could not find anything against me. I don't know what new facts they have collected now."
>
> V.P. SINGH
> *finance minister*



There is little doubt that through raids and prosecutions Singh has made many enemies, several of them in big business, who have been gunning for him. But that is the political price paid by any controversial minister. Stories like the one that appeared in *Ravivar*—whether deliberately aimed barbs or not—are the politician's lot. But even friends of the finance minister say that Singh, who is zealously protective of his Mr Clean image, may have over-reacted. A story, they say, should have been treated—and rebutted—as a story. But in this case Singh has mounted what has, in effect, become a veritable campaign. The exercise could become counter-productive because the public will begin to wonder why the finance minister doth protest too much.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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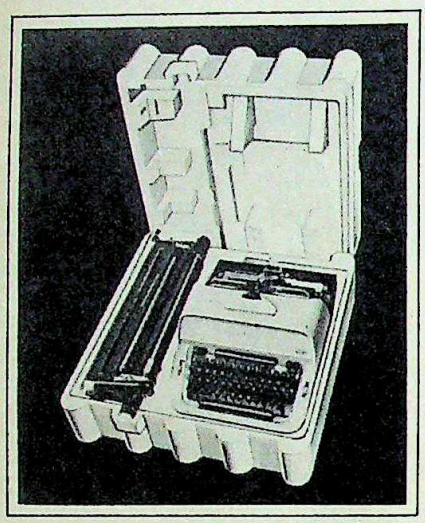

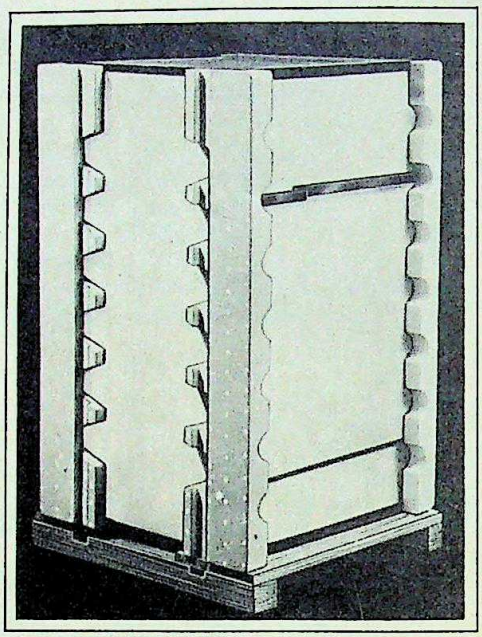

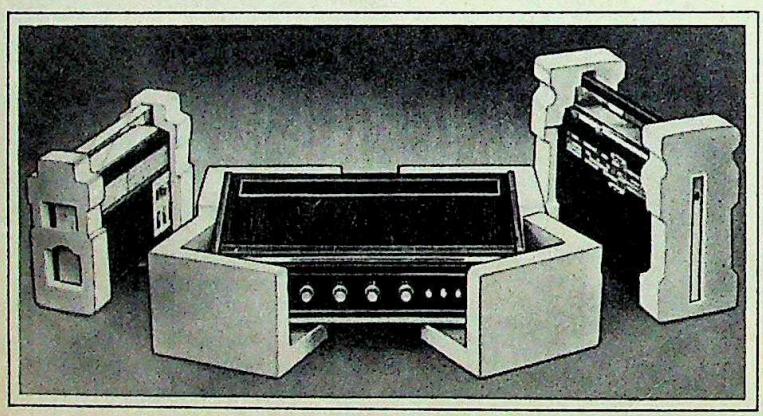

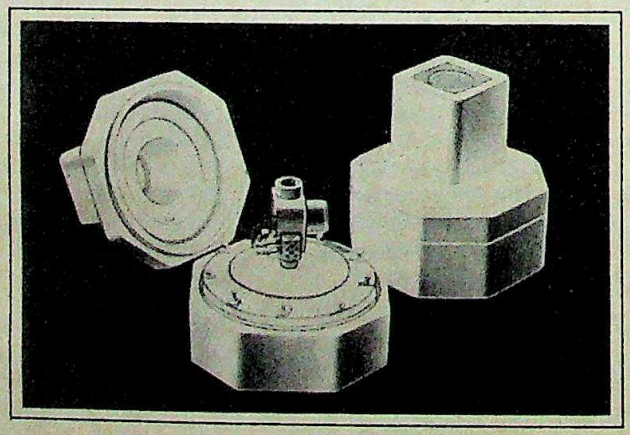

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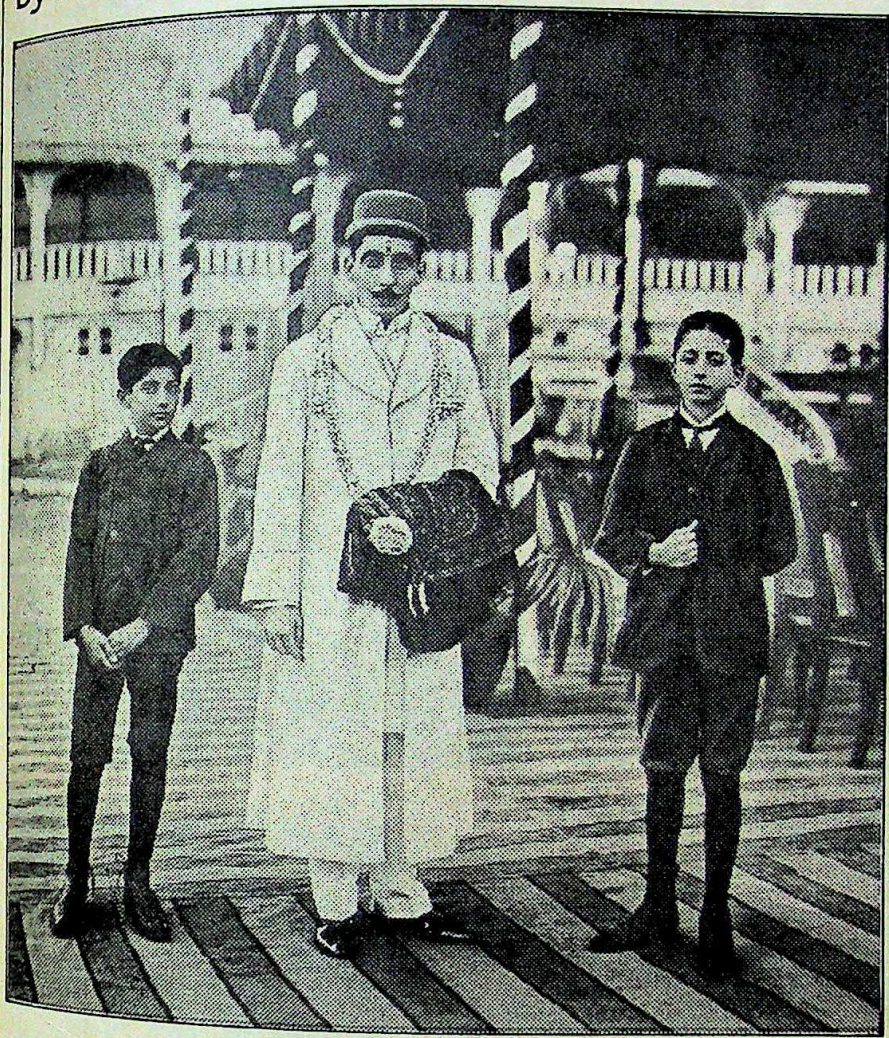
The day great-grandfather turned groom and was given a royal reception by his brothers-in-law a hundred years ago.



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ALL-INDIA GURUDWARAS ACT

Dangerous Proposal

THE Government of India agrees to consider the formulation of an all-India gurudwara bill. Legislation will be brought forward for this purpose in consultation with the Shiromani Akali Dal, others concerned and after fulfilling all relevant constitutional requirements."

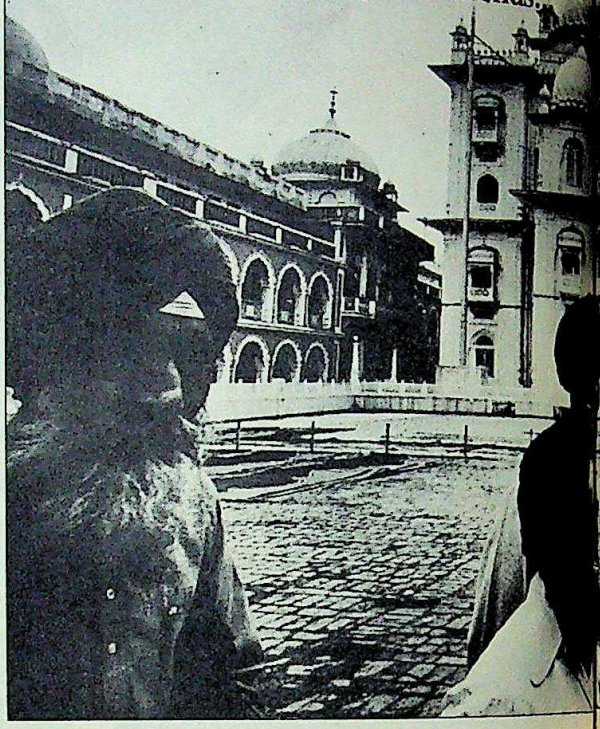
(Clause 5.1 of the Punjab accord, July 24,1985)

IT appears, on the surface,to be among the most innocuous clauses of the Punjab accord. While passions have been aroused over the transfer of Chandigarh and the sharing of the Ravi-Beas waters, there has been almost no noise over Rajiv Gandhi's decision to permit the Akali Dal to devise legislation that would give them virtual control over the gurudwaras of India. But as details of the draft legislation, which is almost ready to be submitted to Delhi, have now become available, warning voices have already started being heard. Says Rajiv Kapur, author of *Sikh Separatism: The Politics of Faith*: "The proposed all-India gurudwaras act has elements which are designed to extend the Akali Dal's power base to Sikhs throughout the country rather than to ensure the proper management of all Sikh religious institutions."

A special meeting of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) approved the draft legislation a fortnight ago. The draft is currently with the Legal Department of the Punjab Government where the final touches are being given to it.

In effect what an all-India gurudwaras act will do is to extend the hold of the SGPC, which currently controls only the gurudwaras in Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana, to all the gurudwaras in the country. In the proposed dispensation, the SGPC will be the apex body at the top of a three-tier system, controlling regional and state boards and the elected local committees which manage gurudwaras on a day-to-day basis. Once the new structure is created the SGPC's annual budget will go up from Rs 12 crore to an estimated Rs 30 crore and the new central religious body would be permitted to give decisions on all controversial matters relating to the 'panth' and its decision would not only be binding but legal. Asks Kapur: "If its decisions clash with the country's secular laws then which decision will be binding on Sikhs?"

Further, since the SGPC's resources have long been utilised for political purposes by the Akali Dal, the proposed act will extend the influence of the Akalis to far beyond the frontiers of Punjab. Considering the SGPC's record of the last four years, when it watched impassively while extremists effectively took over the gurudwaras in Punjab, the proposal for an all-India gurudwaras act could not have come at a worse time. Says Darbara Singh, former Congress(I) chief minister of Punjab: "This is one of the most dangerous clauses of the Punjab accord. I was not consulted by the prime minister before the accord was signed or I would have said so then."

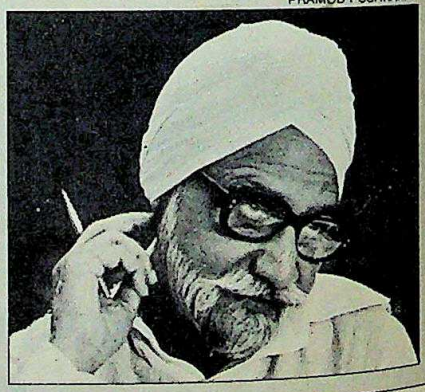


Ostensibly a religious body SGPC's funds and influence have been used by Akalis for political ends.

"The proposal for an all-India gurudwaras act is one of the most dangerous clauses of the Punjab accord."

DARBARA SINGH
former Punjab chief minister.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



The idea of an all-India gurudwaras act first began to be tossed around in the early '60s when two MP's introduced a private member's bill in Parliament. It died for want of support but the Akalis revived the issue after being swept to power in 1977. It was agreed between the Akali and Janata Party leaders that the all-India act would use as a model the Punjab Sikh Gurudwaras Act of 1925 which created the SGPC. A draft was prepared in 1979, but the Janata government fell before the proposal could be passed.

While the Punjab Act ended the control of 'mahants' over gurudwaras, it also created a religious infrastructure which already had in its soul political possibilities because the Akali Dal was by its very nature a natural ally for the SGPC. Initially, the SGPC was given control over some 300 historic gurudwaras in the Punjab but gradually its control began to extend to more and more shrines and gurudwaras which gave it access to enormous funds so that by 1985 its budget went up to an estimated Rs 12 crore. Money meant power, patronage and control over local gurudwara committees so that emergence of a figure like Gurcharan Singh

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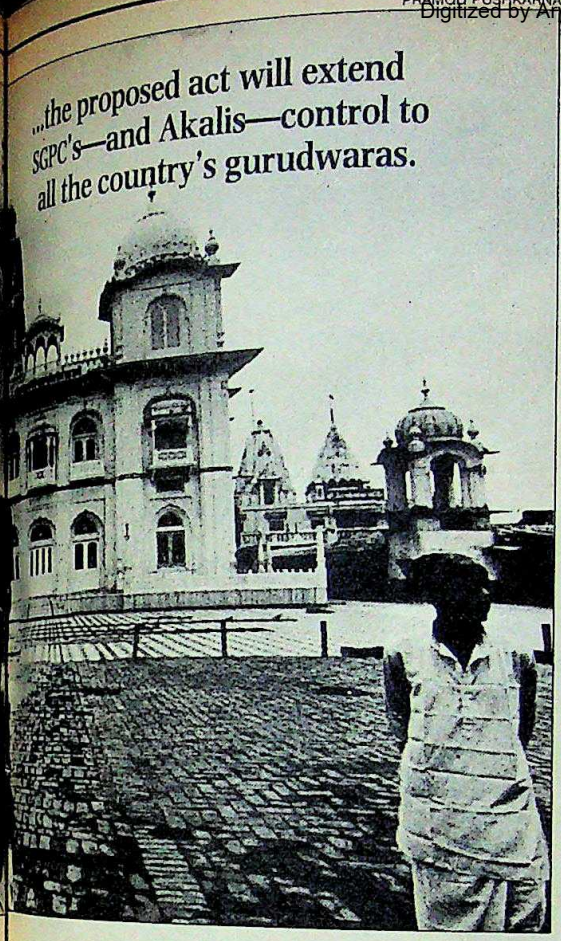
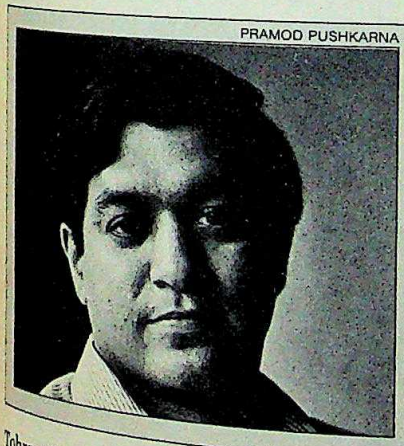
PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



...the proposed act will extend SGPC's—and Akalis—control to all the country's gurudwaras.

The Patna Sahib Gurudwara

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



"The proposed act has elements which are designed to extend the Akali Dal's base to Sikhs throughout the country."

RAJIV KAPUR
author of Sikh Separatism: The Politics of Faith

Tohra, who was not only president of the SGPC for 13 long years but also an Akali member in the Rajya Sabha, was inevitable. Today, though out of the SGPC, he is possibly the most powerful Sikh leader.

With an all-India act, future Tohras could come to dominate Sikh politics not just in Punjab but quite literally from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. And if they have the inclinations of a Bhindranwale then the scale of havoc that they could wreak is terrifying.

Defenders of the proposed new legislation are, however, quick to point out that one of the suggested clauses will forbid future presidents of the SGPC from staying in power for more than two five-yearly terms. Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia, author, civil servant and convenor of the Akali Dal-appointed reviewing committee that has suggested amendments to the earlier draft, said they were trying to persuade the SGPC and the Akali Dal to put a clause which would forbid the SGPC president from holding political office. Asked why the committee had not clearly spelt out that SGPC funds, workers and infrastructure would not in future be used for political purposes, Ahluwalia said: "This is for the (Punjab) Government and the SGPC to decide and even if I had tried I could not have managed to get such a clause included."

Ahluwalia, who was the first to raise a hue and cry about the 1979 draft of the Act, felt that the drafting committee headed by the former chief justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court, Harbans Singh, had not integrated control of the gurudwaras but had, in fact, fragmented it by suggesting nine independent regional boards. He also felt that the Harbans Committee had made other crucial errors in suggesting that all gurudwaras be registered and that *sehajdharis* (Sikhs with shorn hair) not only be prevented from voting in gurudwara polls but also not be considered Sikhs.

The reviewing committee is headed by Information Minister, Natha Singh Dalam and, apart from Ahluwalia, includes Akali Dal General Secretary, Manjit Singh Khaira, and Gurnam Singh Tir, both of whom had worked on the earlier committee. Ironically, its recommendations are even more fundamentalist. Though it has recognised *sehajdharis* as Sikhs it has recommended that *sehajdharis* be prevented from voting in gurudwara elections. Under the Punjab Act *sehajdhari* Sikhs were not only allowed to vote but also to stand for election. Asked what the objection was to this, when there are a lot more Sikhs with shorn hair than in 1925, Khaira said: "Our experience in past elections has been that a lot of Hindus and even Muslims were put up by both sides as voters. If this were to happen in future then representatives of Hindus could dominate the gurudwaras. Naturally the Sikhs would not like this."

Ahluwalia admits that the provision relating to *sehajdharis* is a step backwards, particularly when Hindu-Sikh divisions are widening, but said: "Despite my reservations I didn't try to push my point of view because I knew that I would never get the SGPC to agree with me and I didn't want a deadlock on the issue." So while, on one hand, the Akalis talk incessantly of bridging the divisions between Hindus and Sikhs, on the other they are doing everything possible to make the communal identity of the Sikhs even more clearly defined than before.

Akali leaders say that the main objective of an all-India act would be to prevent government interference in Sikh religious matters but they are unable to come up with any concrete instances of such interference other than the government-controlled 'kar seva' of the Akal Takht after Operation Bluestar and Sikhs not being allowed to carry 'kirpans'. Says Khaira: "All we are trying to do is maintain Sikh control over the gurudwaras."

Undeniably, the new legislation will only strengthen an ostensibly religious structure which will be used for political purposes. Since neither the Central Government nor the Opposition have shown much interest in the implications of the legislation, the act could well be passed before its consequences are fully realised, which, in the present communally-surcharged atmosphere, would be disastrous. If the Government now finds it difficult to wriggle out of its commitment to the enactment of the gurudwaras act, the least it must do is to insist on clauses that would prevent an all-India SGPC from being used for political purposes.

—TAVLEEN SINGH

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PUNJAB

Son Spot

ALLEGATIONS of links with terrorists and smugglers have tainted the reputation of many a minister in the Government of Surjit Singh Barnala (*see Investigation: Pg 76*), but no such shadow had been cast on the chief minister himself. But the arrest last fortnight of Baljit Singh, who figures in the list of 38 top terrorists and is suspected of involvement in the Muktsar killings, and his subsequent disclosure that he knew, Gaganjeet Singh the ambitious, high-profile son of the Punjab chief minister, have placed Barnala in a spot. Barnala denied Baljit's accusations at a crowded and tense press conference but the rival Akali Dal, seizing the opportunity, was insistent that he should resign.

The arrest came entirely by chance. Baljit Singh, 19, Waryam Singh Khapianwali, 26, another accused in the Muktsar case, and Balwinder Singh Brar, a rich landlord of the Muktsar region, along with two other terrorists, had gone to a house in the quiet and heavily-guarded Sector 7 of Chandigarh to buy a video-cassette recorder (VCR). Finding the owner's wife, Jaswant Kaur, alone in the house, the terrorists changed their mind. They snatched the VCR, hit Jaswant Kaur on the head with the butt of a revolver and fled. Jaswant Kaur raised an alarm and Balwinder and Baljit were finally nabbed after a two-hour chase but the other three escaped. The police seized their Maruti car (registration number: PAD 1), a stolen scooter and two foreign-made revolvers.

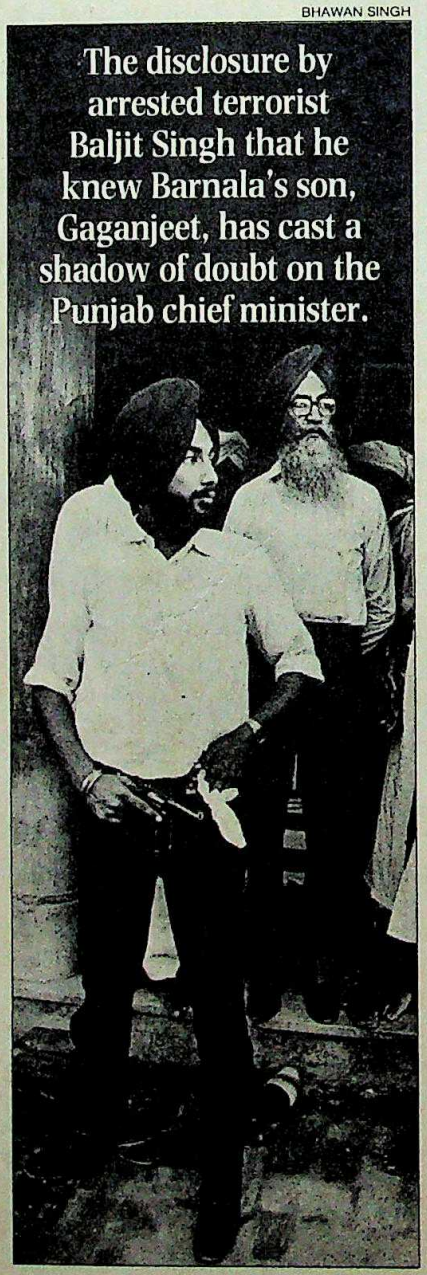
Initially, Baljit pretended to be one Kabul Singh of Gurdaspur. It was only after the Gurdaspur police informed the Chandigarh police that there was no Kabul Singh in the village Baljit had mentioned, that they interrogated him more rigorously and made him confess his identity. It was at this stage that the name of the chief minister's son cropped up. The two went on to make startling revelations which established that Gaganjeet had come quite close to the terrorists—too close, in fact, for the chief minister's comfort.

These discoveries only served to confirm some nagging suspicions which had arisen when Gaganjeet had started showing a personal interest in Brar. According to Chandigarh police chief R.K. Ohri, the chief minister's son had repeatedly told the police to treat Brar nicely, as he did not think Brar was involved in any major crime. The police, however, successfully resisted the pressures because of the support they received from Punjab Governor Siddartha Shankar Ray, who is also the Union territory's chief administrator.

The police learnt that Gaganjeet and Brar had met through a common woman friend (whom the police are now hunting for and hope to nab soon). It was also learnt that the Maruti seized from the terrorists belonged to Sarabjit Singh Sekhon, another rich landlord from Abohar who was Gaganjeet's classmate and had assisted Gaganjeet in looking after Barnala's security during elections. The registration number—PAD 1—was recommended by none other than Barnala. The car was often used by Brar, Baljit and Waryam, who flaunted a photocopy of the recommendation to intimidate cops.

Gaganjeet and Barnala: trapped?

BHAWAN SINGH



Baljit also disclosed that he knew Gaganjeet and had met him along with Waryam in Chandigarh. They had grown friendly over the past few months and Brar had even insisted quite a few times that Gaganjeet accompany him in his car. Apparently, Gaganjeet's motive was to win them over for his and his family's safety. Gaganjeet reportedly had also made attempts to get in touch with the Taksal leadership.

However, the Director-General of Punjab Police Julio F. Ribeiro believes that Gaganjeet had merely walked into a trap laid out by the terrorists. In fact, as Baljit has now disclosed, the idea was to kidnap him. Brar's background and his contact with the chief minister's family provided a good cover for their plans. But before anything could happen, the terrorists were arrested. "The adventures of this young boy could have led to a big misfortune," says Ribeiro.

Gaganjeet himself was not available for comment but Barnala seconds the theory put forward by Ribeiro. While the chief minister chided his son for meeting Brar—who, he admitted, had been introduced to him as a sarpanch and had once stayed with him—he denied that Gaganjeet had any connection with Baljit or Waryam. "What connection can we have with the terrorists who are trying to gun us down any moment?" asked Barnala. "I shall not like to buy peace by being friendly with them. If that were so, many doors are open to talk to them." Then, obviously in retaliation to the charges levelled by the General Secretary of Badal's faction of Akali Dal, Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, and his demand that the chief minister step down, Barnala added: "Everybody knows who is supporting the terrorists. It is Parkash Singh Badal and his Dal making heroes out of these criminals by attending their bhog ceremonies."

While the police carry on their interrogation to extract more details from the wounded Baljit, the whispers within Akali circles grow louder and more persistent. And the factional strife goes yet one step further.

—GOBIND THUKRAL

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ELITE EYE WEAR : FOR VISION, COMFORT AND STYLE.

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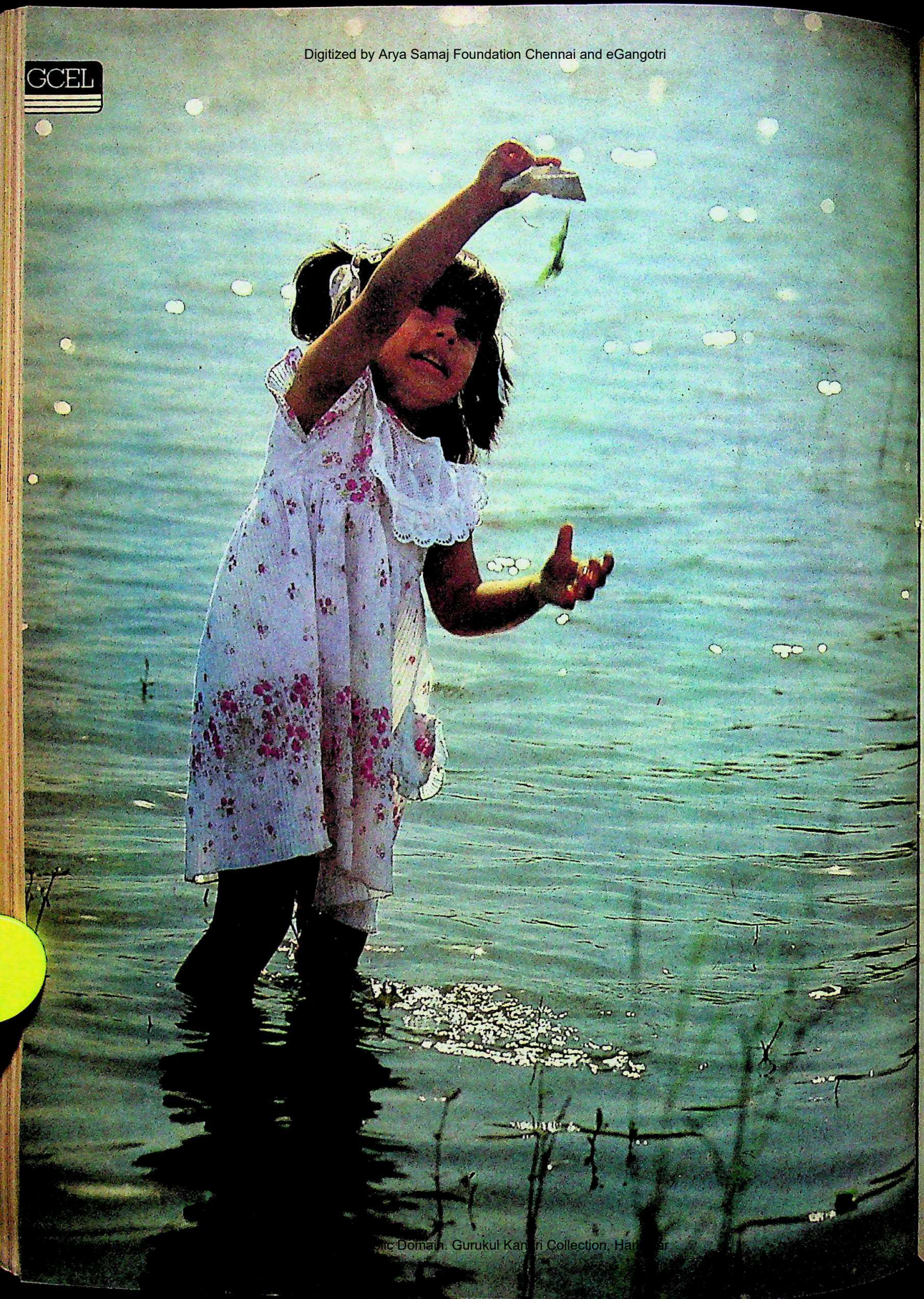

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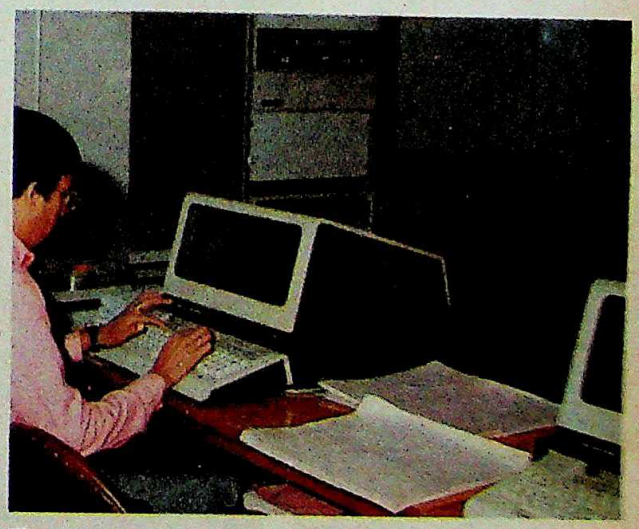

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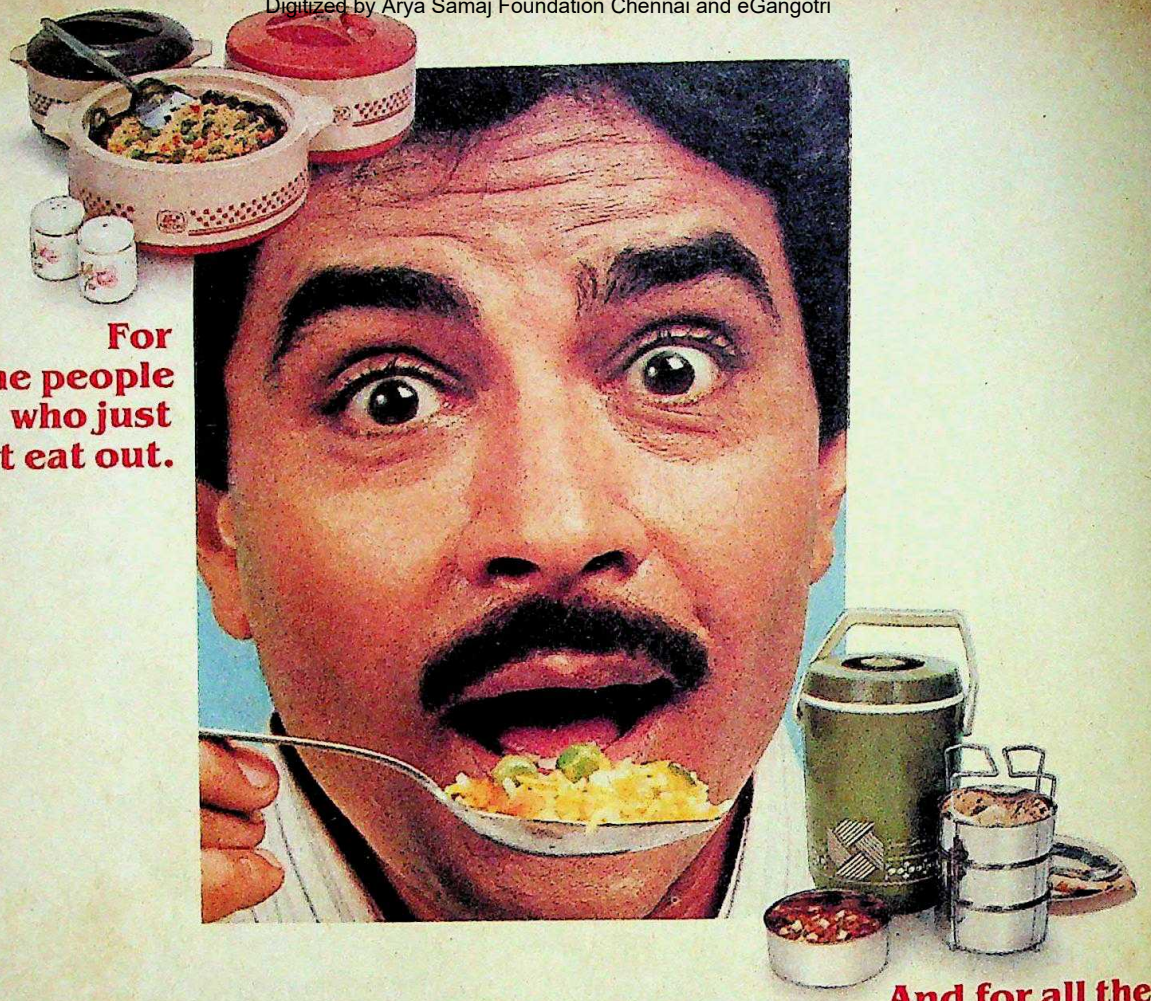

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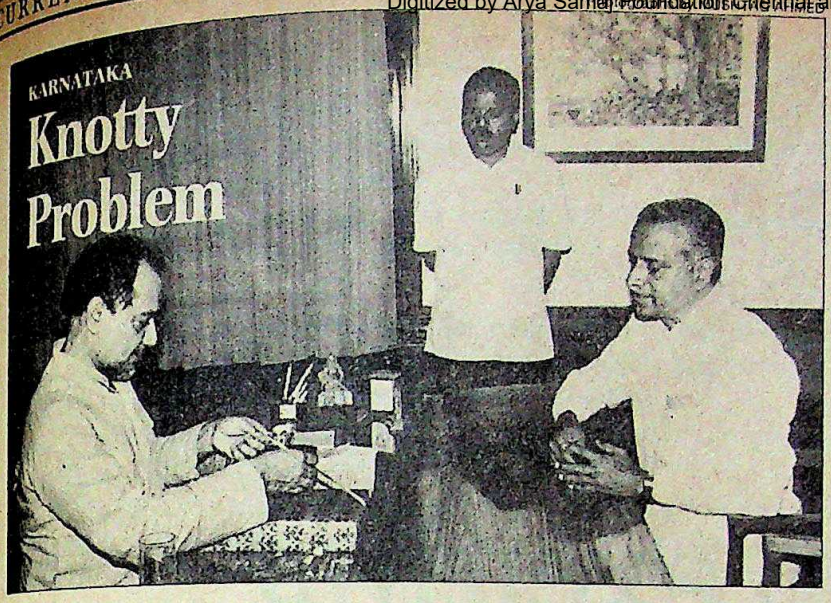
KARNATAKA

Knotty Problem



WHILE neighbouring Andhra Pradesh has been racked by an agitation sparked off by an increase in reservations, Karnataka is threatened with discord for exactly the opposite reason: a possible decrease in reservations for the backward classes. A 15-member commission appointed by the Ramakrishna Hegde Government, whose report was made public last fortnight, has not only recommended that reservations for backward classes should be reduced from 49 per cent to 27 per cent but has also removed a large number of castes from the list of backward classes. The Government is yet to take a decision on the 1,022-page report, but its mere submission has led to groups of affected castes burning Hegde's effigies and calling for bandhs.

Prominent among the protestors are the politically dominant Vokkaligas. The commission recommended that Vokkaligas be de-recognised as a backward caste. Vokkaliga leaders from the ruling Janata Party have publicly demanded that the report be scrapped. Declared H.L. Thimme Gowda, former minister and close aide of the powerful Vokkaliga Irrigation Minister H.D. Deve Gowda: "The report cannot be accepted as it has inherent contradictions." Three other senior Vokkaliga leaders in the party, D.B. Chandre Gowda, Jeevaraj Alwa and H.T. Krishnappa told a hurriedly-called press conference that they had brought the report's "in-built dichotomies" to Hegde's notice.

State Vokkaligara Sangha President K.R. Rame Gowda promised to lead a state-wide agitation against the commission's report, saying: "The report is based on wrong statistics and is also full of glaring mistakes." Vokkaliga students in scores of towns and villages across the state boycotted classes and took out processions and even beat up a deputy commissioner in Mandya. What has especially irked the Vokkaligas is the commission's declaration that Brahmins are more backward than Vokkaligas. Law Minister A. Lakshmisagar, who belongs to the backward community of potters, has called the agitations as "needless and harmful"—a clear indication that there are sharp differences in the Janata Party on the issue.

Venkataswamy (right) handing Hegde the report; and (below) Deve Gowda

Deve Gowda, whose long-held differences with Hegde were reportedly being sorted out, has not said anything openly but he has made no secret of his feelings on this issue. Three months ago, addressing a state-level convention of a backward caste in Bangalore, he said it would be "inexcusable" if all Vokkaligas did not unitedly oppose any move to drop them from the list, adding: "I will not stay in office for a minute if backward classes suffer under the Janata Government." The present formula is based on the report of the commission headed by L.G. Havanur and implemented by the Devaraj Urs government in 1977.

Headed by T. Venkataswamy, a retired secretary to the state legislature, the commission conducted a house-to-house "socio-educational-economic" survey of 3.6 crore people with the help of 44,572 enumerators. Elaborate questionnaires were sent to 14,000 people (only 686 responded) and to 281 heads of departments. The data was fed into a computer and the findings were a revelation.

- Out of 250 castes recommended as backward classes by Havanur, 137 are synonyms of some other castes in the list and therefore repetitive.
- Among those listed as castes were the Aryan race, the Konkani language and surnames like Hegde and Joshi.
- Twenty-six of the castes listed have a population of less than 300 each, six less than 10.

Not surprisingly, a long list of 81 recommendations followed, the other important ones being the reduction of backward classes eligible for jobs from 185 to 31 and the abolition of the "backward special group" of economically weaker sections irrespective of castes, created by Urs, who enjoy 15 per cent reservations (reason: affluent sections were cornering these benefits with "false" income certificates). Justifying his cuts, Venkataswamy argued that deprived sections should be supported with reservations "only till they learn to stand on their legs," and added: "Maybe a time will come when no reservations will be necessary."

All this gave enough material to the Congress(I) to issue a flood of statements. Said a sarcastic K.N. Nage Gowda, a Vokkaliga Congress(I) MLC: "If a computer can determine backward classes, Hegde might as well be replaced by a super computer to rule the state." Senior Janata leaders are apprehensive that the Congress(I) will exploit the confusion caused by the report among the backward classes in the local body elections in November. As it is, the submission of a memorandum by 90 MLA's expressing dissatisfaction over the ministry's size—the third in the last six months—has got Hegde worried. While Hegde maintains that his government has an "open mind" and would allow a public debate before accepting or rejecting the report, it is clear that it has landed him with more problems than he could have visualised when he set up the commission in 1983 to honour a commitment to the Supreme Court given by his predecessor, Gundu Rao.

—SRINIVASA PRASAD

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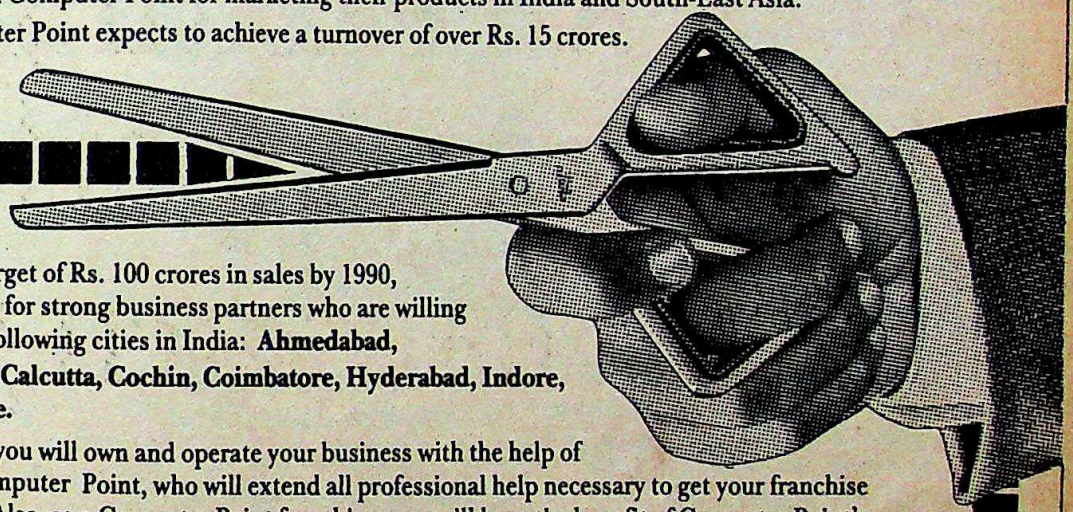

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TERRORISTS

The Political Nexus

ONE of the most vexatious controversies in Punjab relates to the repeated allegation that senior state politicians have links with extremists and smugglers. Both Union Home Minister Buta Singh and Congress(I) Vice-President Arjun Singh have aired this charge repeatedly, and what they say is echoed by leaders of the Left parties in Punjab. The Akalis stoutly deny all the allegations. Special Correspondent SHEKHAR GUPTA toured Punjab along with Senior Correspondent GOBIND THUKRAL to investigate the charges. Their report:

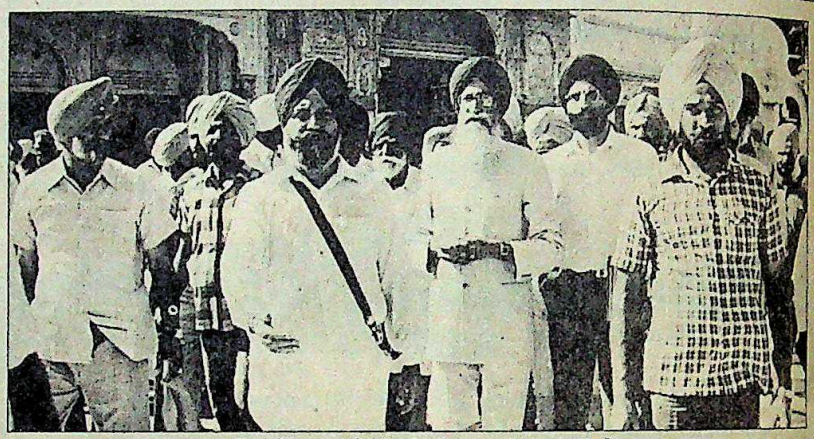
SMUGGLING has been a perfectly acceptable part of life in the border districts of Punjab for many years. But now, with the advent of terrorism and the undisputable evidence of arms and instructions being smuggled in from across the border by professional, trans-border couriers, the nexus between terrorists, smugglers and politicians has acquired a dangerous new dimension.

"The terrorists in Punjab have made their own rules," says Julio Ribeiro, director-general of police. "Smugglers and terrorists have a symbiotic relationship and, unfortunately, many politicians get caught in this." Adds Sarbdeep Singh Virk, deputy inspector general of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in Amritsar: "With their criminal manpower the smugglers provide muscle to the terrorists' muzzle power."

This muscle and muzzle power is now wielded under the protective umbrella of a legion of politicians, from both the Akali Dal and the Congress(I), who jump into the fray the moment a smuggler, or a terrorist close to the smugglers, is caught or killed. Some recent examples:

- Revenue Minister Major Singh Uboke's backing of Major Singh, sarpanch of Marri Megha village, booked under the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Act (COFEPOSA) for smuggling narcotics and arms.
- Agriculture Minister Harbhajan Singh Sandhu's backing of Hardip Singh Shakriwala, jailed under COFEPOSA for supplying smuggled arms to extremists and defence secrets to Pakistan.
- An Akali MP's and a senior Congress(I) leader's alleged role in the mysterious release from jail of Waryam Singh, who has subsequently become the prime suspect in the Muktsar bus killings.

Even Chief Minister Surjit Singh Barnala asserted at a recent press conference that "of the 46 major smugglers in the border districts, only six are with us while the rest are with the Congress(I)." By way of rationalisation, Finance Minis-



Sandhu with Barnala: controversial

Agriculture Minister Sandhu is accused of backing Shakriwala, held for spying and supplying arms to extremists.

"We have to explain police action. Suppose the whole panchayat says an arrest is not just, what can we do?"

Shamindar with Bhindranwale: pressure tactics

Shamindar Singh, Akali MP, pressurised police to release Waryam Singh, later said to be involved in Muktsar killings.

Shamindar says that his were "inadvertent recommendations" and denies any personal link with Waryam.

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ter Balwant Singh added: "Life is very different in the border districts where smuggling is an integral part of politics. Some MLA's from these areas cannot keep away from them." Similarly, Sandhu, who has often clashed with the police, argued that the link is overplayed: "Terrorists do not just operate along the border, they use the whole state." But he qualified: "Only those smugglers who deal in arms help extremists."

The police and intelligence agencies refuse to accept these rationalisations. Says Ribeiro: "We have no doubt that smugglers give arms and information to extremists, and help them in their passage across the border." To securitymen, the terrorists' umbilical support link across the border can be slashed only after smuggling is stopped.

It should cause no surprise that most politicians accused of having links with extremists or smugglers hail from the border districts of Amritsar and Gurdaspur. But the nexus has come under a fair bit of pressure lately, with Ribeiro leading the law and order machinery in a campaign that is unprecedented in its ruthlessness. The result is an escalating row between several Akali ministers and the administration. While Barnala labours to defend his controversial colleagues, the Centre has taken note of several reports from security agencies.

Last February, police officer Virk wrote two letters to B.S. Dhaliwal, the then director-general of police, charging ministers Uboke and Sandhu and several other politicians, including the Congress(I)'s Surinder Singh Kairon, with backing criminals. He said political pressure had made it impossible for the police to function and sought instructions on how to deal with the problem. Dhaliwal took no notice but as soon as Ribeiro came there was action. He conveyed the complaint to Barnala and, referring Virk's letter to all the senior police officers, asked them to report other such instances to him. Says Ribeiro: "You cannot fight the nation's battle without ignoring these petty people." That marked the beginning of his troubles with several Akali politicians. Virk explains their discomfiture by arguing that "Smuggling is the politicians' Achilles heel. You touch it and they squirm."

Following the circular were a series of communications from Ribeiro to both the state and Central governments, mentioning specific instances of politicians' dismay with smugglers and terrorists. The letters also mention the highly questionable manner in which Waryam Singh of Muktsar was able to get released from jail in May this year. While the police had decided to re-arrest Waryam Singh as soon as he was bailed out, he was released by the jail staff well after working hours.

The escape has been the subject of an inquiry and Ribeiro, in his letters to the Government, has named the politicians who are suspected to be involved. Ribeiro firmly states that certain politicians had spoken to Faridkot Police Superintendent Rajan Gupta, asking for Waryam Singh's release, and when "that did not work, approached the deputy commissioner." The letter points at Shamindar Singh, the local Akali Dal MP, and Harcharan Singh Brar, former Haryana governor and husband of Congress(I) leader Gurbrinder Kaur Brar. Says Gupta: "Political recommendations on behalf of suspects are common. The Akalis take the lead, with the Congress(I) close behind."

Saiyanwala: giving shelter

Local Bodies Minister Saiyanwala is accused of harbouring Sabraon, linked to Gattapasha.

"Gattapasha is a known extremist but I can say that Sabraon has nothing to do with them (extremists)."

SHAMINDER says that his involvement may have been to the extent of "inadvertent recommendations" and adds defensively: "Once the district police chief stated that he is a dreaded terrorist, I said please deal with him the way you feel like." He also denies personal links with Waryam: "There is nothing more sacred to us Sikhs than the Guru Granth Sahib. I can put my hand on it and say that I never even saw him." Similar denials come from the Brars.

Meanwhile, Local Bodies Minister Mohinder Singh Saiyanwala has come out against what he calls the "indiscriminate manner in which the police and the CRPF are killing young Sikh boys in fake encounters." But police officials say that his sympathies for the terrorists go beyond this. He is accused by the police of harbouring in his Chandigarh home a man called Balbir Singh Sabraon, said to be an associate of Baldev Singh Gattapasha, a well-known terrorist of Saiyanwala's Ferozepur area. Saiyanwala however asserts that "Baldev Singh Gattapasha is a well-known extremist, but Sabraon has nothing to do with him."

Besides, intelligence reports say that his son Harprit Singh was one of the main organisers of the bhog ceremony of two young suspected terrorists killed in an encounter with the CRPF in July. "At the bhog ceremony Harprit said that the Sikhs were going to exact revenge for the death of the two youngsters, and within a week the Muktsar killings took place," said a senior police officer.

Saiyanwala says that he did speak against the police. "Those two boys were killed just because they happened to be younger brothers of Harbhajan Singh Mand (a well-known terrorist who had been killed in Amritsar in March)," he says, suggesting that "these two were too young to be extremists." He says he has no complaints now that an inquiry has been ordered into the encounter and explains that his son had no choice but to visit the families of the encounter-victims: "I asked him to go well before the ceremony, say his prayers and return before Badal and others opposed to us reached there."

Similar instances, involving other politicians, are available from other districts as well. In Gurdaspur last fortnight, the police arrested suspected terrorist Ajit Singh of Bhugtala village and recovered a Sten gun and over a 100 bullets from him. The arrest brought Buta Singh, an influential Akali and father of Ajit Singh (the president of the Bara Baba Nanak Market Committee and a close associate of Nirmal Singh Kahlon, a minister of state), in confrontation with the district police. He was joined in his protest to J.P. Birdi, the police superintendent, by Kahlon but Birdi stuck to his guns, saying that the two were wanted for a shoot-out near Batala. Kahlon, whose own house at Fatehgarh Churian, the terrorist stronghold near the border, had been attacked by the terrorists

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MAJOR SINGH UBOKE

"Smugglers worked for me"

MAJOR Singh Uboke, Punjab's revenue minister had virtually no claim to fame till the other day. He had deserted the army as a havildar in the Army Education Corps in the early 1950s to join the late Master Tara Singh's Punjabi Suba movement. But only now has Uboke suddenly sprung into prominence with his opposition to Julio Ribeiro, Punjab police chief, and his alleged support to the smugglers and terrorists of his constituency. What sets him apart is his candour in not denying some of the charges and his unconventional views on smuggling. Excerpts from an interview with Special Correspondent SHEKHAR GUPTA:

Q. *Is the allegation that you are protecting smugglers and extremists in the state true?*

A. You have got to understand the facts of life. I have nothing to do with extremists. The smugglers, on the other hand, present a different problem. How can I keep away from smugglers when a large number of my constituents are smugglers? I come from a border constituency where smuggling has been an integral part of life and politics for many decades. I cannot change all that now. I have to eat with the people of my village.

Q. *Is it true that some of these smugglers are your political associates?*

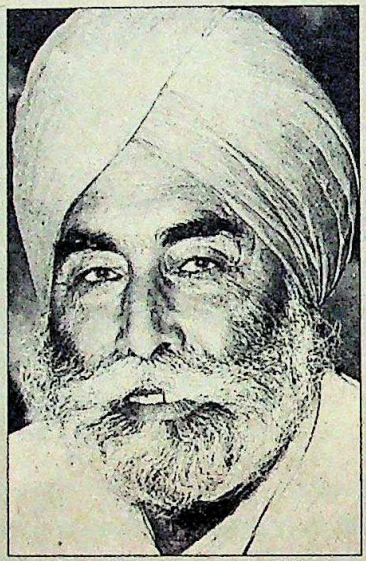
A. I am not denying that several of these smugglers worked for me in the election. But they worked on their own. They also voted for me. I could not have stopped them from doing that. I said I won't take you to the polling booth but if you want to support me please do, by all means. But when dozens of them approached me with offers of money I drew a line and said no very firmly.

Q. *Don't you think that a responsible politician like you should have no contact at all with people indulging in a crime as serious as smuggling?*

A. What is smuggling after all? It is the consequence of our excessive, misplaced idealism. In the quest for high morals and ideals we have resorted to controls on liquor, opium and various other things. Where such controls exist, smugglers find a market.

Q. *Several responsible police officials say that well-known extremist Sukhdev Singh Sakhira used to roam about in your official car in the Tarn Taran area. Is that correct?*

A. I know Virk (S.S. Virk, the former Amritsar police chief) has been going around saying that I was carrying Sakhira along with me. Why did he not arrest him, or me then? Tarn Taran was in his district. Sakhira roamed about freely in Amritsar, Tohra and Badal spoke to him on the phone regularly and yet no one in the police had the courage to catch him. Ring up Virk and ask him to deny that.



Uboke: charging the police

Revenue Minister Uboke is accused of backing Major Singh, held for smuggling arms.

"I may have got a memorandum from somebody and sent it to the police. I am more careful now."

Q. *Couldn't it be because, as the police say, they could not have arrested someone who appeared to be so close to a minister?*

A. Don't be ridiculous. This great respect for minister saab does not stop police officers from writing official letters against me. Nor does it stop them from putting intelligence agents after me. They even withdrew the police guard from my residence. I told Barnala I don't care. Just give us arms and we will look after our own security.

Q. *Yet is it proper for you to go on pleading the cases of well-known smugglers of your area?*

A. I support people fighting repression. The police can today put a two-year COFEPOSA warrant on anyone without asking questions. My villagers will not accept my telling them that just because I have become a minister I will not speak for them. They say *saadey pind da vazir hai te ladna tey nahiyon chhad dawange assi?* (just because the minister hails from our village you think we will stop fighting for ourselves?)

Q. *Why have you been so critical of Julio Ribeiro?*

A. Mine is a basic problem. Does Ribeiro take orders from the Government or not? He says he does not care about MLA's and jathedars. Is he superior to Barnala's Government? Then he makes silly claims like smashing the Khalistan capital with Operation Mand.

Q. *Why were you critical of Operation Mand?*

A. I think I made a mistake by calling it just Operation Fraud. I should actually have called it operation pakhand (charade). They took hundreds of troops, helicopters, guns and boats. But what happened? They did not even succeed in wetting an extremist's beard. A lot of the Mand area falls under my constituency, and if I do not know what a fraud the whole thing was, and do not speak out, who would?

Q. *What about you and your son's involvement in a land-grab attempt with the help of Gurbachan Singh Manochahal, member of the 'Khalistan' panthic committee?*

A. This is the police raj and the police can say anything. Why don't they investigate and catch the guilty?

Q. *Is there any effective way of fighting terrorism in Punjab?*

A. You cannot handle the terrorist problem through repression. No matter what you do, please give up the hope that these youngsters will surrender. You can have peace only by somehow involving them in negotiations.

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in April this year, denies any connection saying: "How can I be suspected of having links with extremists when I was myself nearly killed by them?"

The Akalis seek refuge in the argument that the triangular nexus was a creation of the Congress, which cultivated smuggling families in the border districts. "You put the blame on us but ignore the Congress(I)," says Balwant Singh, pointing to the arrest of state Congress(I) General Secretary Harcharan Singh Hero's son Harpreet Singh from his farmhouse close to Ferozepur, on the suspicion of harbouring terrorists.

The state Government initially claimed that four hardcore terrorists had been hiding in the farmhouse and that the police recovered from Harpreet two two-wheelers allegedly stolen by terrorists. But he was later discharged without bail by a Tarn Taran magistrate. Now Gurbachan Jagat, deputy inspector general (intelligence) has been asked to investigate how he managed to get away so easily. The Congress(I) leaders say it is vendetta. Said Beant Singh, PCC(I) president: "This is an attempt by the Akalis to hide their own sins."

But the cases of some of the most prominent smugglers in Amritsar are an entirely different saga. The recent crackdown has seen 40 of them—invariably members of their village panchayats—jailed under COFEPOSA. However, so audacious are the suspected smugglers in their claims to political patronage that the evidence of this relationship reposes in several government files.

One case recorded in the Home Department files at Chandigarh is that of Ajit Singh Burj, who was arrested by the Amritsar police under the National Security Act on charges of spying. The grounds of detention mention that among the documents recovered from him is a map of the newly-constructed Gharinda anti-tank drain near the border. He is also charged with bringing weapons and instructions from Pakistani agents Ghafoor Ali and Daddi, to be given to the extremists "under directions to be used by them in their struggle for the formation of Khalistan...and also to weaken the security and defence of India in case of an attack by Pakistan...in conspiracy with foreign agents and extremist leaders."

Burj wrote to the chief minister protesting against his arrest. In his representation he claimed that he had been the chairman of the black samiti of Gandhi-wind village for over 35 years, and the sarpanch of his village for 20 years, and that he was thus a respectable person. As further evidence of his "respectability" he flaunted his links with the Akalis. Burj asserted: "The petitioner also extended substantial financial help to Shiromani Akali Dal for the *dharam yudh* morcha."

That the chief minister was not exactly embarrassed by the claims is evident from the Government's response to the representation. On May 16, the Home Department asked the police to re-assess the evidence. A flurry of reminders followed, but the police stuck to their guns.

Kahlon: pleading innocence

Nirmal Singh Kahlon protested to the police about the arrest of Ajit Singh, a suspected terrorist.

"How can I be suspected of having links with extremists when I was nearly killed by them."

A second case in the files concerns Ajit Singh Dariya, who was detained on March 25 this year under COFEPOSA on charges of being in direct contact with a well-known Pakistani smuggler called Bakshi Mussalman. Arrested once earlier, shortly after Operation Bluestar, he was released at the intervention of Arjun Singh, then governor of Punjab. Sant Longowal had written a letter to Arjun Singh, giving a clean chit to Dariya and seeking his release. Since this letter was the last that Longowal wrote before he was assassinated, for Arjun Singh it became his last wish and was duly granted. But Dariya was held by the police again.

His son Bakshish Singh filed a representation on April 3 and claimed that Dariya is an Akali Dal worker and that "the services of my father and honesty of his purpose are well known to revered Sant Harchand Singh Longowal who wrote a strong letter in favour of my father and had him released earlier". A frustrated Virk, finding he could do nothing to keep Dariya in jail, suggested in a letter to the Government that he could be released "if he tendered an unqualified apology and promised to keep off smuggling." The formalities were quickly completed.

A third case in the Government's files concerns Hardip Singh Shakriwala, a member of the Shakri brothers' gang who was arrested on October 10, 1984, over three months after the detention orders were issued. He was detained on the grounds that on April 5, 1984, he went past the Border Security Force (BSF) picket at Pahari and met a Pakistani smuggler called Nazir Ahmed. From Ahmed he collected three pistols and 4 kg of opium. He gave the pistols to Surinder Singh, a known extremist, in the Golden Temple.

Shakriwala was also accused of giving the Pakistanis details of the movement of Indian army tanks and vehicles, and of entering into a conspiracy with Gurbux Singh and Thakur Singh to sketch the location of units around the Amritsar cantonment. Because of his political connections he was let off, but fresh orders for his arrest were issued and he was back in jail on March 25, 1986.

In his representation, Shakriwala too made claims to respectability—having been the "chairman of Land Mortgage Bank at Tarn Taran for four years, sarpanch of Shakri village for several years and head of the Tarn Taran Truck Union for six years." Claiming that he had "been arrested for turning down the undue demands of police officers," he also said he was too busy looking after the "day-to-day" functioning of the Land Mortgage Bank to be smuggling.

His case was backed by Harbhajan Singh Sandhu. The police were asked to inquire again, and their findings showed that in three years Shakriwala had attended the bank's office for 22 days.

Minister Sandhu is not embarrassed by his defence of Shakriwala. "Hardip Singh is not an ordinary person. We have to explain the police's actions to people.

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We go to villages, and suppose the whole panchayat stands up and says that a man's arrest is not just, what can we do?"

The files are full of dozens of similar cases on documents stamped 'secret'. Akali Dal Press Secretary Surjit Singh Sokhey has been pleading the case of another suspected smuggler called Pamma from Madokey village. It was on his intervention that the police did not arrest him earlier this year. Though Sokhey had promised to present Pamma whenever the police wanted him, he has now backed out. The Amritsar police has already written to the state Government to ask him to keep his promise but Sokhey, who has been commissioned by the state Government at Rs 2,500 per month to write Longowal's biography, is unrelenting. "I am not for smuggling, but I certainly am for innocent people whom I know," he asserts.

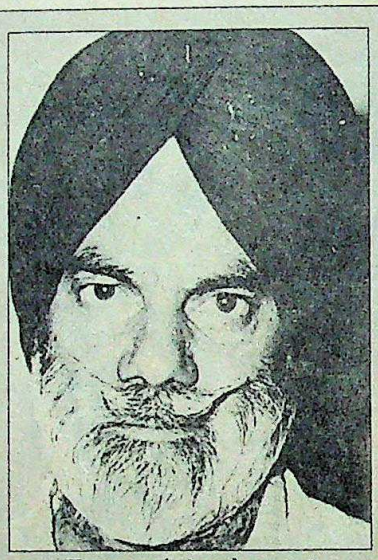
Another recent instance is the recovery of 19 kg of contraband gold hidden in a truck belonging to Gullu, son of Harinder Singh, a former Bhindranwale bodyguard, in Basarke village in Uboke's constituency. The police complain that Uboke has been interfering with the process of law. Uboke on the other hand insists that he is only exposing corrupt policemen. "They found gold all right," he says, but adds; "on the other hand, the police kept at least 30 gold biscuits with themselves out of the 200 caught, and because I brought it to Barnala's notice, the officers call me an extremist."

The latest charge against Uboke, from the Faridkot police chief, is that he has been pressing him to release Bakhtawar Singh, an army subedar arrested for espionage. Bakhtawar has now been handed over to the army. Uboke pleads innocence: "I don't remember anything. I may have got a memorandum from somebody and sent it to police with some instructions," he says. "Now I take no chances."

WHILE the acerbic revenue minister *(see interview)* defends himself against these charges, his son Sajjan Singh, a junior clerk in Guru Nanak Dev University, has been accused of trying to grab a 35-acre plot of land belonging to a housewife, Paramjit Kaur, in Dhepai village on the outskirts of Amritsar city with the help of Gurbachan Singh Manochahal, one of the five-member "Khalistan" panthic committee.

The matter came to a head on March 29 this year when gangsters attacked the farm and fired scores of bullets claiming that the land was theirs. The police later registered a case against six persons, including Sajjan Singh. Apart from him, the others were also charged under the Anti-terrorist Act. The minister's son is still at large.

Paramjit Kaur and her husband Kashmir Singh Randhawa, who have written dozens of memoranda to the prime minister and to Ribeiro accusing Uboke of protecting the attackers, are scared to even talk about the extremist angle to the episode. Says Kashmir Singh: "If we haven't been chewed up between Uboke's jaws it is thanks to upright people like Mr Ribeiro." His wife charges that the attackers had the backing of "people whose names we cannot even mention for fear of our lives."



Hero: son's involvement

State Congress(I) General Secretary Hero's son was held for harbouring terrorists.

Congress(I) leaders claim the arrest of Hero's son is part of an Akali vendetta to hide their own sins.

Uboke dismisses the episode in his characteristic style. "Yes it is true that the cultivators had gone to Manochahal. But they claimed the land was theirs and this woman, who is related to Satnam Singh Bajwa, that big Congress(I) land-grabber, was trying to take it away," he says, and denies that he or his son were involved.

Uboke has also been accused of trying to give undue protection to his personal assistant (PA), Hazara Singh's son Major Singh, charged with attempt to murder in the case of a shootout near Kiran Chowk in Amritsar in May this year. Uboke denies the charge. But he did try to bring about a rapprochement between the families of his PA and the firing victims at a meeting which the police had tape recorded.

Another senior Akali leader in the firing line is Sandhu, who is accused of protecting smugglers with extremist links. "He is the best example of the kinds of problems we face," says a bureaucrat, referring to the fact that in the police records the minister is a proclaimed offender and carries on in power nevertheless. According to the records he had been declared a proclaimed offender by Tara Singh, chief judicial magistrate at Amritsar in October 1985 in an assorted case of conspiracy and cheating.

The charge was that Sandhu Transport Company and the Kisan Workers Transport Company, partly owned by Sandhu, had been discovered running buses under fictitious number plates to avoid paying tax. Some of these buses were caught bearing registration numbers allotted to scooters, tractors and other non-commercial vehicles. Sandhu argues that the case carries no stigma as far as his political career is considered. "The case is against some private companies and personally there are no charges against me. I am not guilty," he says.

The problem in Punjab is that the chronic smuggler-politician nexus which was ignored in the past is now manifested in the most dangerous form possible—a vicious triangle with the extremists at its apex. Even Barnala, while stating that the problem has been blown out of proportion, admits that "the nexus which bred crime earlier now threatens national security", but asserts that he has asked his police not to bother about political interference. Says he: "We have to resist all pressure and break these links, whatever it means." But he is hamstrung by the precarious nature of his hold on power. He cannot afford to annoy people capable of pulling the plug: be they errant Akali ministers or influential Congress(I) politicians. And since there is no prospect of that situation changing, Ribeiro and his fellow-officers cannot expect any respite from the political fallout that the increased tempo of anti-terrorist operations will generate.

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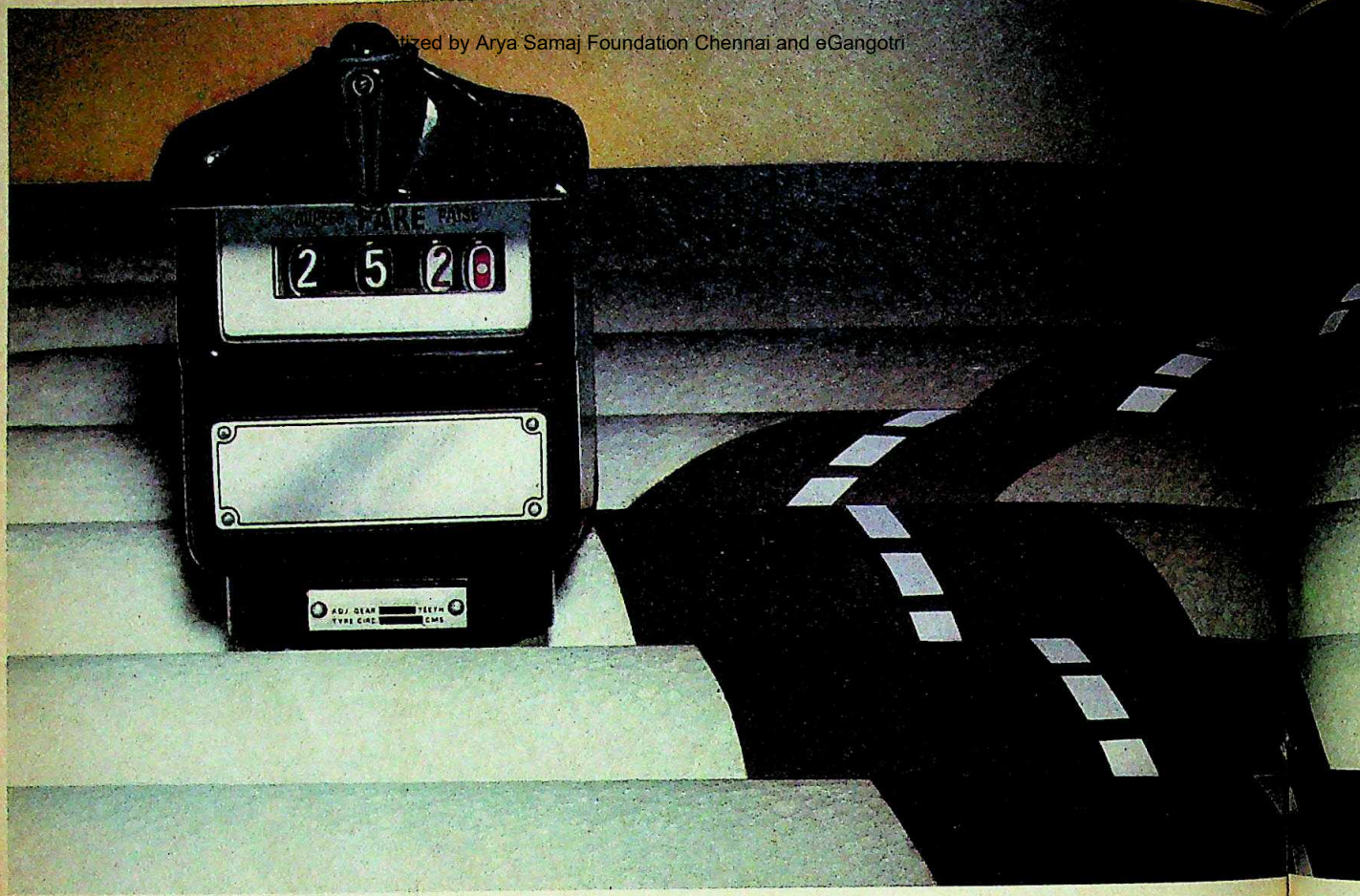

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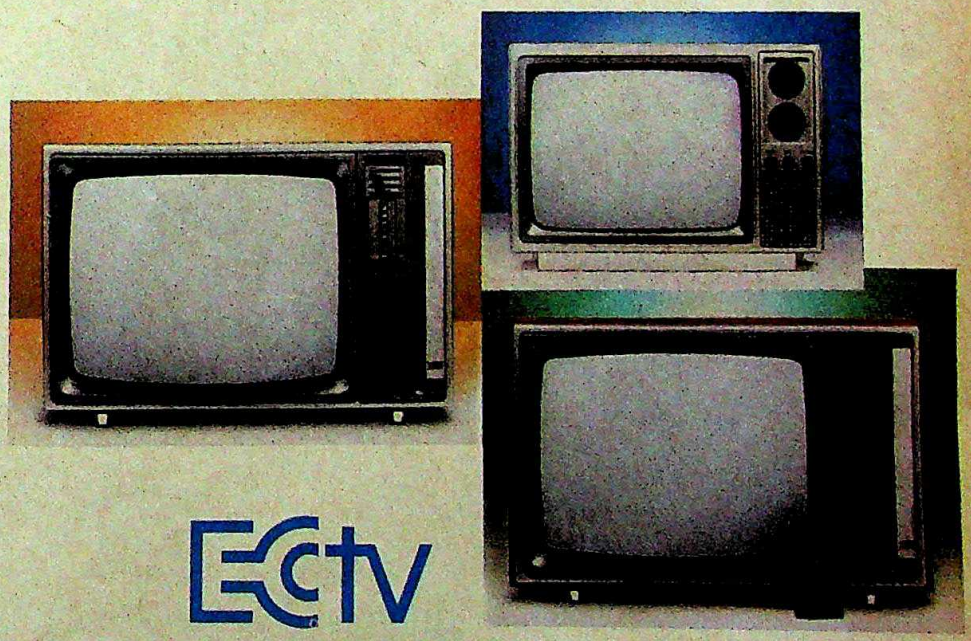

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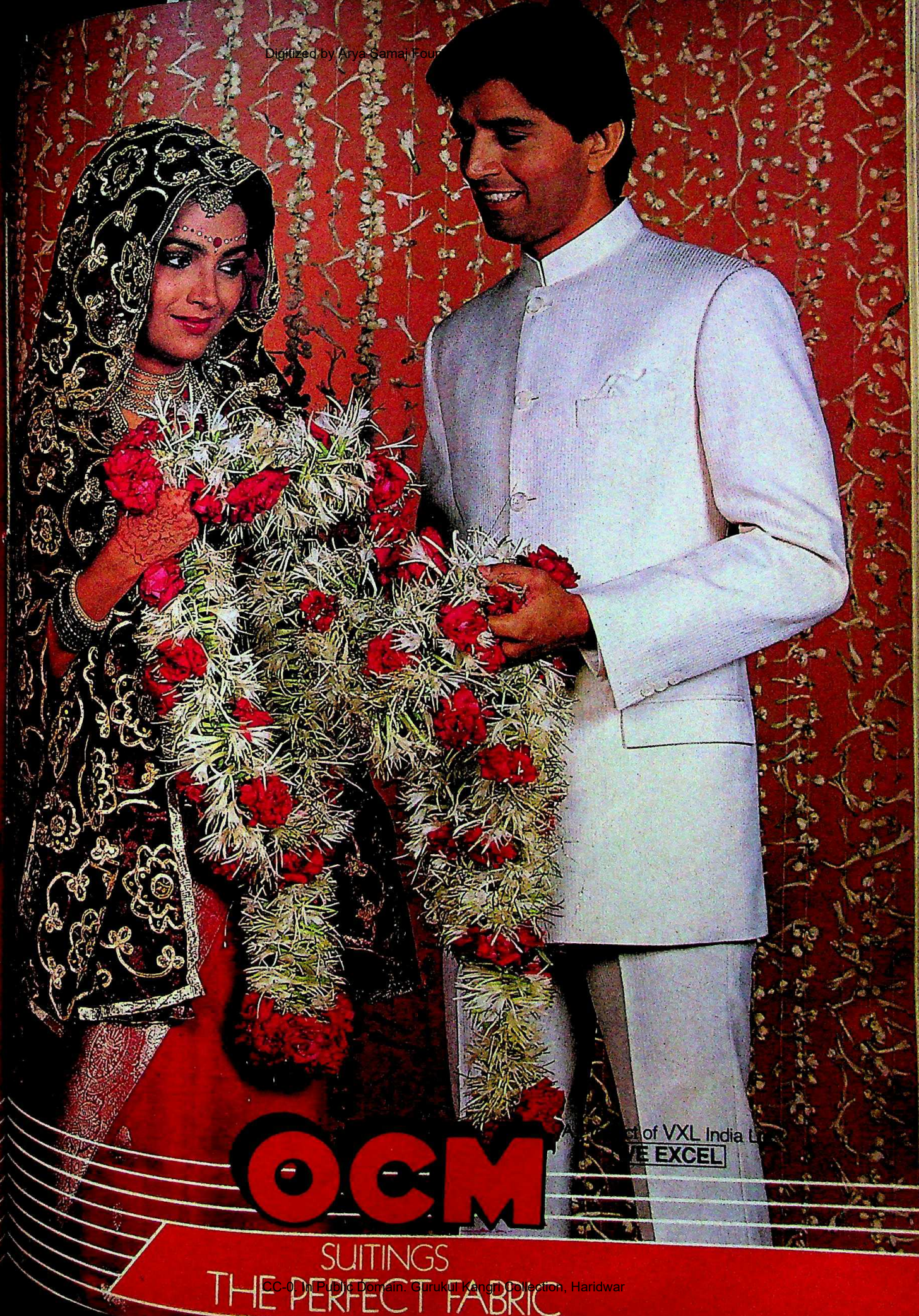

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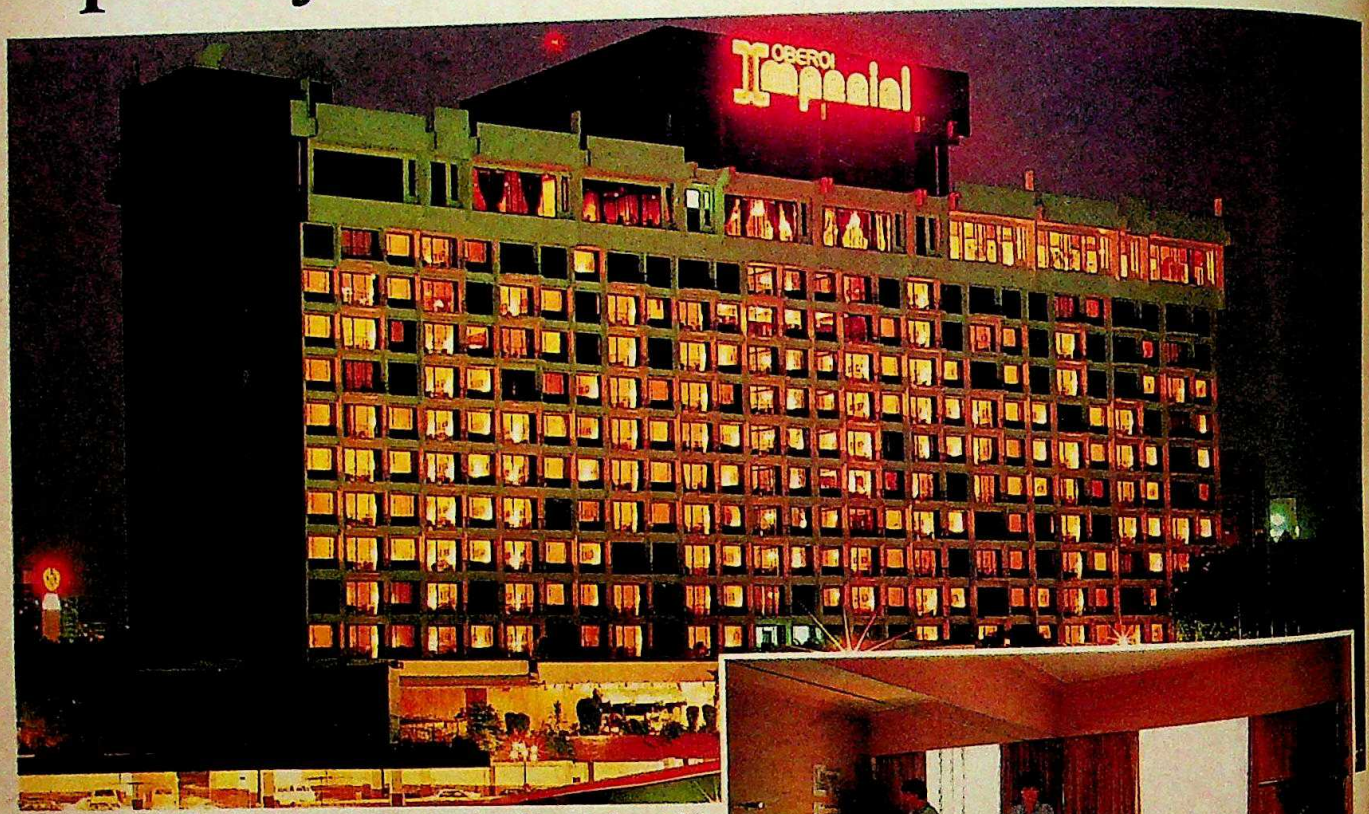

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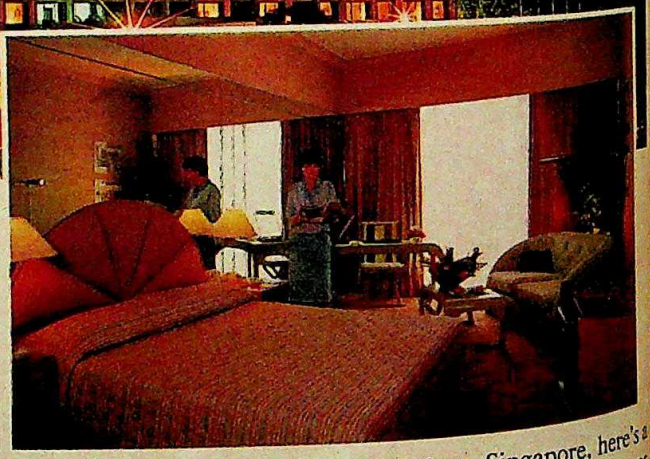

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Temple Trouble

TWO of Britain's foremost Hindu communities have been making news recently. The first concerns the Bhaktivedanta Manor belonging to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKON). The manor was donated to ISKON in 1973 by former Beatle George Harrison to be used as its main training centre in the UK. Although Britain has numerous Hindu temples, Bhaktivedanta Manor is the only *math* where students are trained as Hindu priests, teachers and missionaries. A mock-Tudor manor house built in the 1880s, it has 17 acres of park-land, pastures, gardens and an attractive lake and also has an impeccably-maintained shrine which attracts thousands of Hindus from all over the UK on religious days. This year, however, a cloud hung over the Janmashtami festival. The Tory-run Hertsmere Borough Council has decided to issue an enforcement order to stop all visits to the manor—thereby denying Hindus access to the Krishna shrine. The council argues that ISKON flouted a 1982 agreement by which it was agreed that not more than 1,000 devotees would visit the shrine except on six festival days. Now the shrine attracts many times that number. An energetic court battle is in the offing.

Bhaktivedanta Manor: restrictions

The other controversy concerns the Swaminarayan Mission's plans to build in north-west London a fabulous temple in marble—the biggest of its kind outside India—on grounds acquired from the famous Harrow School. The project is held up since the mission is battling against environmentalists, local residents, World Wildlife Fund activists and other opponents. A ministerial decision is awaited. Both cases have created an uproar amongst the Hindus of Britain.

Prize List

THE autumnal ritual in Britain that sets the literary world alight has already begun in earnest this year: predicting the short-list for the country's most prestigious literary award—the Booker Prize. For publishers and authors it is vital to feature in the short-list. A nomination on the short-list can create a demand anywhere between 7,000 and 15,000 extra hardbacks. This year's entries are a record 120—17 more than last year, and already several leading literary critics have speculated in print about its merits. Indian authors, who have done well in the past, are amongst those discussed. One critic expressed surprise that Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate* had not made the list so far since the publishers (Faber) had the canny hope that "it cannot fail to tickle the fancy of the poet-chairman of the judges panel, Anthony Thwaite". However, Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* has found itself in the first list.

Sanjeev Saith

Seth (left) and Ghosh

September 24 is when the five-member panel will announce the short-list, so Seth still has time. But he and Ghosh have formidable competitors this year; Anthony Burgess, Fay Weldon, Piers Paul Read, Beryl Bainbridge, P.D. James, Timothy Mo, Paul Bailey, Julian Barnes and Kingsley Amis.

Gurbani Line

EVER since its privatisation, British Telecom has launched numerous gimmicks to attract subscribers and enhance revenues. The gimmicks range from joke lines to sex lines. Now a Sikh gurudwara in Southall has, in partnership with British Telecom, set up a hotline to God—dial-a-prayer telephone for those seeking religious succour. The Ramgarhia Gurudwara in Southall recently unveiled what it believes is the first recorded message giving religious readings in Britain. By dialling a number, Sikhs in the UK can hear a recording by Professor Satnam Singh Sethi reciting any one of the 5,850 verses of the Granth Sahib. A gurudwara spokesman maintains that the "Gurbani line" was intended for those Sikhs feeling lonely and depressed who needed spiritual comfort. The gurudwara was specially interested in linking up with hospitals and British prisons where there are Sikh inmates.

Maxwell's Game

THE cause of the Commonwealth Games is being championed by media baron Robert Maxwell of the Mirror group of newspapers. Maxwell, who, as chairman of the games put in £2 million, has now embarked on a crusade to recoup part of the £3.8 million losses from boycotting nations. He seems to have made Rajiv Gandhi a special target. A recent issue of *The Daily Mirror* carried a bizarre quiz. It asked: in which capital did the army recently

Maxwell: picking on Rajiv

march through its streets to cow down its citizens? Which country's police forces opened fire on its citizens to stop them from rioting? The answer: New Delhi, India. But there is a problem here for Maxwell. His papers belong to Britain's crop of sex-and-crime tabloids which are hardly intended for serious readers of international news.

—RAMESH CHANDRAN

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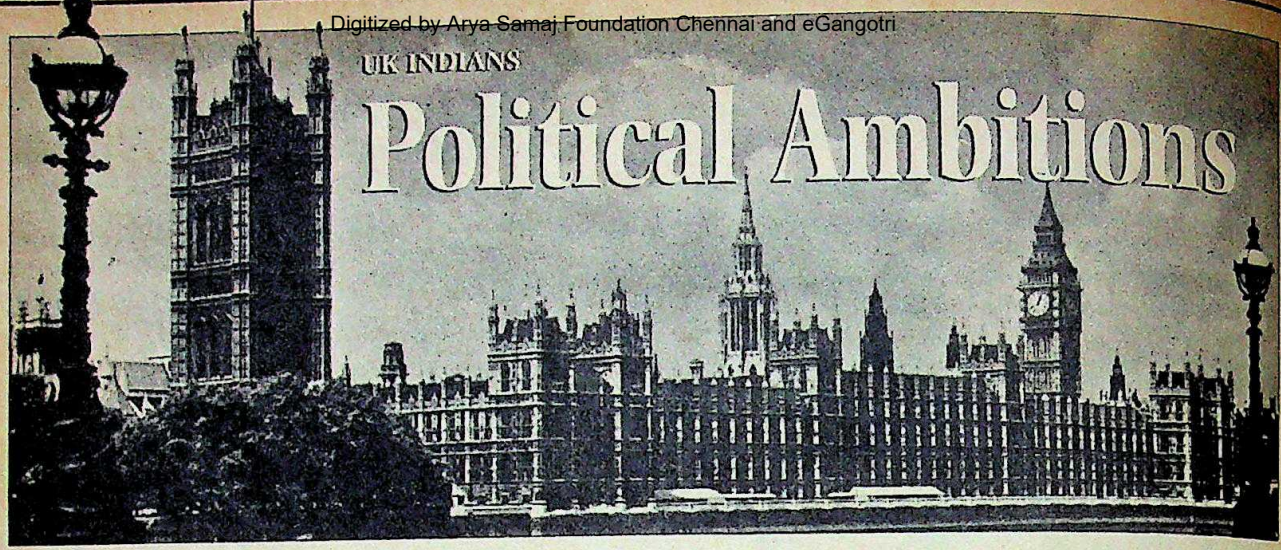

UK INDIANS

Political Ambitions

DESPITE the fact that there are constituencies in Britain where Asian votes are strategically located to swing the balance in their favour, not a single Asian candidate has got into the House of Commons since 1924. But recent developments have now motivated the Asian community to mobilise itself politically with an eye on the coming general elections. A report on their prospects.

SINCE 1924, the British House of Commons has remained uncompromisingly all-white. Not a single member of Britain's substantial ethnic minority—either Asian or Afro-Caribbean—has got into Westminster since Shapurji Saklatvala was elected as a Communist candidate over 60 years ago.

This unedifying record in "multi-racial" Britain now stands poised for permanent change in the next general elections when perhaps as many as five "black" candidates could become members of the British Parliament. For a variety of reasons none of them could be from the Indian subcontinent—the five with the most propitious chances happen to be Afro-Caribbeans.

Although there are constituencies across Britain where the hefty Asian votes are strategically located to swing the balance in favour of an Asian candidate, out of the half-a-dozen prospective parliamentary candidates of Indian background—unlike their Afro-Caribbean comrades—none stand an unerring, sure-fire chance of being elected to the next House of Commons. Partly because some of them are not representing constituencies which are designated in local political parlance as "winnable" and partly because in safe constituencies like Southall—an impregnable rampart of Indian immigrants—ambitious candidates are locked in a mutually ruinous, fratricidal combat to represent the constituency, paving the way for an ageing, white, sitting MP to be renominated (*see box*).

> **Race relations lobbyists argue that if true representation of the minorities is to be accurately reflected based on their population, there ought to be 25 to 30 MP's when there are none at the moment.**

Despite being better endowed with greater resources and numerical superiority, the Indian community in general, unlike their Afro-Caribbean colleagues have embodied less cogent participatory zeal to harness their collective strength into a powerful lobby since they are more often engaged in disputatious and obstructionist conflict. The schisms are patterned not on uncluttered ideological debate but over sectarian, casteist and communal issues.

The import of the intrusive and incoherent politics of India into Britain have hardly helped their cause for solidarity. A stream of recent studies on the composition of the ethnic minority vote has convinced many an independent observer of Britain's changing political face that the "black vote" could be vital in a number of parliamentary constituencies. The last available figures—the 1981 census—reveal that the ethnic minority population was a little over 2.2 million out of which 55 per cent are of Asian origin—47 per cent from the Indian subcontinent. Of the 47 per cent, 30.5 per cent are from India (the largest community being Gujaratis, followed by Sikhs), 13.4 per cent from Pakistan and 2.9 per cent from Bangladesh.

Despite their numbers—5 per cent of the overall British population—the fact that not a single member of the ethnic minority has found representation in the British Parliament for the last 62 years in a country professing "multi-racialism" is seen as an ignoble stigma. Their representation in mainstream British politics is still very small, though their participation in elections at the local borough level, has steadily increased.

Race relations lobbyists argue that if true representation of the minorities is to be accurately reflected based on their population, there ought to be 25 to 30 MP's when there are none at the moment and perhaps five after the next general elections.

The growing significance of the minority vote has not been lost on Britain's political parties, especially the Labour Party and the Social Democratic Party (SDP)-Liberal alliance and they have made determined efforts to woo the "blacks" and to encourage their participation in the political process. The term "blacks" is all-pervasive here: it encompasses both

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Afro-Caribbeans as well as Asians. The all-embracing term "blacks" includes Africans, West Indians, Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans, and others.

The reasons leading to the dalliance between the political parties and the hitherto disenfranchised "blacks" is self-explanatory. It is estimated that there are about 100 parliamentary constituencies in the UK where the ethnic minority population is more than 10 per cent.

What are the motivating factors which spurs Asians to mobilise themselves politically? In dozens of interviews with INDIA TODAY, Indian-origin councillors and prospective parliamentary candidates across Britain cite several fundamental reasons. Foremost among them is racial disadvantage and racial discrimination. Racial attacks and racial harassment are facts of life for present day black Britons. For all the elevating debates and race relations' committees of recent years, a recent study published by the Runnymede Trust alleges racial attacks had in fact increased and strongly criticised the "minimal" and "cosmetic" responses of the police and local authorities. The race relations industry in this country is of the unshakable belief that racism is institutional as expressed in immigration and nationality laws, educational institutions, churches, press and media, trade unions and within Britain's political parties.

The presence of National Front and other anti-immigrant candidates in elections has only helped increase the awareness of blacks of key political issues contributing towards their zeal for political activity. Besides race relations and immigration, other vital issues confronting the new breed of Asian politicians are equal employment opportunities, better housing and educational facilities.

For the Indians, their battles are just beginning: there are at present five parliamentary hopefuls: Keith Vaz (Leicester East), Praful Patel (Brent North), Vidya Anand (Folkestone and Hythe) and Mukesh Savini (Sheffield Hallam) from the Labour Party and Zerbanoo Gifford (Harrow East) from the SDP-Liberal Alliance. INDIA TODAY took five case studies of parliamentary hopefuls from all three of Britain's major political parties (including Narinder Saroop who is likely to emerge as a Conservative candidate) which provides a striking illustration of the issues that confront them, their personal goals and the special problems they face as India-born or having Indian parentage backgrounds in Britain's political apparatus.

"The Gujarati community here is politically sophisticated. They prefer a non-controversial MP who will fight for their rights. I intend to fulfill that role."

Keith Vaz

■ Born in Aden of Goan parents, Vaz, 30, a solicitor who unsuccessfully contested the parliamentary seat of Richmond and Barnes in 1983 for Labour is now back in the fray for the next general elections from Leicester East which has an influential Gujarati community. The constituency used to be staunchly pro-Labour until the party lost by 993 votes in the last elections when Labour leader Neil Kinnock's Press Secretary Patricia Hewitt lost to the current sitting MP, the Tory right-winger Peter Bruinvels.

In a constituency that is 31 per cent Asian—70 per cent Gujarati out of 75,000 voters—Vaz is confident he could well become the first Asian MP in the next House of Commons since he stands the best chance amongst all other Asian candidates. The issues he confronts in Leicester East are pretty much those encountered elsewhere in the country: immigration, race relations, housing rates, education and unemployment. Says Vaz: "It is very much a mixed constituency. The Gujarati community here is affluent and politically sophisticated. The voters here prefer a moderate and a non-controversial MP who will effectively fight for their rights. I intend to fulfill that role." Vaz is well-liked and popular but is not without his critics even within his own party who feel his Indian credentials are "dubious". The criticism leaves Vaz unfazed. He says he is now learning three languages—Gujarati, Hindi and Punjabi—and hopes he can at least speak the first fluently.

Vaz is a dashing campaigner. Even his answering machine carries a party political broadcast. Callers are at first tantalised by Nat King Cole, then informed: "Thank you for calling. Keith Vaz is unavailable at the moment because he is fighting for the return of a Labour Government and victory for socialism in Leicester East." But socialist victory is not going to be easy. His opponent, Bruinvels, is a high profile right-wing moralist constantly grabbing national headlines.

Praful Patel

■ One of Britain's best-known Asian political activists, Patel is caught in a stormy political skirmish in Brent North in North-West London against an equally reputed Tory sitting MP and Junior Minister Rhodes Boyson. The area has a sizeable Gujarati concentration. Patel, who has been an ubiquitous figure for the past 15 years at most India-related events, is an investments adviser and consultant. Recently he was appointed by the Government of India to the Consultative Committee on NRI's investment matters.

Patel is bluntly critical of what he describes as the "inherent racism" afflicting Britain's political machinery and demands, as an example, what has stopped the Tories or even the Labour Party from nominating Asians for peerages to the House of Lords. Patel's current campaign in Brent North is not made easier by the factionalism and caste-ridden dissensions which has riven the Gujarati community who are now at loggerheads amongst themselves over a variety of disputes.

Yet Patel is brimming with confidence that he would be able to overcome the huge 14,000 vote majority which his

Patel is peppering his constituents with imaginative news-letters which contain warnings to his voters: "Mrs Thatcher is destroying the fabric of family life."

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Southall Infighting

SOUTHALL, vividly christened as 'Little India' or 'Little Punjab' for its remarkable likeness to a bustling city centre of a Punjabi town, has for long been the bulwark of Indian immigrants in Britain. In the parliamentary constituency of Ealing-Southall, almost 50 per cent of the population hail from what is known as the "New Commonwealth and Pakistan"—translated, this meant Southall offered an inestimable chance to put an Asian into the House of Commons. Lamentably—and not surprisingly—a clutch of Asian candidates and factions are now involved in a debilitating row over the selection of the prospective candidate from the region.

The reasons are annoyingly familiar: too many India-born candidates for the slot and none willing to rally round a single Asian candidate. As a result, an elderly white candidate, Sydney Bidwell, who has represented Southall for over two decades once again stands poised for re-selection. Besides Bidwell the front runners are:

■ **Sardul Singh Gill:** He is the first Indian Labour councillor of Ealing borough with an impressive record of service in the region. Educated in Khalsa College, Amritsar, he came to the UK in 1962 and was drawn to Labour Party politics. He is often remembered for statements like: "Southall is in fact England's turban, not because of my personal involvement here, but because of the symbol." With his long experience in the area, Gill ought to have made a sound candidate but a number of local Indian councillors oppose him openly. The influential Indian Workers Association is also hostile towards Gill. Says Gill: "I concede Bidwell has done good work. But Southall is now ready for someone who is more attuned to its special aspirations and someone with whom the people here can identify physically, emotionally and spiritually."

■ **Madhav Patil:** Hailing from Sangli in Maharashtra, Patil has been a rumbustious trade unionist who became the secretary of the Westminster branch of the largest civil service union—the Civil and Public Services Association. Actively associated with organisations such as the London Majlis and the Anti-Apartheid League, he is an Ealing councillor for Mount Pleasant ward who successfully recruited hundreds of Asians into the local party. Patil emerged as a contender when members of the Ealing-Southall "black sections" lobby endorsed him, but if his own colleagues are to be believed he is not a serious threat to Bidwell or Gill.

■ **Valerie Vaz:** This vivacious and attractive councillor from Elthorne ward has emerged as the surprise element in the current race for the Southall nomination. A relative newcomer, Valerie is parliamentary candidate Keith Vaz's sister who briefly did her initial schooling in Panchgani before she came to the UK to study at Bedford college, London University and then went on to Cambridge. As a councillor she has made rapid strides to become the "Chair" of the police committee. The criticisms against Vaz are that she is more "English than Asian". Says Valerie: "It is unfortunate that we are too busy trying to prove to the white people who is the blackest man, who is the most ethnic, who is the most Indian." Her own challenge bolstered by left-wing elements is not considered threatening but she is tipped as a future high-flier.

—RAMESH CHANDRAN in London

RAM STUDIO

Sardul Singh Gill

Madhav Patil

JOHN CHAPMAN NUJ

Valerie Vaz

opponent Boyson enjoys. He claims that his joint strategy with other Brent Labour hopefuls—Ken Livingstone (Brent East) and Paul Boateng (Brent South)—will help them make a unified sweep across the three constituencies. There have been some notable Asian successes in the area of late. During the recent May council elections, the number of Asian councillors increased from 3 to 9 and now Brent also boasts of Britain's first black woman council leader. Patel is now going full tilt with his canvassing peppering his constituents with imaginatively conceived news-letters in both English and Gujarati, some of which contain an assortment of warnings to his voters ("Mrs Thatcher is destroying the fabric of family life", "Dignity, not despair—right to a home"). Patel's grassroots work is admirable. Yet it seems ironic that had Patel contested from Brent East or South and unlike his colleagues Livingstone and Boateng, did not have to contend with a strong opponent, his case could have been smoother.

Zerbanoo Gifford

■ In this constituency of Harrow East where the renowned school is located and which is 25 per cent Asian, the SDP-Liberal Alliance's parliamentary candidate is a young Parsi married to an English solicitor. As a woman with an Indian background, Zerbanoo has had to come to grips with the likes of the British Movement—a particularly repelling racist reincarnation of the execrable National Front. Ever since her candidature has been announced, she has had to endure smashed windscreens and windows and an assortment of dire threats, all of which she has tenaciously resisted.

The articulate Zerbanoo, however, admits to having been "knocked off balance" by the intimidation but has decided to fight on. "I am determined to get into the House of Commons", she says. "I am not scared of death threats. I am very Indian that way. I believe you have a life span. When your time is up, you have to go. I am a moderate who is reasonable and it is an advantage for this country to have someone like me in Parliament rather than an extremist."

Education is a key issue in her constituency and there have been vigorous debates over the teaching of mother tongues. She argues: "It has now become a highly politicised issue. I have been telling the white constituents that India is the fourth largest exporting area for this country. You are selling modern technology and you are sending marketing man-

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"I am not scared of death threats. I am a moderate and it is an advantage for this country to have someone like me in parliament rather than an extremist."

ERIK RUSSELL

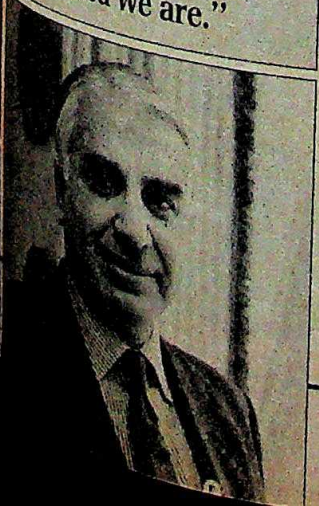
agers who can't speak Hindi, Gujarati or Punjabi. What good is it to send someone equipped with French or German to India? When you argue a point this way instead of being irrationally vociferous, they (the locals) sit up and take note."

Zerbanoo is a lively campaigner who fancies the idea of becoming the fourth Parsi parliamentarian in the House of Commons. But her fortunes would depend on the national swing favouring the Alliance which usually finishes behind the Tories and Labour nationally.

Narinder Saroop

■ He is the best-known Asian Tory in the country. A wealthy businessman, Saroop is the founder-member of such dyed-in-the-wool Tory associations as the Anglo-Asian Conservative Society and the elitist Durbar Club. A conservative parliamentary candidate for Greenwich in 1979 which he lost despite gaining nearly 33 per cent of the votes, Saroop is a former Indian Army officer who has held various positions in London's financial nerve-centre—The City—and is also an adviser with Lloyds insurance brokers.

"There is a danger in being seen as too successful. The element of envy comes in. The more prosperous we become, the more marked we are."



Saroop, whose aristocratic upper class English mien and broad pin-stripe suits somehow befits his "dedicated Tory" image, has lately inadvertently landed himself in unwelcome controversy. The Anglo-Asian Conservative Society has come under fire from various quarters that it has been "infiltrated" by pro-Khalistan Sikhs—an allegation which Saroop emphatically denied. Within weeks, Saroop was displaced as chairman of the society by Mohinder Bedi, general secretary of the World Sikh Welfare Organisation.

The latest development is fraught with dangerous implications for Britain's Tory Party since many Indians here feel that it has steadfastly cultivated Sikh separatists under the mistaken belief that they form a solid vote bank.

Saroop, whose other brain-child is the more sedate but exclusive Durbar Club which boasts amongst its members the *creme de la creme* of Asian businessmen, is confident that this time around—he would get, deservingly, a "winnable" party seat. He argues that he is as capable as the next man but grants that his colour is perhaps an undermining factor.

Despite his "propah" background and considerable influence within the ruling party, Saroop too echoes the views of his other India-born politicians that on race relations he is a "worried man". However, he points out that traditional "conservative values" of family ties and private enterprise suit Asians and adds that Mrs Thatcher herself admired the entrepreneurial zest of Asian businessmen. He cites the example of the growing prosperity of Indian businessmen but proceeds to put in a cautionary note: "There is a danger in being seen as too successful. The element of envy comes in, so it is a double-edged sword. The more prosperous we become, the more marked we are."

Vidya Anand

■ Anand faces the toughest fight amongst the current crop of Asian parliamentary candidates. The scholarly Asian is a Labour Party candidate in the conservative bastion of Folkestone and Hythe overlooking the English Channel. Anand has no Gujarati or Punjabi vote bank to woo, and he says that suits him fine since he would much rather fight a parliamentary seat as a "socialist" rather than on the colour of his skin. Anand's campaigning is directed against the controversial Anglo-French channel tunnel designed to link Britain with the European continent.

"One of the first soldiers to die in the Falklands was an Indian. If we are good enough to die for the country we should be good enough to be in Parliament."

MADAN ARORA

Anand's arguments have considerable support amongst his constituents that the channel tunnel would not create any additional jobs in the area and the tax-payers money was being flittered away to bolster the "profiteering scheme" of the Tory Party. The second major issue is the nearby Dungeness nuclear power station which in the post-Chernobyl phobia nuclear energy has created a movement rapidly gaining momentum.

Anand, who came to Britain 25 years ago from Delhi, has been a stalwart Labour Party activist ever since. He candidly concedes that Indians, or Asians, have given considerable ground to Afro-Caribbeans due to lack of unity whilst the latter have found favour with the white liberal do-gooder politician. He argues that Asians put in more into present-day British society than they get out of it. He says: "One of the first soldiers to die at Carlos beach in the Falklands was an Indian. If we are good enough to die for the country or pay its taxes, we should also be considered good enough to represent the country's constituents in Parliament." But for all his perseverance, observers see Anand's nomination as classic "tokenism" to the blacks by the Labour Party.

—RAMESH CHANDRAN in London

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FISHERMEN'S PLIGHT

To Hell and Back

WHAT follows is the quintessential horror story: the tale of 92 Indian fishermen who had gone to Kuwait two years ago and, while fishing in the Gulf, drifted into Iranian waters. They were picked up by the Iranian navy, imprisoned first in Iran and then released—of all places—in Pakistani territory. In this strange land they were "captured" by Pakistani forces and imprisoned under brutal circumstances for more than a year. Even worse, the Indian authorities, who were aware of their plight, did practically nothing to help these innocent Indians for most of their incarceration. A report from Senior Correspondent RAMESH MENON:

THEY are back home now. But for the 92 Indian fishermen, not even the roar of the sea can drown the gruesome memories of the 17 months spent in Iranian and Pakistani prisons. Tortured and hounded and denied even the basic human necessities during their long months of captivity, they are a broken lot. But more than the trauma of the prison months it is hurt and anger at the "inaction" of the Indian Government to secure their release that has come to scar the psyche of the fishermen.

"We were treated like common criminals. But the Indian Government did not come to our rescue," charges a disillusioned Gangaram Tandel, a 20-year-old fisherman of Nani Danti village in Valsad district of Gujarat. Adds Thakorebhai Baria, 40, of Daman: "Our numerous letters to the Indian embassy in Islamabad went unheard. We thought we will never see India again." An equally saddened Parbhu Tandel of Valsad's Kakwadi village laments: "The Indian Government did nothing to help us in spite of so many pleas. In fact, Pakistani jail officials told us that they were ready to release us, but the Indian Government did not ask for us."

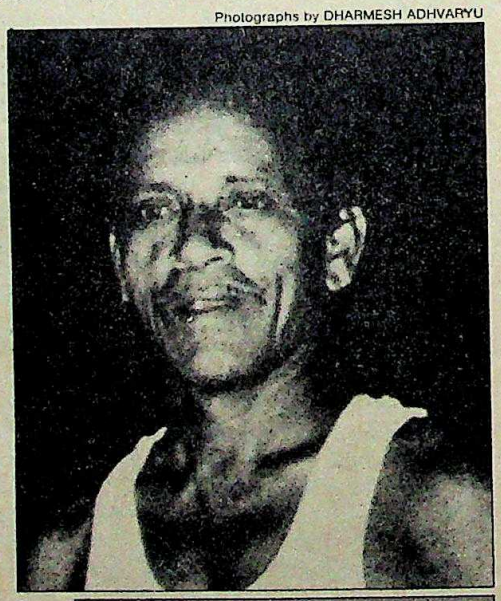
The fishermen, mostly from the western coastal belt, had left for Kuwait two years back, enamoured by the glitter of petrodollars. But they were fishing in troubled waters, as they soon realised to their chagrin. While fishing in the Gulf early last year, they were captured by the Iranian navy on the charge of trespassing. There were 92 Indians aboard the 17 mechanised fishing trawlers that were seized by the Iranians. "None of us must have ever realised that we had entered Iranian waters. It all looks the same in the sea," says Ramanbhai Sorthi, 32, one of the 92 Indian fishermen who had the misfortune of being aboard those trawlers.

Blindfolded and handcuffed, they were taken to Iran, where for four weeks they were shifted from jail to jail and ultimately lodged in Teheran jail. At Teheran, recalls Sorthi, they "could hardly sleep in peace as the night was punctuated with bomb blasts, gun-fire and airplanes. We could even hear people praying whenever there was gun-fire."

Their pleas for informing the Indian embassy were coldly ignored and instead, like lambs meant for slaughter, they were herded into Pakistani territory and released. But with the authorities already tipped off, the fishermen were caught within minutes of being released. Following a summary trial at Dalbandi they were sentenced to three months imprisonment and lodged in ill-ventilated, overcrowded, dirty Pakistani jails. They were made to work for long hours, their back-breaking chores including the cleaning of latrines. Many of them were often beaten up. In Baluchistan's Mach jail, as many as 91 prisoners were squeezed into a single cell measuring a mere 30 feet by 20 feet.

Life became an unending nightmare. Says Gangaram: "There were insects in the dal and stones in the rice." Pocket-sized pictures of Hindu gods were covered with cloth during prayers to avoid them

Photographs by DHARMESH ADHVARYU



THAKOREBHAI BARIA
Daman

"Our letters to the Indian embassy went unheard. We thought we will never see India again."

GAURI TANDEL
mother of Mohan Tandel, Valsad district

"I will never let my son out of India, even if he is going to earn a hundred times more. Can money buy self-respect?"

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from being seized by paranoid Pakistani guards. All letters came in for special scrutiny and censorship and only a few could be smuggled out by the relatives of helpful Pakistani prisoners.

More disheartening was the sight of other Indians languishing in Pakistani jails. Jailed on flimsy grounds, some of them had spent 14 years in prison but had little prospect of being released. Among them was Kasab Abdul Kadar of Jodhpur district. He was arrested in 1977 when he entered Pakistan to sell petty goods, and has not been released since, though his sentence ran for three months only. Instead, branded a spy, he has been tortured and one of his earlobes partly lopped off. His thighs bear the scars of wounds carved by a knife. Jivan Khan Juma Khan, also of Jodhpur, was languishing in Pakistani jails since 1977, ever since the ill-fated day when he crossed the Indian border looking for his camels that had strayed over. Another Indian could not talk properly as his tongue was slashed.

The jailed fishermen were more upset to learn that Indian women kept segregated in Bahawalpur and other jails were being ill-treated. A Kashmiri girl, who has been at Bahawalpur for six years, gave birth to a son after being repeatedly raped, they said. Charges Sorthi: "The Indian embassy officials were aware of this but chose to do nothing."

The fishermen state that they wrote some 150 letters to Indian embassy officials, Pakistani bureaucrats and officials in New Delhi, as well as Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. None were acknowledged.

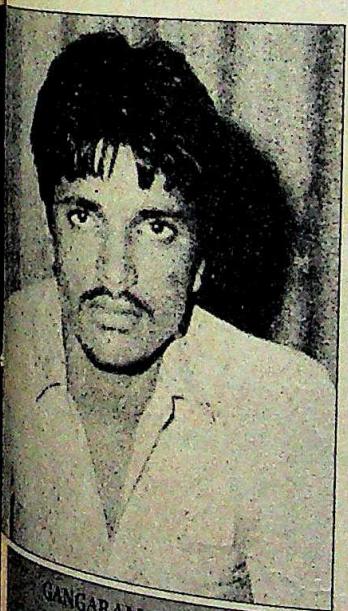
IN March 1986, they went on a hunger-strike demanding immediate release. They also demanded that the Indian embassy be informed of their plight. In case of the non-acceptance of these two demands, they wanted to be transferred to a better jail. The Pakistani authorities acceded to the last request and shifted them to the Multan jail in Punjab.

A month later, an Indian embassy official turned up to enquire into their welfare. He, however, seemed unconcerned about the fate of the other Indian prisoners in the same jail. Back home, desperate relatives of the jailed fishermen using the smuggled letters as evidence tried to put pressure on the Indian Government to secure their release. Gujarat MP Uttambhai Patel wrote to the prime minister and several officials in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). Chief Justice P.N. Bhagwati, acting on a letter written by a Valsad resident, Mahesh Desai, ordered the Centre to secure the fishermen's release. Benazir Bhutto, who was also sent an SOS by Desai, offered to help "within the limitations of the set-up".

Still nothing seemed to move. The prisoners were shifted to the notorious Bahawalpur jail, where jail officials exhorted them to support 'Khalistan'. A Pakistani social worker, Abdul Sattar Edhi, moved by their misery, offered to help. He even offered to pay for their passage back home. Ultimately pressurised into belated action by the mounting din, the MEA secured the fishermen's release.

Sorthi was in one of the first groups to be released on July 4 this year. But there was little cause to rejoice. The released fishermen were told to walk softly across the border to Ganganagar, without attracting the Indian authorities' attention, "as if they were not free citizens of India but common criminals". They were told by Pakistani officials that "if they are not careful they will get shot". A group of 14 fishermen was even detained at Anupgadh for interrogation. They were released only after 22 days once their bona fides had been established with the Gujarat police. The others fared no better. Far from welcoming the fishermen, the police at Ganganagar it is believed, seized some of their belongings. Gangaram had to travel ticketless to his home-town Valsad, while Parbu had to sell off 15 cassettes of religious discourses to reach home. Says Devchand Tandel of Nani Danti village in Valsad: "After going through all this suffering, a ticket home was the least that could have been expected from the Indian authorities."

Shaken and scarred by the experience, the fishermen now don't want to leave their shores. Says Bharat Tandel of Nani Danti village: "There is nothing that will ever make me leave the shores of India now." Adds Gauri Tandel, mother of Mohan Tandel: "I will never let my son out of India again, even if he is going to earn a hundred times more than what he is earning here. Can money buy self-respect?" The fishermen are now slowly piecing back their lives, trying to put the harsh memories of the 17 nightmarish months in prison at the back of their minds.



GANGARAM TANDEL
Nani Danti village, Valsad district

"We were treated like common criminals. But the Indian Government did not come to our rescue."

RAMANBHAI SORTHI
Daman

"None of us must have ever realised that we had entered Iranian waters. It all looks the same in the sea."

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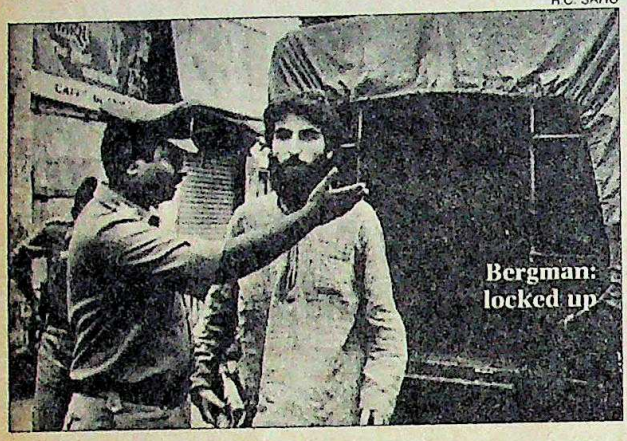
Sudden Arrests

WHEN 21-year-old David Bergman set out from his home in Birmingham to cycle 15,000 km to Bhopal to draw attention to the plight of the gas victims, he couldn't have known that he would attract the police as well.

R.C. SAHU



Bergman: locked up

Last fortnight Bergman, who has been working among Bhopal's gas affected children, ended up in a police lock up, accused of being a "spy" for Union Carbide.

He wasn't the only one behind bars. At a meeting of doctors convened by the Madhya Pradesh Government to consider the problems of gas affected patients, Gautam Banerjee, an activist of the Bhopal Group for Information and Action, was caught while allegedly trying to tape the discussion. The Group, which has half-a-dozen active members, has been bringing out bulletins to publicise the state of the patients. After first accusing him of spying, the authorities changed their tune a few days later to charge him with just trespassing.

In the Cold

LAST fortnight, Panchayat Minister Rampal Upadhyay became the third Rajasthan minister to go in Chief Minister Harideo Joshi's reign of just a year and-a-half. Upadhyay had come in the public eye last year when he was accused of taking abroad—at government expense—a woman who pretended to be his wife. Upadhyay survived that scandal but had to step down last month when Justice Mahendra Bhushan Sharma of the Rajasthan High Court passed strictures against him. The allegation was that the minister had removed Rampal Agarwal, chairman of the Gangapur Cooperative Spinning Mill, because he had refused to employ Upadhyay's son and brother. Neither of them were qualified for appointment in the mill, which is located in Upadhyay's home district, Bhilwara. They were employed after Agarwal's removal and Justice Sharma held Upadhyay guilty of mala fide intentions. Soon after his resignation, which came under heavy pressure from the Opposition, the former minister filed an appeal before a division bench of the high court. Going by his indifferent record, it's hardly likely to make any difference to anybody. Except, maybe, to former chief minister Shiv Charan Mathur, also from Bhilwara, who was at loggerheads with Upadhyay.

Upadhyay: guilty

Line of Action

CHUBBY Srikantadatta Narasimharaja Wadeyar, scion of the former Mysore ruler and a Congress(I) MP, has reason to be amused amidst all his worries. The Karnataka Government and the Income-Tax Department are fighting it out over him—or to be more precise, his properties.

The tax authorities had gone into the act last year saying that Wadeyar owed crores as income, wealth and gift tax. They started provisional attachment proceedings with regard to his palaces, an elaborate process. Indeed, it may be even more elaborate than they had imagined. Recently, the state Government issued a notification saying that it was "acquiring" the Bangalore palace (spread over 480 acres) and the famous Mysore palace (80 acres) for an unspecified "public purpose". "Persons interested in the property might file their objections within 30 days," the notification advised.

Not about to be upstaged, the taxmen retorted with a fresh notification that they were attaching not only these two palaces but also a summer palace at Mysore and the palace stables because Rs 11 crore was due to them. The notification warned sternly: "Anybody dealing with these properties in any manner will be doing so at his own risk." The matter does not end there. The properties are also used as museums by the state Government and the tax authorities now want that some Rs 50 lakh collected as gate fees from tourists should be handed over to them.

RAJ CHENGAPPA

Wadeyar: tax trouble

Said a disgusted income-tax official: "The Karnataka Government really shouldn't have done this." Wadeyar, who says that he will "fight it out in the courts" may well get some breathing space while the Centre and state work out whose quarry he is. Meanwhile, one thing is for certain: the public is assured of amusement over the coming months as the drama unfolds.

Battle Within

THE BATTLE over the composition of the privileges committee has now come out on the streets. And on two sides of the fence are the two groups in the Congress(I), represented by the two factions of the students' wing of the Kerala Students' Union (KSU)—the Antony group and the Karunakaran group. The latest fracas in this running battle erupted last fortnight on the Kerala University campus during the elections to the varsity's senate and ended in the stabbing of former KSU secretary Pratap Verma Thampan, who is pro-Antony—allegedly by some people from the Karunakaran group. The police, say eye witnesses, did not intervene. As important political figures, including leader of the Opposition E.K. Nayanar, dropped in to see the injured Thampan, tension escalated. Faced with mounting opposition, KSU President Saratchandra Prasad, a Karunakaran crony, resigned as the police questioned his associates. Said a prominent youth leader: "The chief minister not only wants the legislature but also the party's students wing to toe his line."

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Himachal

EVERYTIME IS FESTIVAL TIME

Festive mood sets with Shivaratri celebrations in February at Mandi and Kangra — seven days of joyous celebration. The splash of colour on Holi accompanied by cattle fairs at Sujanpur, Tihra and Hamirpur.

The nine-day Navratra Fair follows with gusto at Chintapurni, Naina Devi, Brajeshwari and Jwalamukhi, where people hail Durga — Mother of Universe with red silken flags.

Minjar Mela, a harvest festival of Chamba, climaxes in the immersion of golden silk "minjars" in the waters of Ravi. Come October, and you've the greatest show on earth — Kulu Dussehra. Brought in gaily bedecked palanquins down the hill-traces, village deities pay homage to Lord Raghunath and the green oval at Kulu bursts into colourful celebration. A unique carnival. A seven-day extravaganza of dance and drama, song and music.

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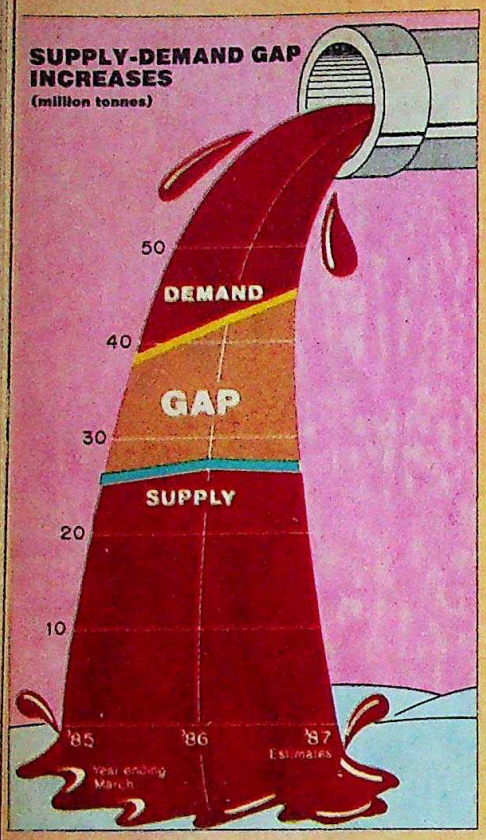
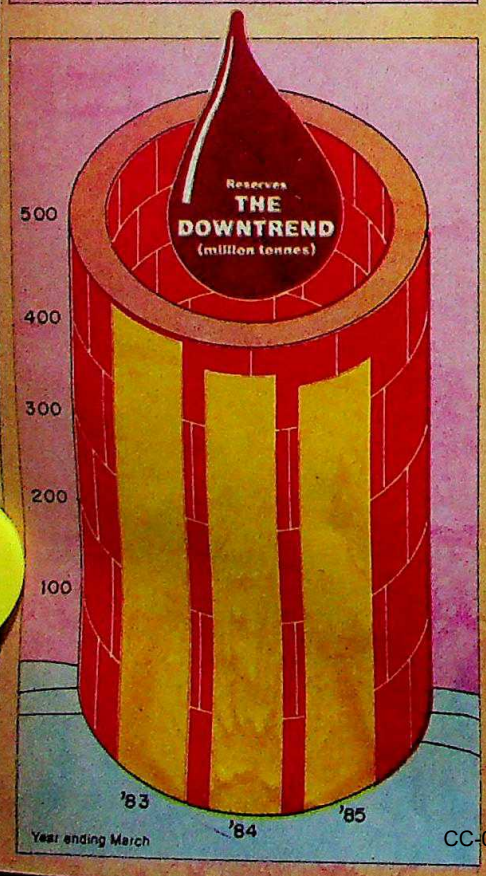
ONGC The Oil

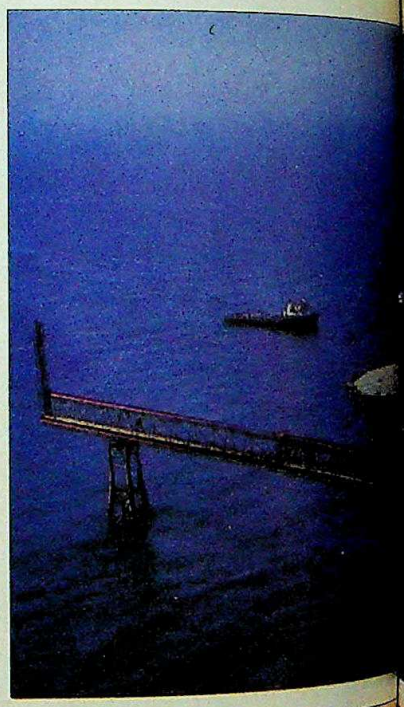
Self-sufficiency is declining...



...recoverable reserves are falling...



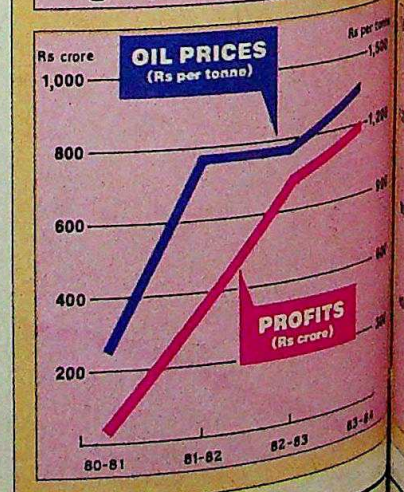
AS INDIA enters a period fraught with uncertainties about the strength of its foreign exchange reserves, the question uppermost in everybody's mind is: will the country continue to maintain a high degree of self-sufficiency in oil? During the international oil crisis of the early 1970s when crude prices sky-rocketed, the Indian economy received a massive jolt. Hopelessly dependent on oil imports, the country was forced to spend each year an amount equal to its total foreign exchange reserves. But in the 1980s there seemed to be a magical



BARRING some dramatic new discoveries, India's oil bubble which, according to incessantly rosy predictions by the Government, was supposed to balloon into a cocoon of self-sufficiency by the 21st century, could burst within this decade. If present trends continue, the country will neither be self-sufficient in oil nor self-reliant in technology by 2000 A.D. In fact India, after the last few years of heady optimism in this area, once again faces the frightening future of dependency on foreign sources to meet the major share of its domestic requirements.

This admittedly alarmist conclusion is based squarely on interviews with senior experts in this field as well as an investigation of the internal documents of the ONGC—the public sector agency which shouldered almost exclusively the charge of finding new oil to meet India's growing needs, as well as providing indigenous wherewithal for oil exploration and production. During the last five years, under the chairmanship of Colonel S.P. Wahi, ONGC has claimed—through a plethora of publicity releases and glossy brochures—that it has achieved, or come close to achieving, these goals. And during this short time, the five-year-plan allocations for ONGC shot up from about Rs 6,000 crore in the sixth plan to the currently-estimated Rs 12,000 crore—the largest single chunk of resources in the petroleum sector alone. But notwithstanding this staggering increase, of which about Rs 2,000 crore was spent each year during the sixth plan on the hunt for oil and gas, ONGC discovered no significant new structures containing recoverable oil deposits. Most of its efforts were concentrated on Bombay High, which continues to be the milch cow now rapidly being depleted. True, ONGC made profits during this period, and it is also true that it was able to achieve an all-time record in production. But in what can only be described as a public relations blitzkrieg,

...profits reflect high prices...



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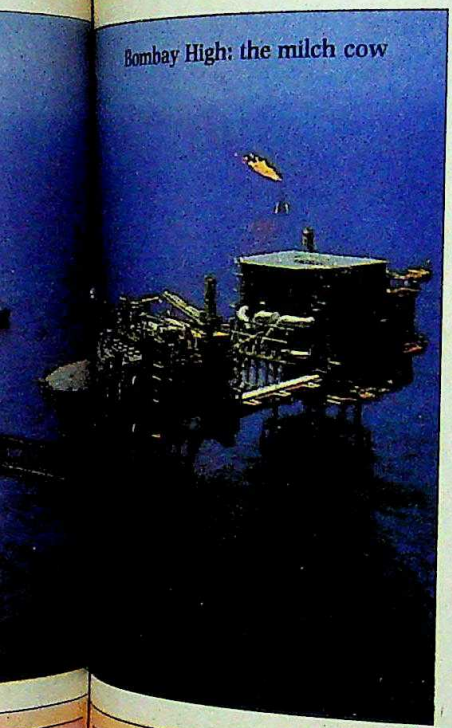
Oil Mirage

turn around when India's own oil production brought down foreign dependency from 70 to 30 per cent. Was this only a mere reprieve or a long-term trend? In order to make a realistic assessment of what the scenario may be when the 21st century arrives, INDIA TODAY conducted wide-ranging interviews and examined mountains of internal records of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC). It is a grim picture. A report from Features Editor INDERJIT BADHWAR assisted by SHEKHAR KUMAR JHA:



Bombay High: the milch cow

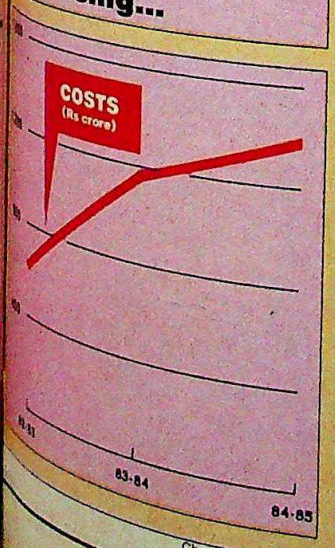
these facts were trumpeted with rapid-fire frequency in order to paint the last five years as a booming success story. What this public relations exercise masked from public view was the sobering reality that the rewards reaped during this brief time-span were a culmination of 20 years of often fruitless labour and that a small portion of Bombay High was—and continues to be—the only flash-in-the-pan saving grace in an otherwise dismal scenario in which production from onshore fields has been more or less stagnant. And in many instances, the ONGC public relations campaign heralded old oil finds as new discoveries, used statistics to make the record look rosier than it was, and claimed success even in the field of indigenisation—a development that is far from the truth.

What follows is an account of ONGC's claims (entitled "claim") along with details of INDIA TODAY's investigative findings (entitled "findings"):

Claim: **The increased production during 1984-85 has brought the country nearer towards self-sufficiency.**

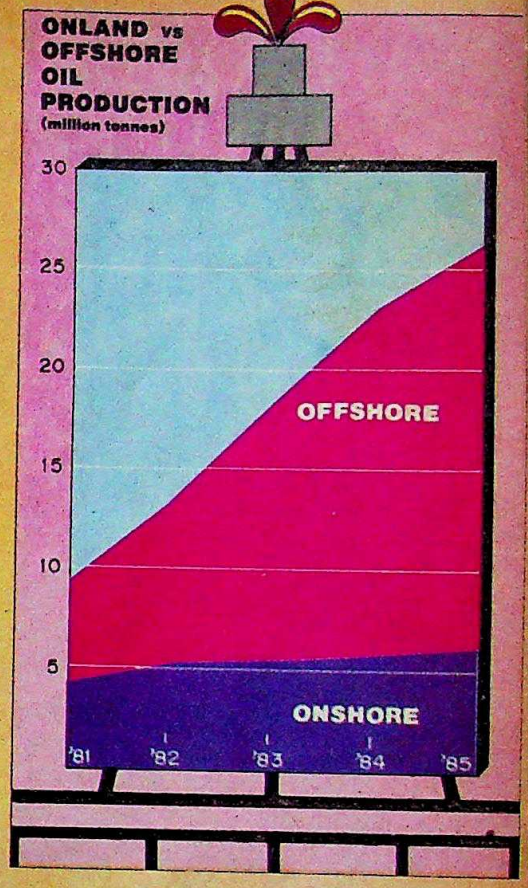
Findings: In the very short run this may be true. During 1984-85 the country achieved an oil self-sufficiency level of 73 per cent (demand: 39 million tonnes; production: 26.26 million tonnes). Of this amount, Bombay Offshore area—the only offshore facility producing oil—contributed about 75 per cent of the total. The remaining amount came from India's two remaining oil sources—onshore fields in Gujarat and Assam. Production from these onshore fields has remained more or less static for the last 15 years and is likely to decline. In the year 2000, India's crude oil requirements are expected to touch 100 million tonnes. To satisfy these needs, oil production will have to increase threefold. But a negative trend has already set in. During 1985-86—because of an increase in demand and only a small increase in production—the self-sufficiency

...operating costs keep rising...

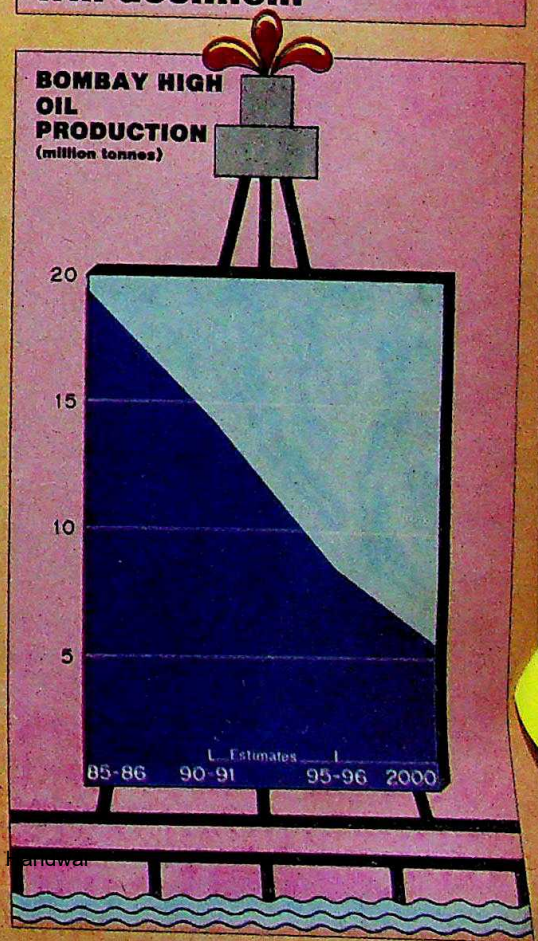


Charts by B.K. SHARMA

...onshore production stagnates...



...offshore recoveries will decline...



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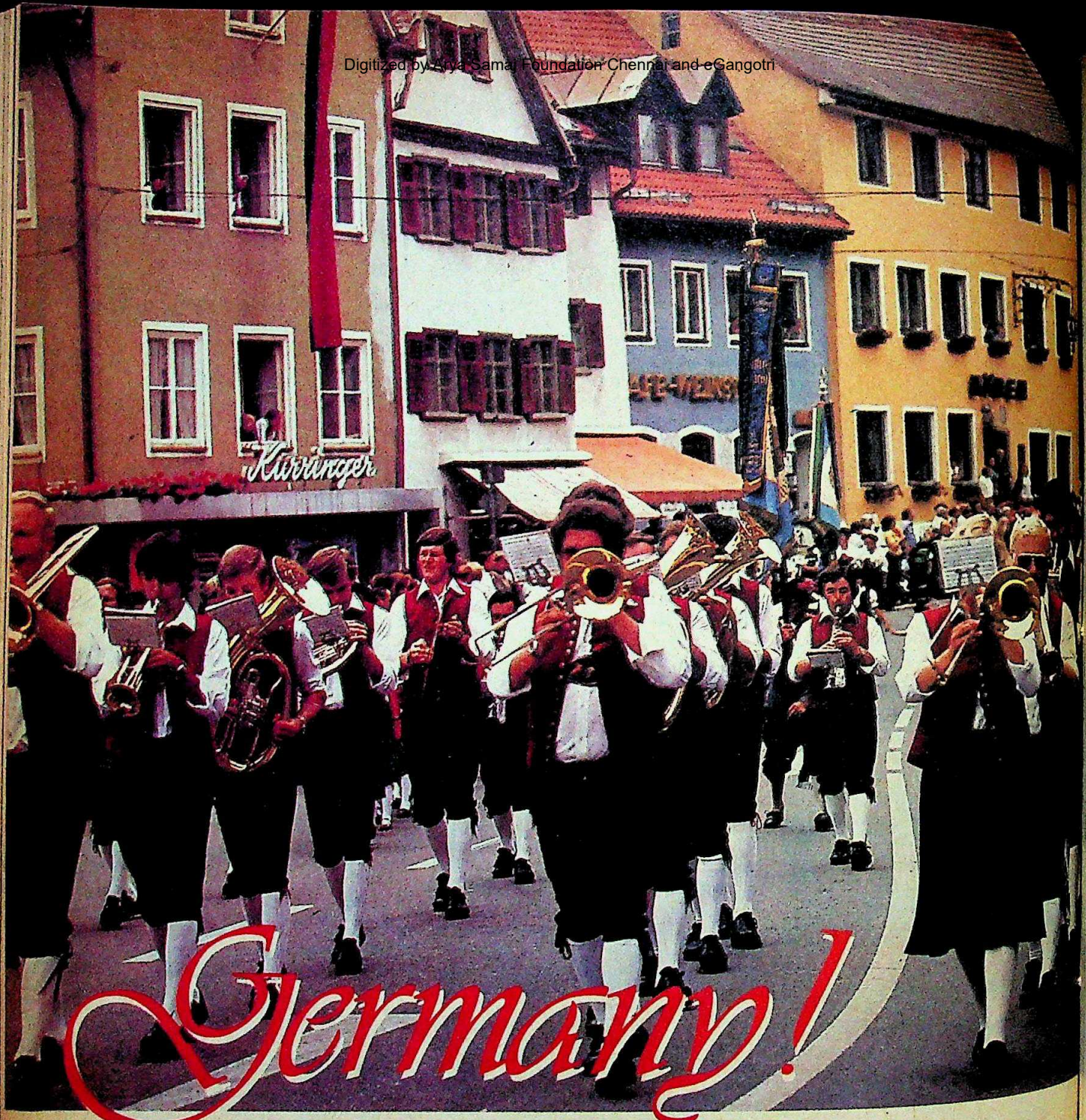

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level actually declined by nearly 10 per cent. During 1986-87 the self-sufficiency level is expected to continue to dip by an additional 7 per cent. Beyond this reality lie only grandiose plans and exploration scenarios but no known quantities of commercially exploitable oil.

Claim: **Self-sufficiency in oil has now become an achievable goal on account of sustained accelerated efforts of ONGC.**

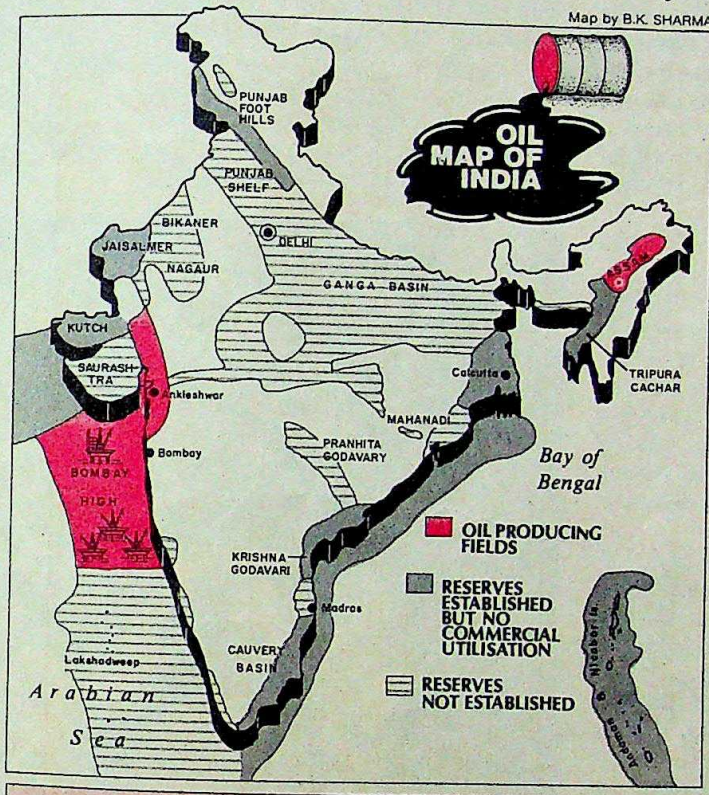
Findings: Recoverable reserves from ONGC's onshore fields, according to the Reserves Estimates Committee, totalled 101.45 million tonnes in 1981, of which 30.69 million tonnes had been extracted by the end of March 1986. This leaves about 70 million tonnes which, if extracted according to the present rate of 6 million tonnes a year, will barely last into the 21st century. This still leaves Bombay High to make up the bulk of the supply to meet India's needs, which are expected to increase annually by over 4 million tonnes for the next 15 years. But Bombay High is already producing to capacity and, according to senior engineers, "has plateaued out".

Moreover, according to a confidential ONGC study, output from Bombay High will dip from the current level of about 20 million tonnes to 5.60 million tonnes by the turn of the century. Even under the most optimistic profile—barring some unexpected major oil find—India's present fields can yield no more than 10 million tonnes of recoverable oil by 2000 A.D.—thereby pushing the country into a 90 per cent oil dependency. During the next four years, India's demands are expected to total about 245 million tonnes. Assuming optimum production—100 per cent of demand, which is quite impossible—more than half of the reserve will be depleted within this period with no new additions in sight.

Claim: **The emphasis on productivity, efficiency, innovative measures and cost-effective operations have again helped ONGC to achieve an all-time record performance in 1985-86.**

Findings: The statement "all-time record performance" suggests that ONGC's entire operation performed exceptionally well in order to set a new oil production record. It is true that ONGC exceeded the original target. But in terms of actual production, the gain over the previous year was only 1.25 million tonnes or a little more than 25,000 barrels of oil per day with about half the increase coming from Bombay High and the rest from the more-or-less stagnant known fields. None of this addition came from any of the new fields.

Map by B.K. SHARMA



India's oil comes from only 3 Basins

Claim: **Record production of 27.514 million tonnes has been achieved as against the target of 27.11 million tonnes.**

Findings: Here there is a subtle change of emphasis by the ONGC public relations machine. The new pronouncements speak no longer of "self-sufficiency" but of "record performance". This is because the increase in demand had clearly begun to outstrip the small rise in production. In terms of barrels per day, India's needs had soared to 872,486 but domestic production was 555,475.

Claim: **This record production has been made possible by putting some new hydrocarbon bearing structures into production through early production systems, thereby improving well productivity and reducing the number of sick wells....The Sixth Five Year Plan saw increase of oil production from 9.21 million tonnes in 1980-81 to 26.25 million tonnes in 1984-85.**

Findings: Throughout this scenario Bombay High—in particular Bombay High South—was being flogged to death against the advice of senior scientists within ONGC. The dramatic jump in production was due only to one factor—an unexpected bonanza from Bombay High South, which alone contributed nearly 14 million tonnes of oil during 1984-85 to the country's total production of 26.25 million tonnes. Until South began production, the rest of the Bombay offshore oil scene was—and remains—disappointing. Initial offshore production, starting in the mid-'70s, yielded no more than a total of 4.42 million tonnes of oil—a little less than half of India's total production. At that time India imported 70 per cent of its crude requirements. The turn around occurred only because Bombay High South—discovered in the '70s as an extension of the Bombay High field—gushed beyond even ONGC's calculations and produced 33.7 million tonnes during 1981-85 as against the original projection of 24.6 million tonnes. Conversely, the other offshore fields failed miserably in meeting targets. Bombay High North, which had created the original flutter of great expectations, began slipping and fell below originally targeted production. Bombay High East, and a related oilfield Panna, categorised as "new" offshore finds by ONGC, failed to produce a drop of oil during this period, while production from two other offshore structures, Ratna and Heera, have been mere drops in the bucket.

However, Bombay High South is also running into trouble. According to a report prepared by the Institute of Reservoir Studies, ONGC has slowly been killing the goose that has been laying the egg of black gold. Because of the accelerated production of oil from this structure—without the use of water injection techniques used to keep up the pressure of oil flow from the wells—as much as 17 million tonnes of recoverable oil from this deposit has seeped away into pores from which recovery is impossible. The institute had recommended that in order

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COLONEL S.P. WAHI

"You have to take risks"

COLONEL S.P. Wahi, 57, who has been the helmsman of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) since 1981, completes his term in office at the end of this month. His latest public sector assignment followed two previous ones at BHEL and the Cement Corporation of India. His assumption of office coincided with India's luckiest oil-breakthrough—the record production of oil from Bombay High South at a time when all other fields were stagnant.

This development, which pushed India into a period of near self-sufficiency, also catapulted Colonel Wahi into the headlines. He is described by friends as an incorrigible optimist, impatient with government regulations, who created a new corporate image for ONGC. Short of stature, balding and moustachioed, he cuts a classic Colonel Blimp figure. He alternates smoking a pipe with cigars, cigarettes, and chewing on an occasional paan.

Wahi's admirers refer to him as the best public sector executive in India while critics denounce him as a slick image-builder. Senior government officials associated with the Petroleum Ministry believe that Wahi has concentrated too much on the organisation and its image rather than on adventurous exploration. "Even though there is constant talk about new strikes and new finds," one senior ONGC official said, "the truth is that we have been going round and round in circles in the same structures and reduced exploration in real terms. The colonel's strategy was to concentrate only in the proven areas, exploit Bombay High to the hilt in order to be able to boast of records in a short time." Added a senior secretary: "For all the claims made, the planning of exploratory wells has been poor and time schedules have never been met."

What Wahi's critics also suggest is that ONGC, which was created in 1959 as a statutory body, has become an entity unto itself with little or no oversight in order to assess strategies and make risk-benefit analyses. Some years ago, a recommendation was made at the cabinet level that a new committee be created for this purpose but no decision was taken. "Outside ONGC," a former Petroleum Ministry official said seriously, "there is no technical competence, no think-tank in other parts of government to monitor the commission in terms of a broad national perspective. There is no second opinion."

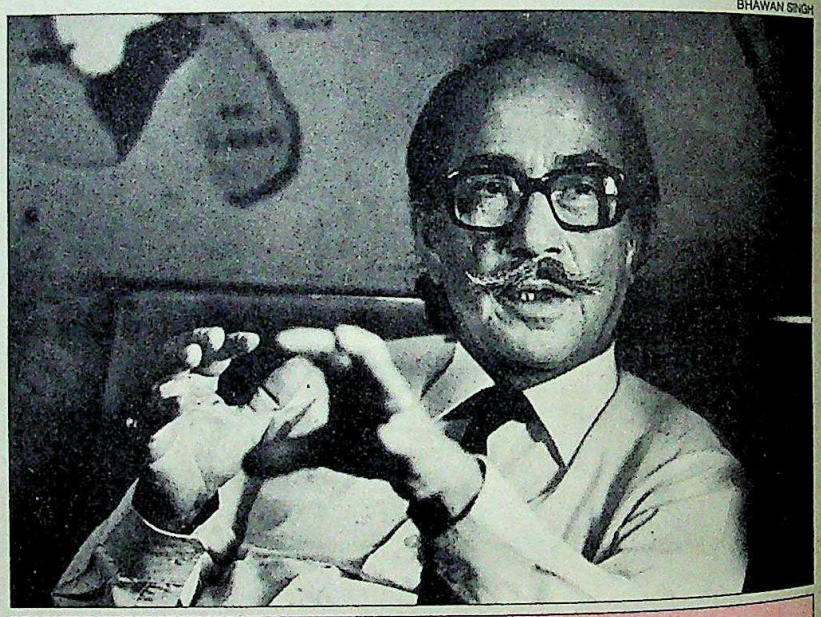
But Colonel Wahi stresses that he needs even more independence from the Government in order to function more effectively. "I don't need one penny from the Government any more," he says. "I can manage with my own resources as well as borrowing through the World Bank." ONGC's corporate culture, he says, is different from other such organisations, "because I trained my people to talk in terms of money and not numbers." There is little doubt that the corporate structure has mushroomed into what many say is a top-heavy management structure. ONGC's manpower has shot up from 26,374 to 41,591 during the last five years. The number of officers, about 14,000, far exceed the number of Class IV employees (7,392). The expenditure on employees has gone up during this period from about Rs 54 crore to Rs 148 crore. The average annual expenditure per employee is now about Rs 36,000.

Wahi likes to talk about his management strategy in terms of "strength and weakness analyses", "modern communication systems" and "systems orientation". Every senior manager, he promises, will soon have a computer terminal on his desk. In Dehra Dun, christened, "The Oil Capital of India", by ONGC because its corporate headquarters is located there, a new administrative block is being built which, says Wahi, "will be the highest building in Uttar Pradesh." Also under construction is a training centre and a computer centre, "the most modern in Asia". The corporate lifestyle also includes business lunches, well-appointed guest-houses, a six-seater Dornier aircraft to ferry VIP's. He was interviewed by Features Editor INDERJIT BADHWAR in his New Delhi office:

Q. *What do you consider your best achievements?*

A. We have become the pace-setters and are shoulder to shoulder with any company in the world. We have shown continuous stability and continuous improvement. We are one of the healthiest companies in the world. We were able to do this through making, for the first time, a comprehensive, long-term strength and weakness analysis of the whole operation.

BHAWAN SINGH



"I'm confident we will meet our needs"

Q. *But what about the future? There has been a decline in self-sufficiency. Will we meet our oil needs in the year 2000?*

A. The position is not as desperate as some people say. We have only realised 25 per cent of our prognosticated reserves. And self-sufficiency is also related to expenditures and demand management. We have to manage our demands more efficiently and conserve

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energy on a war footing in order to move away from oil dependency. If the economy is uncontrolled, we could face an energy crisis situation.

Q. But the question remains, what after Bombay High is depleted? Where is the new oil?

A. You must look at the overall picture. After all, 51 per cent of the world's totally-recoverable oil is in 49 large structures. The balance is in 1,000 fields. The future lies in small fields and not necessarily in huge structures. Seventy-five per cent of our work will needs to be done through an aggressive exploration strategy. The oil game is always a high-stakes scientific gamble and you have to take risks.

Q. But where in particular do you expect to find the oil to meet the country's projected demands?

A. Gandhar and Krishna-Godavari are significant finds. I am also excited about Himachal, Tripura, Jammu and Kashmir and Andhra Pradesh. I'm confident we will meet our needs by the year 2000.

Q. But in many of these fields, ONGC *has drilled over and over again for more than 20 years without finding any significant recoverable reserves. Why the hope?*

A. Where there is a will there is a way. The real answer, my friend, is perseverence.

Q. According to your annual report your cost of production is going high.

A. More than 87 per cent of these costs are uncontrollable costs incurred through statutory charges, royalty payments, cess and sales tax. And we can self-finance our operation from internally-generated funds.

Q. However, these audited figures show not only your total operational costs going up but also the profits falling as a percentage of your turnover.

A. If we continue to accelerate our hydrocarbon search, the costs will be higher but so probably will be the results. The result of this investment will come 10 years later. Besides, these accounting methods are geared for engineering-type industries with simple input-output ratios. They are irrelevant to us because they don't take into account the wealth (oil reserves) which are underground. Today I am investing in areas where there may be no return. But if I make a breakthrough, then all these accounting ratios will be useless.

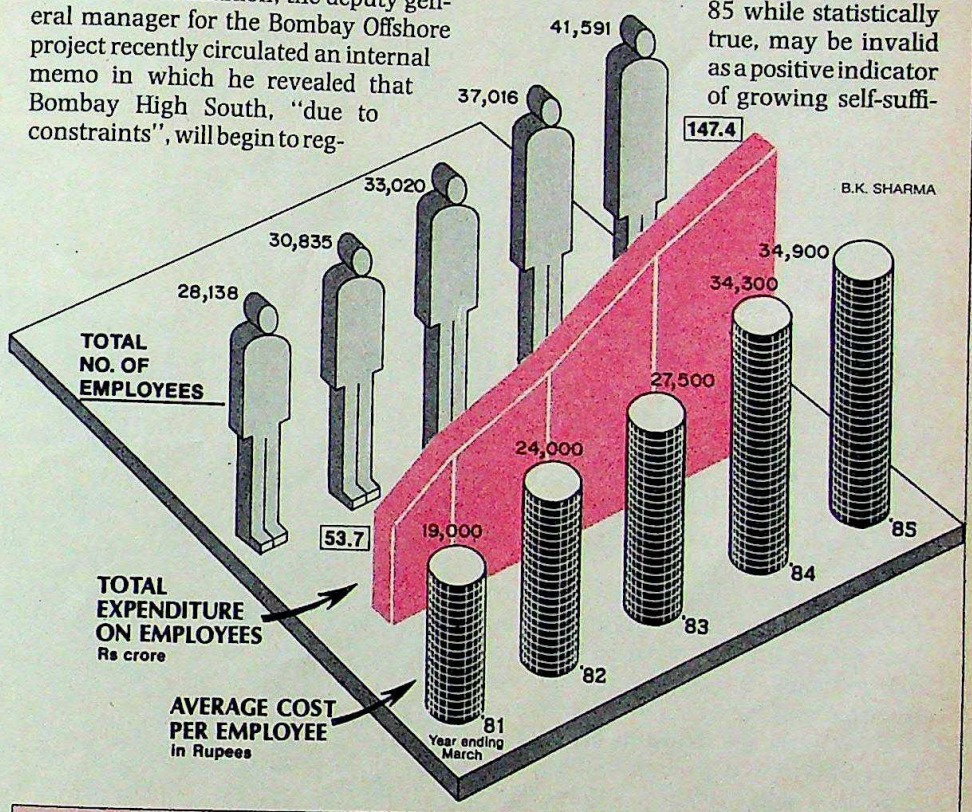
to prevent this damage to the well, the accelerated oil production should be lowered from the rate of 2,60,000 barrels of oil per day to 1,80,000 barrels until the water injection system for maintaining reservoir pressure could be commissioned. But this recommendation was ignored because it would have entailed a short-fall in production of about 8 million tonnes during 1985-87, a period during which ONGC was claiming its records. In addition, the deputy general manager for the Bombay Offshore project recently circulated an internal memo in which he revealed that Bombay High South, "due to constraints", will begin to register short-falls in production.

Onshore oil production, confined mainly to Cambay in Gujarat, and to Assam, seemed even less promising for the future. Of Gujarat's 615 wells and Assam's 230 wells, a total of 272—about a third of those in production—were on "artificial lift" by the end of 1985. The "lift" is an emergency procedure in which chemicals and heat are added as stimulants to wells which are getting rapidly depleted and ceased to bubble by themselves. The threat of a sharp decline in onshore production is also borne out by the fact that about 37 per cent of all the producing wells in Gujarat and 28 per cent of those in Assam have now run dry.

***Claim:* Recoverable reserves also increased from 328.42 million tonnes in 1980-81 to 450.96 million tonnes in 1984-85. These achievements...have been widely acclaimed as a very significant contribution to the economic progress of the country.**

Findings: Behind the statistics of recoverable reserves—in which ONGC has staked a claim of another record performance—lurks another disappointing reality. Colonel Wahi's claim that these reserves shot up dramatically from 328.42 million tonnes in 1980-81 to 450.96 million tonnes in 1984-85 while statistically true, may be invalid as a positive indicator of growing self-sufficiency. If anything, the last few years have registered a sharp short-fall in reserves. A more revealing comparison would be to begin with the year 1983 when reserves were 482.81 million tonnes. This figure fell to 465.19 million tonnes in 1984 and to 450.96 million tonnes in 1985. This clearly shows that during the very years that ONGC was painting a rosy public relations picture the depletion in India's oil reserves was occurring faster than any additions. A recent report of the Committee on Public Undertakings (COPU) has castigated ONGC for performing considerably below planned targets in all major activities—surveys, exploratory drilling, development drilling, production of crude—during the sixth plan period.

***Claim:* During the sixth plan period 41 hydrocarbon strikes/discoveries have been made.... The total accretion to the**



ONGC's manpower has shot up in five years

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existing geological reserves in 1980-85 has been 894 million tonnes of oil and gas.

Findings: These "new" discoveries and strikes as well as plans to establish huge reserves indicate that there has been feverish exploration activity which will usher in a new era of self-sufficiency. The use of phrases such as "hydrocarbon strikes," "prognosticated reserves," "petroliferous structures," "discovery of oil and oil equivalent of gas," used randomly by ONGC in its publications and press releases are, according to accepted international standards, no accurate measures of whether these structures will yield oil for commercial purposes. These terms are of academic value. Prognosticative reserves only give some indication of the volume of work which will be required for further exploration. Geological reserves are more precise indicators of the total oil-bearing potential of a given field, and not all of even those is extractable. The only true yardstick is "commercially recoverable oil"—the amount which can actually be extracted from a given structure economically as well as with available technology. And from any known oil field or "geological reserve", only about 15 per cent—under optimum conditions—is accepted as the commercially recoverable quantity.

Claim: **The "new" discoveries have been in Bombay High, Narsapur, Kaza and Tatipaka in Krishna-Godavari, Narimannam in Cauvery onland, and Karjisan and Pakhajan in Gujarat. Production from the following new structures commenced through the Early Production System (EPS) in 1985: Dahej, Balol, Wasna, Limbodra (all in Gujarat) and Narimannam (Tamil Nadu).**

Findings: In its litany of new and recent discoveries and strikes—in which it is never made clear how much oil is actually commercially recoverable—ONGC has also listed oil fields and pools, some of which were discovered in the '70s. Balol, ONGC's internal documents reveal, was discovered in the early '70s even before Bombay High. Dahej and Wasna figure in an ONGC paper prepared in January 1981. While the ONGC statement promises to produce oil from these structures through EPS, nowhere does it mention the quantity to be recovered. And small wonder. The total recoverable amount from the three fields will barely form a trickle: Dahej, 0.4 million tonnes; Wasna, .56 million tonnes; Balol, .44 million tonnes. According to a report prepared by an ONGC group appointed in 1982, Wasna and Balol were listed as two small oil pools along with 24 other such pools forming less than 2 per cent of the total onland geological reserves.

Narsapur and other Krishna-Godavari structures, recently heralded as potential new finds, were explored and drilled by the international oil giant Chevron which spent more than $30 million between 1982-85 and pulled out after concluding that the field was not commercially viable. And ONGC—despite claiming to have established a geological reserve of 24 million tonnes in this field—has so far not been able to extract even a drop of commercial oil. And total confusion prevails not only about the viability but also the history of this field. Former petroleum minister P. Shiv Shankar stated on October 24, 1982, that oil and gas had been struck in Razole (Godavari basin onshore) and tests were underway to determine commercial viability. But the *ONGC Recorder* stated—and this announcement was carried in Parliament in July 1986—that oil had been struck for the first time in 1986 in the Krishna-Godavari structure in Kaikalur-3. This notwithstanding official pronouncements.

Claim: **The strike at Gandhar, discovered in March 1984, is emerging as one of the most prominent discoveries after Bombay High.**

Findings: The real picture of the Gandhar discovery is still hazy. In his Republic Day speech at Tel Bhavan in Dehra Dun, Colonel Wahi estimated that the Gandhar structure contained 100 million tonnes of geological reserves. If this claim is accurate, the recovery of oil (calculated at 13 to 20 per cent of the total reserve) will be in the vicinity of 13 to 20 million tonnes. This, compared to the national demand of more than 40 million tonnes by next year—when Gandhar is likely to be put in production—is no large amount and will not be able to cater to even a year of domestic requirements.

Further, according to ONGC sources, each of the four wells drilled initially contain varying sand structures indicating the field is not homogeneous; it is thus extremely difficult to make an accurate prediction of the reserve at this stage. Officials of ONGC's western region in charge of developing Gandhar maintain that even after having drilled nine wells in the area it is still premature to make any credible assessment of the deposit. ONGC is now planning to dig several other wells in the structure before arriving at a final production plan. Commenting on finds during the sixth plan an inter-governmental sub-group observed in its recent report: "The individual discoveries and finds made during the plan were, in general, small, suggesting that a similar pattern could prevail in the seventh plan as well. The conclusion was that oil production has not branched off from the two onshore areas of Gujarat and Assam as well as from Bombay Offshore and

BHAWAN SINGH

ONGC bill board: high-powered public relations

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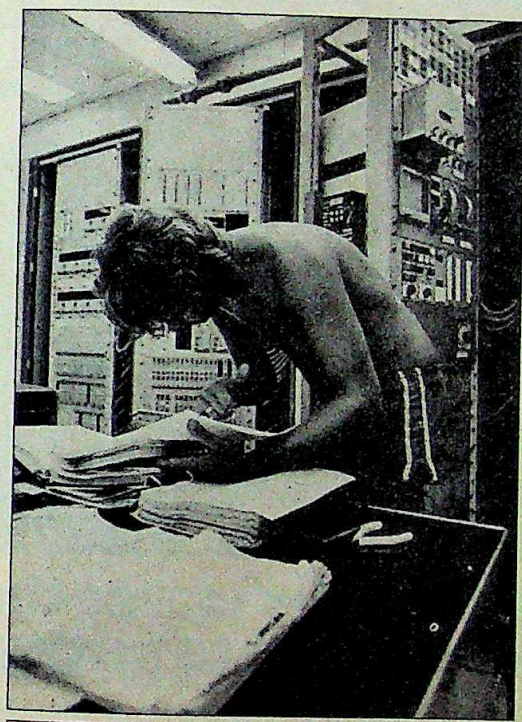
significant fields or structures have been added through innovative exploration.

Claim: **ONGC expects to establish—for the future—additional reserves of 1,400 million tonnes of hydrocarbon reserves through new exploration.**

Findings: This futuristic scenario appears to be a case of old oil in new bottles. According to a break-down this new bonanza will come as follows. Of the new 1,400 million tonnes to be established within the next five years, 810 million tonnes will be established in Category I basins (Assam, Bombay Offshore, and Gujarat), 645 million tonnes in Category II basins (Rajasthan, Cauvery, Krishna-Godavari, Andaman, West Bengal, Himalayan foothills, Ganga valley, Tripura, Nagaland), and the remaining in Category III basins (Kutch, Saurashtra, Kerala-Konkan and Mahanadi). Even senior ONGC insiders are baffled by these projections. By ONGC's own admission, the Category I basins have already begun to exhibit signs of "diminishing returns"—in other words, the flow from these fields can at best be kept constant with the help of artificial measures. In the Category II basins, 25 years of exploration have so far established only 72.2 million tonnes of geological reserves. It boggles the imagination as to how this figure will be expanded to nine times this amount within a span of five short years. Within this category itself, there are four basins—Bengal, Himalayan foothills, Ganga valley, and the Andamans, where even after 20 years of repeated exploration within the same structure, no reserves have been established. And in Category III also, the projections have been made not on the basis of established reserves but only on theoretical geological studies. Following issuance of the COPU report, the petroleum secretary himself admitted that these projections were "probabilistic" exercises and no certain guide to achievement in self-sufficiency within a given time-frame.

Claim: **The achievements in the financial year 1984-85, the last year of the sixth plan period, exceeded the previous year's records and have been widely acclaimed as a very significant contribution to the economic progress of the country. Net profit has gone up from Rs 882 crore in 1984-85 to Rs 923 crore in 1985-86.**

Findings: There is no doubt that ONGC has made large profits during the sixth plan. But most of these profits were made possible by one major factor—a dramatic increase in the Government's administered prices for ONGC crude. ONGC profits rose dramatically from Rs 46.57 crore in 1980-81 to Rs 375.54 crore in 1981-82—an eightfold rise in profit during a period when production rose by merely one-third, from 9.2 million tonnes to 13.1 million tonnes. What made this possible was the price of oil, which was raised from less than Rs 400 per tonne to Rs 1,180 per tonne. During 1982-83, when production from Bombay High began to soar, the profit rose to Rs 692.87 crore—a fivefold increase. During this year the administered price of crude was raised further to Rs 1,380 per tonne. Despite these figures however, auditors say, the future earning capacity of ONGC does not look too bright and could reflect on the efficiency of the organisation. Between 1983 and 1985 the percentage of ONGC's net income to equity registered a sharp decline. In other words—even as more and more resources were being added to ONGC (equity)—the company's earnings continued to decline.



Foreign role in Bombay High

Claim: **Cutting down operational costs has helped ONGC save crores of rupees during the last few years.**

Findings: Reports show rising costs. Meanwhile, between 1981 and '85, the ONGC cost of crude per tonne soared from about Rs 400 to Rs 877.32 per tonne (from Rs 57.51 to Rs 116.98 per barrel), and the cost of drilling doubled during this period from Rs 4,505 per metre to Rs 8,982 per metre. Overall, the operating costs of ONGC also about doubled between 1983-85 from Rs 634.93 crore to Rs 1,395 crore.

Claim: **ONGC has been alive to the need of indigenisation not only to conserve scarce foreign exchange but also to achieve self-reliance.**

Findings: The recent COPU report expressed "dismay" at the fact that despite ONGC's claims that its technology is comparable to that of foreign companies and that it has now reached the goal of self-reliance, the amount of foreign exchange being spent by it has been increasing. Foreign exchange expenditures on ONGC's activities increased from Rs 920 crore in 1982-83 to Rs 1,189 crore in 1984-85. According to the confidential minutes of an ONGC board meeting held on January 29, 1985, the commission approved the acquisition of 44 new rigs at a cost of Rs 956.41 crore. The foreign exchange component of these was estimated at Rs 514.36 crore.

Claim: **Significant progress has been achieved in the sphere of indigenisation of our material inputs during the last few years. During 1983-85 about 54 per cent of the total purchase of capital equipment and stores made by ONGC was through indigenous sources. This indicates rapid growth of indigenous capability.**

Findings: New developments indicate that ONGC may be moving away from the twin goals of self-sufficiency and self-reliance. For example, for the fourth time since the '70s, India has decided to invite "reputable companies" to explore in all the offshore basins, excluding Bombay, covering 27 blocks encompassing an area of 3.59 lakh sq km. The terms are the most liberal India has ever offered. Under the proposed contracts, foreign companies will explore offshore areas (including Krishna-Godavari) on a turnkey basis. ONGC, for all practical purposes, will do nothing more than monitor and share the production and charge royalties. This would spell a critically-diminishing ONGC role in exploring, drilling, and producing oil from India's offshore facilities. But so far, despite ONGC's official claim that it "is now on the international map and a large number of companies world over are watching with interest the strategies adopted by ONGC," such efforts in the past have not attracted many bidders. During the first round 12 years ago, three contracts were signed, while there was only one in the second round. The third round, in the mid-80s, was cancelled because no bidder showed any interest.

Even Bombay Offshore—to be main-

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HARI OM GULATI

Wahi presides over a full board meeting in New Delhi

tained under the ONGC aegis—is for the main part a foreign operation in terms of rig supervision, technical expertise and equipment. In order to show that ONGC had taken a big step in the direction of indigenisation, the commission announced that it had started buying rigs and machinery—the main expenditure item in oil production—from Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL), another Indian company. But, internal documents show, this was a shell game because the machines provided to ONGC by BHEL contain imported components as high as 77 per cent. According to Indian industrialists, the foreign components in parts they fabricate for ONGC operations is as high as 50 per cent. In 1985, the ONGC annual report noted that the commission had made "a real contribution to the Indian economy... through helping establish a sound base for the manufacture of drilling rigs, offshore supply vessels, cementing units and logging units.... This has created the right environment for the transfer of technology to Indian units." But the following year, the commission's own import substitution group announced that during the seventh plan, greater emphasis would be placed on the charterhire of many of these same items. In other words, these goods and services—mostly available from abroad—will, in the future, simply be leased. In fact, ONGC's charterhire plans caused the director of the Department of Economic Affairs to remark caustically at a recent performance review meeting of ONGC: "India has of late become a residual market for charterhire of drilling rigs."

Claim: **Improving efficiency in drilling operations...have paid excellent dividends.**

Findings: During the sixth plan, ONGC's drilling, both onland and offshore, fell short of its own targets. Onland ONGC drilled 20 per cent below target. The most serious short-fall was in the Assam field where ONGC, as against a target of 3,00,000 metres was able to drill only 1,91,230 metres. The minutes of a confidential performance review meeting held last year reveal that the petroleum secretary admonished ONGC officials over short-falls in drilling and refused to accept their excuse that the failure to meet targets was the result of non-availability of rigs.

Claim: **Drilling has been streamlined to achieve the maximum efficiency. Mobile rigs have been introduced which have increased cycle speed by 40 per cent.**

Findings: Despite ONGC's claims of improved "rig performance", the bare facts are that six out of eight rigs owned and managed by it and employed at the crucial Bombay High field performed miserably during 1985-86. The overall rig performance at Bombay High would have been disastrous had it not been for the much better performance of foreign rigs managed and operated by foreigners under charterhire. During that year Sagar Vikas burned down in a fire; Sagar Pragati was grounded in April 1985 and towed away to Dubai for repairs and is still out of commission; Sagar Jyoti was grounded in December 1985 because of damage to its legs; Sagar Ratna's legs were damaged in April 1985. It was recommissioned after the legs of another rig were cannibalised for repair purposes; Sagar Shakti, employed to drill a target of 12 wells could very disappointingly drill only eight; and Sagar Gaurav fell far short of required performance expectations. The only two drills which met their performance targets were Sagar Vijay and Sagar Samrat.

Claim: **The number of sick wells has been reduced...and the period of seismic parties (for exploration) has been increased. ONGC has achieved international standards of excellence.**

Findings: During a closed-door performance review meeting of the sixth plan, the petroleum minister said ONGC needed to make "substantial improvements" by speeding up seismic surveys, improving the technical audit of the quality of data collected, better interpretation of data and a more realistic determination of drilling programmes "based on vigorous analysis". He also noted that there were a large number of "sick wells" and the time being taken to repair these was "a matter of serious concern". And he also made it clear that in his opinion, the Oil and Natural Gas Commission had a long way to go in order to "attain international levels of excellence".

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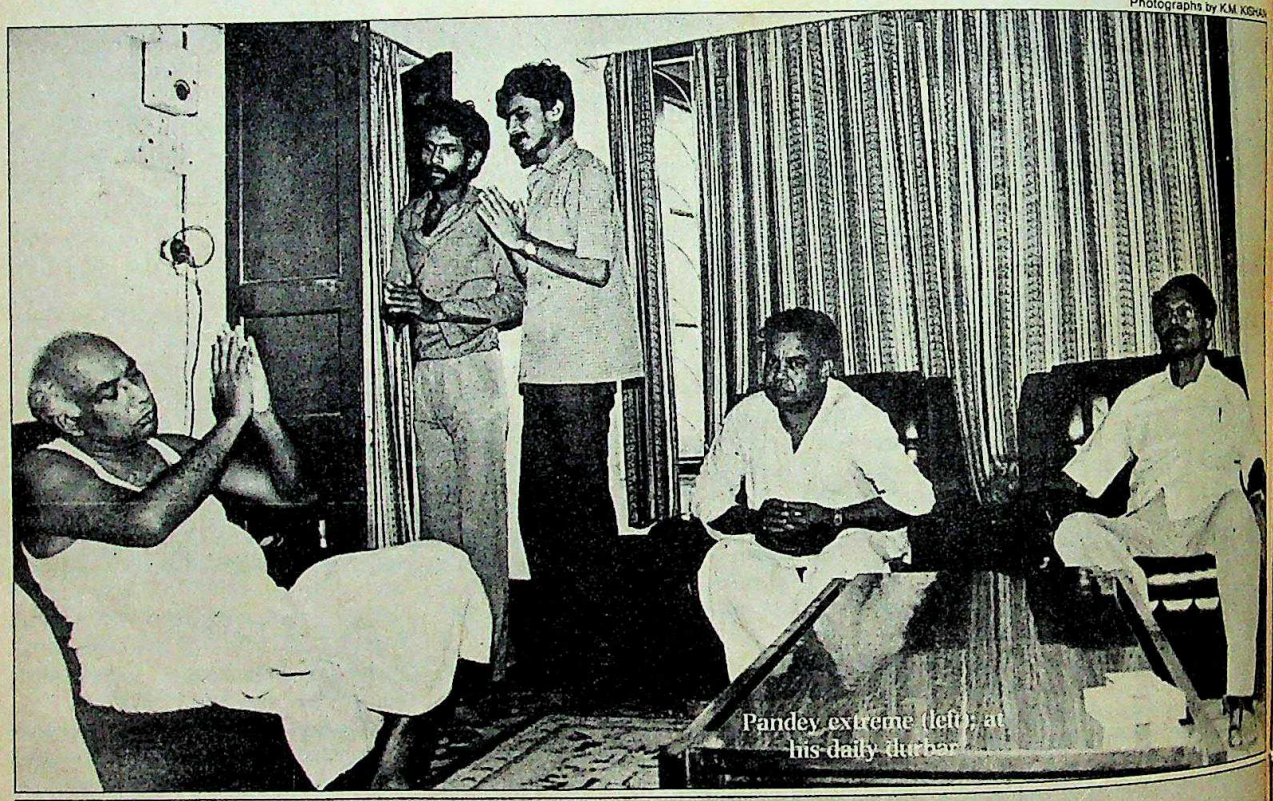
BIHAR

Ruler-in-Law

IN Bihar politics there is never a dull moment. Currently adding spice to the state's political scenario is Jagdish Pandey, Chief Minister Bindeshwari Dubey's samdhi (daughter's father-in-law). Pandey, a controversial but slick and dramatically effective behind-the-scenes operator, has emerged as a powerhouse in the state. His unofficial stature has created deep resentments within members of the ruling party who have questioned his influence in several petitions to the Congress(I) high command. A former irrigation official, who was thrice suspended on corruption charges, Pandey, now in retirement, continues to hog the limelight as the godfather whose diktats carry enormous weight. A report from Principal Correspondent FARZAND AHMED:

Photographs by K.M. KISHAN



Pandey extreme (left) at his daily durbar

Congress(I) politicians say that Pandey—the "super chief minister"—is a masterful behind-the-scenes operator with an uncanny ability to influence government decisions and dictate transfers and postings.

EVERY morning a privately-owned, shabby, multi-storied building at Road No. 6-C of Rajendranagar, in Patna, becomes a beehive of official activity. Visitors climb a flight of stairs leading to a small, modestly-furnished drawing-room on the first floor and are greeted by a tall, balding man in a white vest and lungi. He is Jagdish Pandey, 59, a relative of Bihar Chief Minister Bindeshwari Dubey, holding his daily durbar.

September 2, 8.00 a.m. A group of engineers—office-bearers of the Bihar Engineering Services Association—exchange pleasantries and get down to the business at hand. "You should not go on strike. You know Bihar is passing through a critical phase," says Pandey. "But the Government, the officers, these IAS bureaucrats are not listening to us", the group leader says. "Don't worry. I will see your demands are accepted, officers will be taken care of. Meet Dubeyji this evening. He is a nice man," Pandey assures them. "But how can we meet and enter his house?" the leader asks. "The security men at the gate will be told about your visit. Is it okay?" The men assent and troop out. Ten hours after this meeting, a government announcement declares that the engineers association has withdrawn its proposed strike following a meeting between the office-bearers of the association and Chief Minister Dubey.

A DIG-rank officer sitting in a corner of the crowded room, rises and salutes Pandey. "Yes," the man in lungi asks. The DIG, obviously a worried man, whispers in his ear for five minutes. "It is okay. Let me

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see what can be done," Pandey responds. The police officer, it is learnt, is after a new field posting. He leaves, smiling. Next, as the durbar continues, a rustic panditji, headmaster of a Sanskrit school in Rohtas district, touches Pandey's feet. "Sir, my school has not yet been recognised. We are facing a lot of problems. Please do something." Pandey pauses. "You go and meet the director and the minister. I think your work will be done," he says. Another young man in khadi comes into the room. He is president of the subordinate engineers association. "Sir, what happened to our demands?" he asks. "Please meet me after a few days. I could not find time to think over your problems," Pandey replies.

Suddenly two young men barge in. Pandey appears to recognise them. "You are from private engineering colleges?" he asks. "I told you to meet the chief minister. He is a very nice man. He is like your father. He will solve your problems."

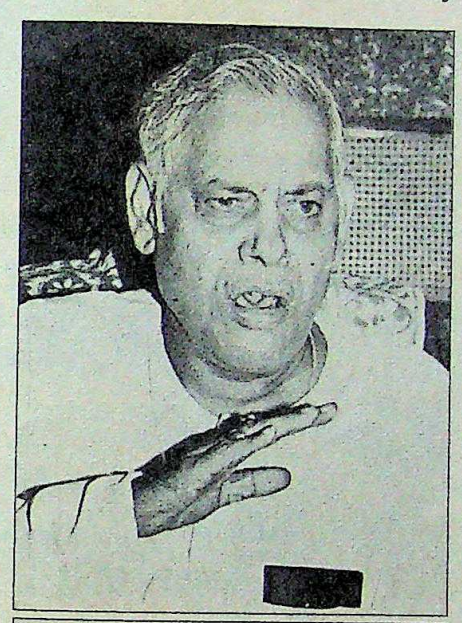
"Sir, you are also like our father. Please be kind enough and do something to save our careers. Long back we completed our course but no exam has yet been held. Our lives are ruined", pleads one man.

"Government is not responsible for such private institutions. However, Dubeyji might do something. First go to the Department of Science and Technology and then meet Dubeyji", Pandey responds.

THE morning durbar is over. Not for nothing is the retired chief engineer of irrigation and close relative of Dubey's called "super chief minister" and his Rajendranagar house referred to as the "mini-secretariat". His reputation is both legendary and notorious. His commitments are almost always mysteriously complemented in record time. But Pandey, aware of his enormous influence which has caused—and continues to cause political tremors in the state—smugly denies his importance.

"Yes, everybody thinks I am a super chief minister, running the state administration, interfering in the functioning of the chief minister but this is all a canard just to tarnish my image and defame the chief minister," Pandey says. His son, Ramesh, is married to Dubey's daughter. And through this relationship, Pandey has carved out for himself a commanding role in dispensing patronage and official favours. Senior government officials as well as Congress(I) politicians say that Pandey is a masterful behind-the-scenes operator with an uncanny ability to influence government decisions and dictate transfers and postings—especially those of engineers—without leaving a trace of his own involvement. But his in-law, chief minister Dubey bristles at this accusation: "Let anybody prove that Pandey has been interfering with my administration. This is my challenge."

However, during last fortnight's opposition-sponsored no-confidence motion in the Assembly, it was Dubey who had to face this challenge. As the chief minister took a firm and voluble stand in defence of his government against the opposition stand, he remained curiously



Dubey is a lonely man, heart-broken after the death of his two daughters. His only surviving daughter is married to Dr Ramesh Pandey. Ramesh and his father have taken on the family responsibilities.

silent in the face of strident demands from MLA Ajit Sarkar of CPI(M) who repeatedly asked him to "please say something on your *samdhi* Jagdish Pandey also." Even more curious was the fact that no one from the treasury benches stood up to defend Dubey on this particular issue. "Instead of going to jail for his bunglings in the Irrigation Department, he was promoted and now, after his retirement he is the real chief minister," Sarkar said.

This was by no means an unfamiliar scene for Dubey. Pandey in the past has dominated headlines in Bihar on account of serious charges of corruption against him as well as allegations that he exerts a vice-like grip over the state administration. In fact, soon after he became chief minister, Dubey's political troubles started only because of Pandey. His first major action, after he assumed office, was to revoke several corruption charges on which his *samdhi* had earlier been suspended as chief engineer. With lightning speed, Pandey was posted as technical secretary to the chief engineer of the Sone Command Area, then promoted to chief engineer's rank just prior to his retirement. These moves created political bedlam. After all, the charges on which Pandey had been suspended were hardly a trifling matter. During 1982-83, according to official sources, Pandey as superintending engineer of minor irrigation at Ranchi had purchased Rs 7 crore worth of irrigation pipes without technical sanctions or work assessments. The cost, according to a vigilance inquiry, was double of what should have been incurred. Even more devastating were the revelations that the pipe purchases exceeded the total budgetary allocation for all the Ranchi minor irrigation circles (Rs 3.4 crore) and that only a small portion—about 20 per cent—of the 5.2 lakh metres of the pipes purchased were used. The remaining portion was simply junked.

After Pandey returned from the wilderness and started exerting his clout, the dissidents began a steady stream of complaints to the high command, verbally as well as in writing. Matters reached a head in February when, during a reshuffle, two ministers, Amarendra Mishra, minister of state for roads construction, and Indernath Bhagat, excise minister, were sacked. According to the official grapevine they were removed because they had defied Pandey's desires regarding transfers and postings of officials within their departments. Following this development Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi despatched a political emissary from Delhi to investigate these charges.

It was in the aftermath of the cabinet reshuffle that the epithet "super chief minister" came to be applied to Pandey. A memorandum signed by 108 legislators and submitted to the Central leaders noted: "The first thing that Dubey did on assumption of office of chief minister was to revoke the suspension of his *samdhi*. He (Pandey) is behaving, maybe working like the super chief minister, and taking bribe amounting to crores." Even today the legislators remain equally incensed and the latest memorandum from dissidents

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to the high command against Dubey uses similar language when referring to Pandey.

When pressed, Pandey says: "I advise people who come to me as a citizen." But it is hard to believe that in a state like Bihar where everything moves at slower than a snail's pace, the intervention of a mere "citizen" can produce the speedy results for which Pandey has built up a reputation. Pandey's role as a crisis manager and troubleshooter for his *samdhi* was clearly evident last month when he intervened with government doctors of the Bihar State Health Services Association (BSHSA) who had crippled health care through a state-wide strike. Pandey is quick to boast that "as a result of my initiative and efforts, the nine-day strike was called off. BSHSA leaders met me and I convinced them that their strike was wrong. I told them that the chief minister, who is honest, would meet your demands." Pandey admits that he then interceded with his *samdhi* and persuaded him to put off his Delhi trip to meet the doctors.

MY house is not a mini-secretariat but you may call it free advice centre," he laughs. The power of this "advice-centre" to which technicians as well as industrialists flock for counsel was confirmed by BSHSA General Secretary Dr Gopal Prasad Sinha, who said the man behind the successful negotiation to end the strike was, indeed, Pandey. "We are not concerned about his past, but he is definitely a man with knowledge, drive. He has the capacity to persuade people and influence the Government." But behind his effectiveness lurks not only the irrigation scandal of the past but also the oft-repeated charge—made most recently in the memorandum from the dissidents—that Pandey brokers postings and transfers in the state in exchange for money. But Pandey challenges "anybody to prove this charge".

Pandey, who belongs to a rich farming family of Dehri-On-Sone was a diploma holder (an overseer) when he joined service three decades ago. In his rise to the post of chief engineer he was able to traverse all technical and legal hurdles. Family connections—he is related to the late Kedar Pandey, the former Bihar chief minister and Union minister, besides being *samdhi* of the current chief minister—certainly helped. Apart from this, Pandey had also established close rapport with important politicians, particularly former chief minister Jagannath Mishra who promoted him as superintending engineer against the advice of the Bihar Public Service Commission.

But Pandey has a habit of cursing his fate. "Frankly speaking," he says, "because of Dubey now being chief minister, we have been ruined. My son (Dr Ramesh) had a good medical practice and medical shop at Bokaro. His earning is Rs 25,000 a month but he gave up everything to look after Dubey without any gain. And we all are facing all nonsensical allegations." This statement is partly true. Dubey is a lonely man, heart-broken after the death of two daughters in the last few years. His only surviving daughter, Asha, is married to Ramesh Pandey. Ramesh and his father have taken on the family responsibility of looking after Dubey and have established a strong emotional and psychological relationship with him. In the process, Pandey has gradually acquired enormous power. Says dissident leader Bilat Paswan Bihangam: "Pandey is thriving because of inefficiency and lack of political will of Dubey."

While Pandey's political power may be a relatively new phenomenon, his wealth is from old landholdings. His father, late Pandit Chandra Bhushan Pandey, was the richest farmer in the area and was among the few in Rohtas (then Shahabad) district to pay agriculture tax in the '50s. His two brothers—one a local *mukhiya*—continue to farm their land and take care of other rural property. "I had property in Orissa also. But all had been sold out after the death of my father. I have not added even an inch of land since then," Pandey proudly proclaims. In Patna he owns a house and a car. "I just don't understand why people think I can't own a car and a house," he says. "But some leaders think I am corrupt and this was why my house was raided four times. But nothing was found. Karpoori Thakur as chief minister got me suspended and my house raided as he thought I was keeping political funds of the late Kedar Pandey. They could not prove anything."

As superintending engineer, Pandey bought Rs 7 crore worth of pipes, the cost of which, according to a vigilance inquiry was double of what should have been incurred.

The question that all political pundits mull over in Bihar is when Pandey will directly enter politics. Sources within the Bihar Congress(I) maintain that in order to clear the air and stem dissident activity, Pandey's direct entry into politics, through an election, will be a welcome move. But Pandey openly says that he dislikes politicians and is "not interested in party politics or in getting a ticket". From the "super chief minister's" vantage point, this makes sense because, for him, any other political office in the state would only be a demotion as well as an end to his unique and enviable position of being able to exercise power without responsibility.

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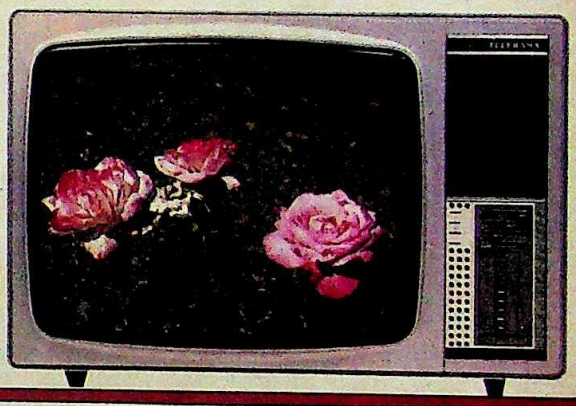

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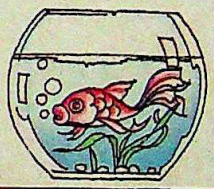

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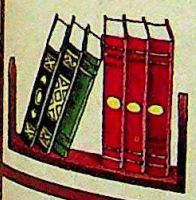

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ARIF MOHAMMED KHAN

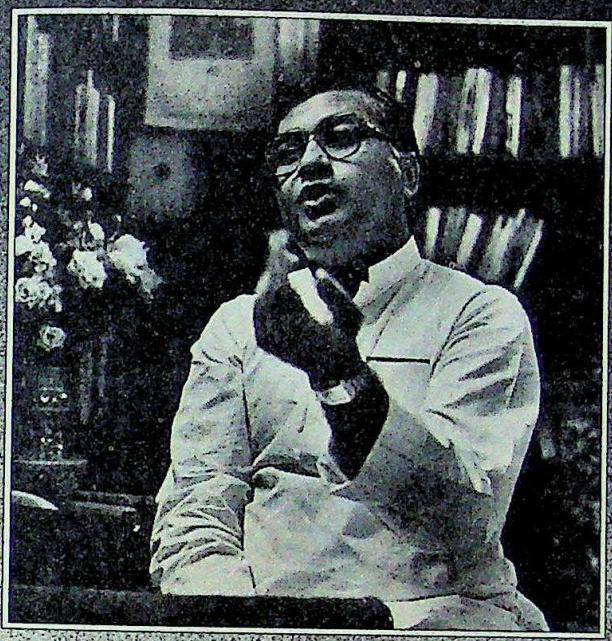
"It is my duty to speak out"

BARELY 35, Arif Mohammed Khan has rarely stopped making news. As president of the Aligarh Muslim University Students' Union, he stood out for his open admiration of the then Swatantra Party leader, Piloo Mody, and his refusal to invite mullahs to the university. In 1977 he became a minister in the Janata Party government in Uttar Pradesh—the youngest minister in any state government—and then created history by quitting the Government and the party within three months over the handling of the Lucknow riots between Shias and Sunnis. Last year, when he was given additional charge in the Home Ministry, he became the first Muslim in that ministry. His resignation in February over the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill made him a national figure.

After a few months of relative anonymity, the irrepressible Khan bounced back into the news last month when a Bombay weekly revealed that he had "snubbed" Rajiv Gandhi in a letter he had written to the party president giving his reasons for not attending the Seva Dal's training camp, which was held recently at Nainital. Khan has yet to release the contents of the letter, but it is believed that in its conclusion, Khan says categorically that he has lost confidence in his leader's ability to combat communal and sectarian forces. Khan has now broadened his criticism of the Government by coming out against all the three major political initiatives of the Rajiv Government: the Punjab accord, the Assam accord and the Mizoram accord.

But all this would be irrelevant in a larger canvas were it not for the fact that Khan is voicing the opinion of a cross-section of Congress(I) leaders and workers who feel the same way but lack his courage to speak out. With Rajiv's Government increasingly being shown up as inexperienced and indecisive—the security belt fiasco was only the latest example—unease is growing in a party already troubled by electoral failures in Punjab and Assam. And rebels like Pranab Mukherjee and S.S. Mohapatra are openly sending signals to Khan that he would be welcome among their ranks. It was against this background that Assistant Editor AJAY KUMAR *interviewed Khan for over two hours in the tastefully-decorated and book-lined drawing-room of his residence in New Delhi. Excerpts:*

Photographs by BHAWAN SINGH



"I am only trying to draw the Government's attention to a dangerous situation. I am opposed to the politics of appeasement, to the politics of short-term expediency."

Q. *Is your criticism of the Punjab accord on the same lines as the stand that you adopted against the Muslim Women's Bill?*

A. What I found objectionable about the Bill was the Government's handling of it which gave respectability and credibility to fundamentalist and communal forces in the community. Similarly, I am not against the Punjab accord per se, but what I find basically objectionable is the lenient attitude towards those who continue to mix politics with religion, who use communalism and violence to pursue their political ambitions. Have the forces with whom we made the accord stopped talking in terms of separatist politics? Who were the people who started the *dharmyudh*? Who were the people who burnt the Constitution? Have any of them retracted from the decisions taken at that time?

Q. *Do you think that this government lacks the strength to combat sectarian and communal forces?*

A. I'll answer this with an example. At the time of the 1984 elections, in every election speech we had referred to the Anandpur Sahib resolution as a charter for disintegration, as something that could not be a basis for negotiation. But when it came to the crunch, then we said that all our apprehensions had been clarified by the Akali Dal. What was I to think then? That the criticism of the resolution was only meant to whip up feelings against a particular community as an election gimmick? Didn't anybody realise then that such an election gimmick can create a cleavage between two communities? Now the man in the street is asking me: when you had described the resolution as a charter for disintegration had you applied your mind fully to the resolution? Were you serious or were you trying to fool me?

The question is: what was the promise we made to the people? I feel that to stand by the pledge we made to the people during the elections may be difficult but it should not be covered by the respectable alibi of bringing these people to the national mainstream because nobody has changed.

Q. *Why didn't you voice these apprehensions when the accord was signed last July?*

A. Because it was this government's first political initiative, though there were many in the party who had apprehensions even then. By the accord, what I understood at the time was that the other party had given up its separatist pretensions, its communal slogans. But I did not expect the Government to accommodate the separatist viewpoint.

Q. *To briefly go back to the Muslim Women's Bill. Will you clarify once and for all whether your Parliament speech upholding the Supreme Court's*

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judgement in the Shah Bano case was made on your own or because you were asked to?

A. (Pauses). The speech definitely was mine but no minister of the Government of India can give expression to his views unless his views are concurred by people who matter. The Bill was addressed to the Home Ministry and I was then minister of state for home affairs. I was intervening on behalf of the Government. In the circumstances, can any minister give expression to his personal views? Anyone who is conversant with parliamentary norms will not even ask this question.

Q. *After you quit, have you tried to meet the prime minister to sort out your differences? It is said that you have even refused invitations to dinners sent by the prime minister.*

A. Why should I meet the prime minister? My views are well-known and I am available to the party leadership. As for the dinners, it is true that I have not attended any of them, but these are formal social occasions; they are not forums for ironing out differences.

Q. *You don't think your criticism of major policy initiatives amounts to indiscipline? Shouldn't you be saying all this in party forums?*

A. Which party forum? Whatever I am saying is in consonance with the promises we had made to the people. I am giving expression to my views on issues on which—because we have deviated from these promises—the forces which we consider a threat to the integrity and security of the country are getting strengthened. If anybody feels that I am violating party discipline by saying this, they are free to do so.

Q. *Are you planning to quit the party?*

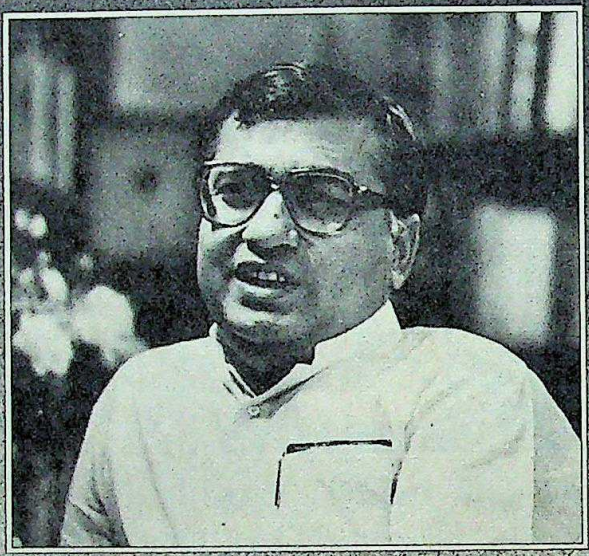
A. Not at all. As a person who has had the good fortune of serving the party when it was not in power I have some sort of emotional attachment to the party.

Q. *But people who have voiced similar apprehensions, like Pranab Mukherjee and Gundu Rao, have been thrown out of the party. Are you creating a similar situation so that you are thrown out and get public sympathy?*

A. What situation am I creating? I am not criticising the accords. I am critical of our failure to implement them.

Q. *You have also criticised the Mizoram accord, which is very new.*

A. The Mizoram accord? Isn't it surprising that a government which was elected to maintain the integrity and unity of India is making compromises with those who had openly taken to arms to wreck the unity of the country from within?



"Arjun Singh should join the Gorkhaland movement so that his sane advice will be available to them and in future they will refrain from writing to the United Nations directly."

Q. *But the discussion with the Mizo leaders was started by Mrs Gandhi.*

A. That discussion would not have resulted in handing over power to the same forces, in winding up the Congress(I) organisations in the state and handing over the administration to those who openly claim that they were receiving foreign aid, that they were supplying arms to the neighbouring states. Can you imagine the feelings of those whose near ones were killed by insurgents in Mizoram? There was one brilliant officer from the Uttar Pradesh cadre who had 36 bullets in his body. How does his family feel?

Q. *But when you question such major initiatives of the Government, aren't you asking for trouble?*

A. I am not asking for any trouble. I think we have reached a stage where, in the words of Bertrand Russell, it is a duty to disobey when it is a sin to obey, it is a duty to speak when you consider it a sin to keep quiet. I am only trying to draw the Government's attention to a dangerous situation. I am opposed to the politics of appeasement, to the politics of short-term expediency. A government is meant to govern and it is all the more welcome if it works faster but it should not be a government which works faster under pressure from communal groups. Somebody has got to say it: we have to stop acting under pressure.

Q. *Are your feelings shared by a large number of people within the party?*

A. Definitely.

Q. *Why did you criticise Arjun Singh's statement on Gorkhaland?*

A. I have only seen newspaper reports where the party's vice-president has been quoted as saying that he does not consider the Gorkhaland agitation to be secessionist. My problem is: as a Congressman should I believe the words of the vice-president of the Congress(I) or should I believe the stand taken by the West Bengal Pradesh Congress(I) Committee, which was a party to the resolution in which the agitation was described as secessionist? The leaders of the Gorkhaland agitation are writing directly to the United Nations, writing to heads of state of foreign governments, observing August 15 as a black day and yet the vice-president of the party says they are not secessionist? If the vice-president of the Congress(I) feels so strongly about this, my advice to him would be that he should join the Gorkhaland movement so that his sane advice will be available to them and in future they will refrain from writing to the United Nations directly.

It is clear that politics is being played with such a sensitive issue. But when you try to play politics just to embarrass a government which belongs to a different party, you are adding a dimension which may cost the nation very dearly. (Heatedly) I cannot find words strong enough to express my feelings on this subject.

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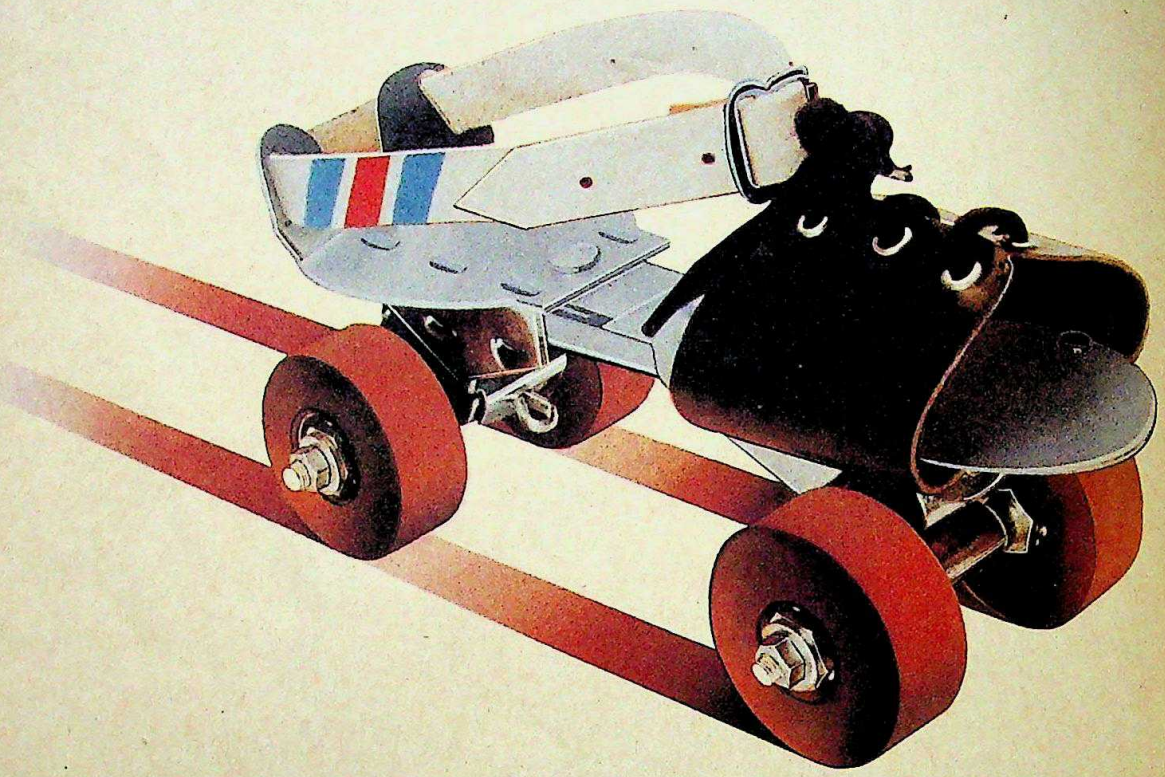

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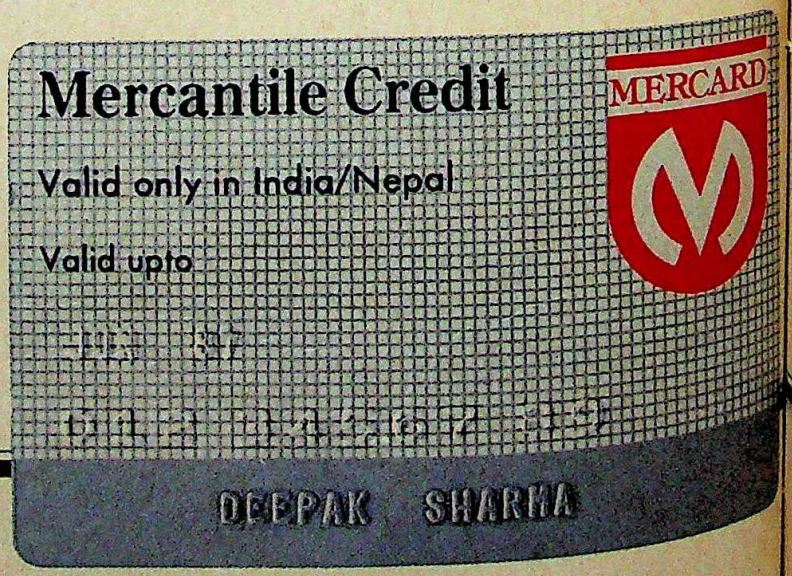

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BLACKLIST DEAL

THE GOVERNMENT and big business have struck a deal on the official blacklisting of business groups (INDIA TODAY, August 15), and Finance Minister V.P. Singh will soon call businessmen for talks. Under the terms of the deal, companies that agree to fork out the tax amounts they do not dispute, and petition the courts for an early hearing of tax cases that have been pending for over five years, will have their names struck off the blacklist. The Finance Ministry had decided to deny licences to 20 leading business houses, each of which owed it Rs 5 crore or more in taxes, and to hold up their applications to raise funds from the public, till they paid their dues. Subsequently, several leading industrialists submitted representations to the prime minister on the matter and met him personally. And Bhadrachalam Paperboards had cleared its immediate dues earlier, but New Delhi had not been informed by the Hyderabad collector. This firm too has been taken off the black list.

AMBITIOUS MOVES

FIBRE manufacturer J.K. Synthetics has ambitious greenfield ventures on its drawing-boards, including computer software and fascimile equipment, and acrylic fibre and nylon tyre chord projects. The company has already obtained licences for these projects and is investing a hefty Rs 425 crore over the next five years in them, and in expanding production capacities at its existing synthetic fibre and cement plants. J.K. Synthetics is busy talking to Japanese firms for the software project, to be located on the outskirts of the capital, and hopes to export up to Rs 30 crore worth of software to its Japanese collaborator by 1990. The foray into fascimile systems could be even more ambitious: in four years' time the company expects to manufacture up to 10,000 of them annually in Himachal Pradesh. The Rs 500 crore-turnover firm expects all these ventures to take its sales to around Rs 1,000 crore by 1991.

LOAD-SHEDDING

THE GOVERNMENT is readying to provide a golden handshake to some of the 33 lakh employees of state-owned firms. The package of incentives will be unveiled shortly, and public sector company managements have been instructed to find out exactly how much fat can be shed. The Government will also hold talks with the unions next month in a bid to sell them its voluntary retirement plan. Officialdom believes that overmanning is largely responsible for the losses of several firms, and the goal is to get employees over 50 and the unproductive in sick undertakings to call it a day.

ENERGETIC PLANS

BEST & Crompton has tossed its hat into the non-conventional energy arena: windmills, solar energy and mini-hydroelectric power-stations. The engineering company has applied for permission from the Government to set up a clutch of new enterprises in collaboration with Windmatics of Holland (windmills), Terralite of the US (solar energy), and Neyrpic of France (hydel power plants). The new companies, in which the collaborating foreign firms will contribute 40 per cent of their equity, are expected to eventually notch up sales figures that may range between Rs 30 crore and Rs 50 crore.

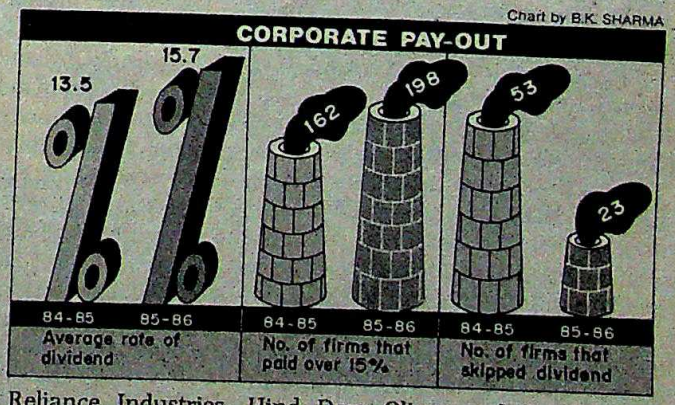
STARTLING SUM

WHILE almost everyone agrees that the country's communications network is woefully inadequate, the bill for setting things right could be a horrifying Rs 55,000 crore. That startling sum is what the Department of Telecommunications reckons it will need till the year 2000 (the figure however includes the seventh plan allocation for telecommunications of Rs 4,000 crore). In a blueprint that will be eventually forwarded to the prime minister, the department says that it expects to generate some Rs 22,000 crore internally, but over Rs 20,000 crore will have to come from public borrowings in the eighth and ninth five-year plans and the Government will have to shell out the balance. The department is also lobbying for permission to raise an extra Rs 2,000 crore in the seventh plan by floating bonds.

RICH RETURNS

BEAR operators have been battering the stock-market in recent months, but the news from the dividend front is decidedly bullish. *The Economic Times* reports that with profits up, private companies are paying out more dividends to investors and the average rate of dividends is on the upswing (*see chart*). Over half the 345 firms studied paid their shareholders 15 per cent or more last year. Companies like

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



Reliance Industries, Hind Dorr Oliver and Bajaj Auto went one better—handing out a 50 per cent rate of dividend. Also, fewer companies skipped dividends last year than the year before. For all that, more medium-sized outfits (in terms of equity capital) shelled out fatter dividends than the big boys of industry.

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A Partial Reform

THE spate of criticism that has met the Fourth Pay Commission's report shows how little the critics understand of what is involved in building a modern nation state. Judging by the letters columns of newspapers alone, the pay commission has been far too generous. Most doubts centre on the Central Government's capacity to shell out Rs 1,282 crore annually in additional emoluments, and that of the state governments to match the increase in Central salaries and emoluments, as they must eventually do. Some pessimistic estimates place the total "cost" of the pay commission recommendations at up to Rs 4,000 crore a year, that is, Rs 14,000 crore over what is left of the seventh plan. This will increase the financial resources gap left in the plan by 35 per cent.

None of the critics has made any distinction between the lower rungs of the civil service, composed broadly of Class III and Class IV employees, who account for over 97 per cent of those on the Central Government's pay-roll, and the higher Class I and Class II services that account for less than 3 per cent. Nor has anyone even suggested that while the lower grades may be over-paid for the work they actually do (mainly because of gross over-staffing), the higher level employees may be badly under-paid for the responsibilities they are asked to shoulder.

It is the failure to even consider this possibility that reveals the critics' lack of awareness of the innate compulsions of nation-building. Perhaps the most important of these is to build a techno-managerial elite—a "new middle class" that can help the country meet the twin challenges of industrialisation and modernisation. This group puts a premium on the acquisition and generation of technology, on the development of managerial systems capable of handling complex, large-scale production processes and the creation of marketing networks that cover not a village but the entire country, and eventually the whole world. Modernisation is essentially the change in relations between individuals and groups that results from the rise of an industrial society. It involves the replacement of customary with contractual relations, the development of a new legal framework to cope with these relations and a redefinition of the relationship of the individual with the state.

Every country that has successfully made the transition from a pre-industrial to an industrial society has fostered the growth of this techno-managerial elite, rewarding its members with both high incomes and high status. In the US or UK, it is not the self-made millionaires who enjoy the greatest respect and wield the most power but the often anonymous chairmen and presidents of vast corporate empires, who own few if any shares but have worked their way up the corporate ladder. The Soviet Union, similarly, reserves its best rewards for its top civil servants, its scientists and technologists and its managers of state enterprises.

> "The most that the pay commission will succeed in doing is to offset the inflation that has taken place since 1976. The country's techno-managerial classes will only get a brief reprieve."

In India, by contrast, not only have three decades of industrialisation failed to foster the growth of a techno-managerial elite, but this class has been under constant attack ever since the country gained its independence. In industry, government policy has consistently favoured owner-managed firms over professionally managed ones. It is the salaries and perquisites of the latter that the Government has sought to control, knowing fully well that owner-managers live off their companies. And despite its socialist protestations, by decreeing that public sector managers should not as a rule earn more than their counterparts in the civil service, the Government has ensured that in the only part of industry that is manned solely by professional managers, real incomes have dropped inexorably from year to year.

No single group has been discriminated against as heavily as the senior members of the civil service. Shortly after independence, the salary of a secretary to the Government was reduced (except for members of the Indian Civil Service) from Rs 4,000 to Rs 3,500 per month. In 1976, almost 30 years later, the secretary was still receiving only Rs 3,500 a month, although his cost of living had on a conservative estimate gone up more than fivefold.

It is against this backdrop of a remorseless decline in real incomes that the pay commission's recommendations must be judged. Even if senior civil servants' salaries were excessive in 1947, at some point during the ensuing years they must have ceased to be so. From that point onwards, the rise in importance of their functions should have been reflected in a rise in their real incomes. Measured against this yardstick, the pay commission's awards are not too generous but too niggardly. The secretary's salary of Rs 8,000 per month that it has recommended is 128 per cent more than what it was in 1976, but the index of wholesale prices (a better indication of rises in the cost of living for the middle classes than the consumer price index) has risen by almost the same amount. When taxes, provident fund contributions and house rent contributions are deducted, the net increase has been far less sharp. This is one reason why the ratio of the highest to lowest net income will fall from 10 to 1 today to 9.2 to 1 if the pay commission's recommendations are accepted.

Thus the most that the commission will succeed in doing is to offset the inflation that has taken place since 1976. It will do nothing to reverse the fall in real incomes that occurred in the previous 30 years of independence. Since the salaries paid by the Government to its doctors, engineers, public sector managers and other technical staff provide the base for determining the market value of these professional skills, the country's techno-managerial classes will only get a brief reprieve. The downward slide of their real incomes may be halted, but not for long.

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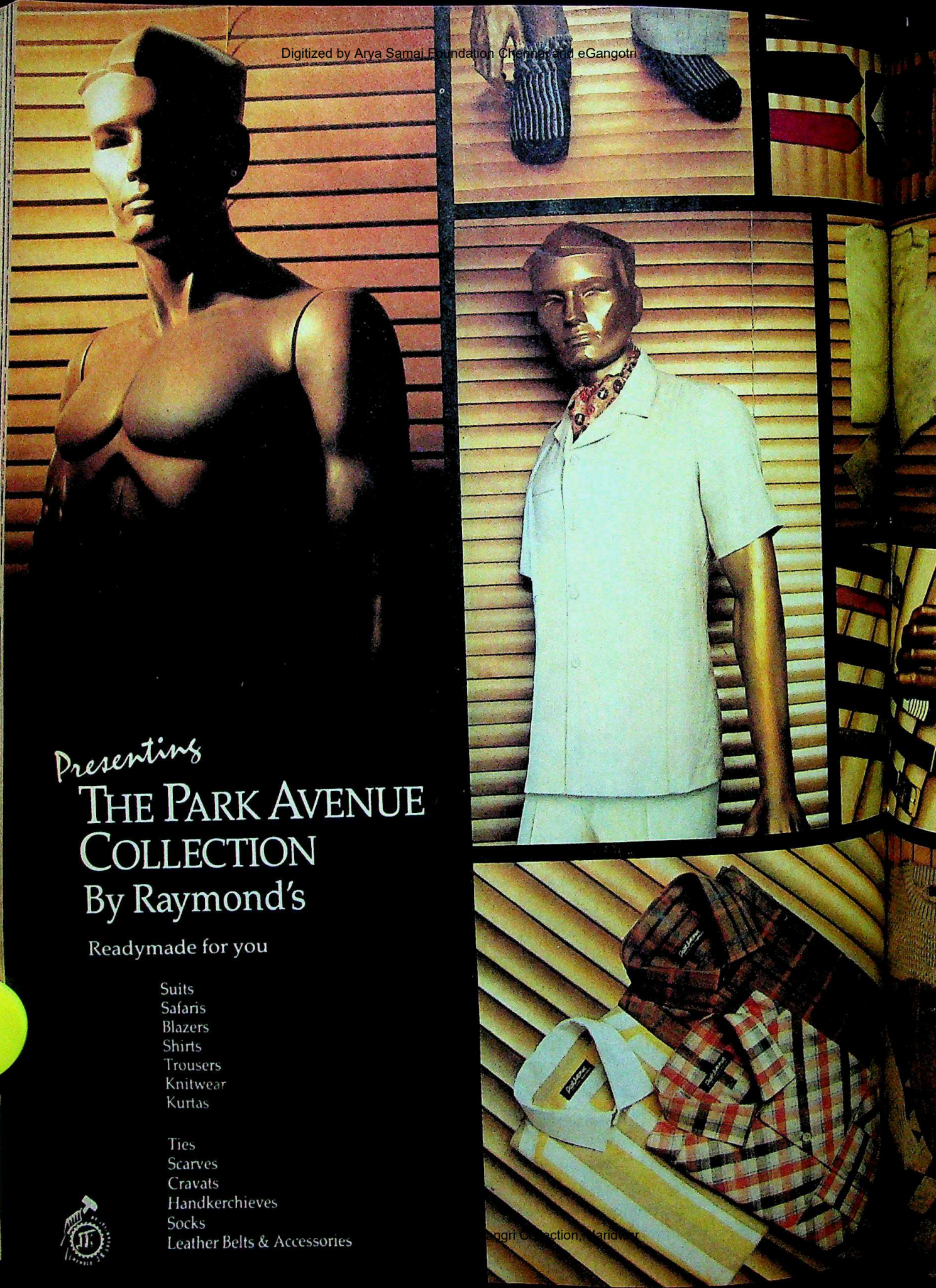

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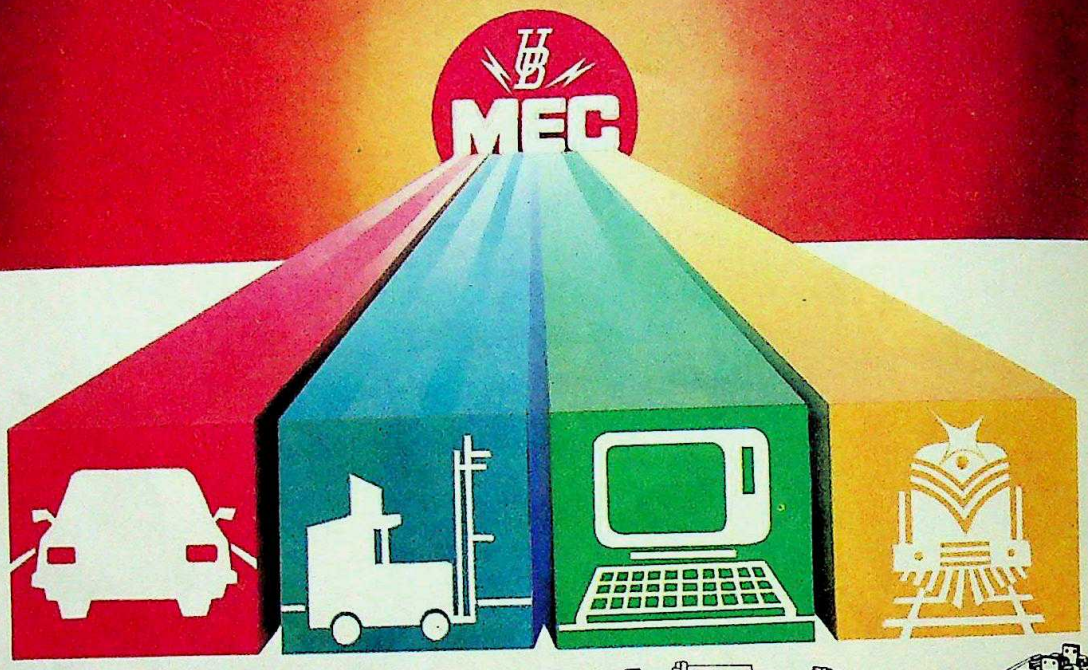
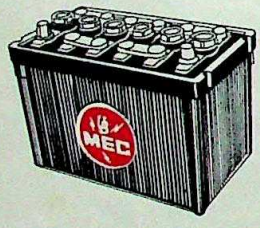
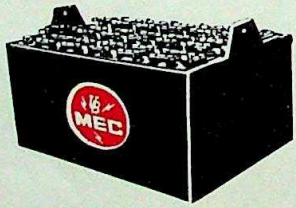
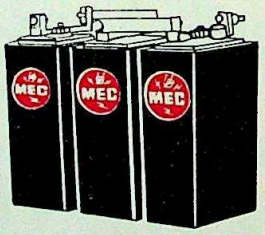
THE CHARGE OF THE POWER BRIGADE









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THE BIRLAS

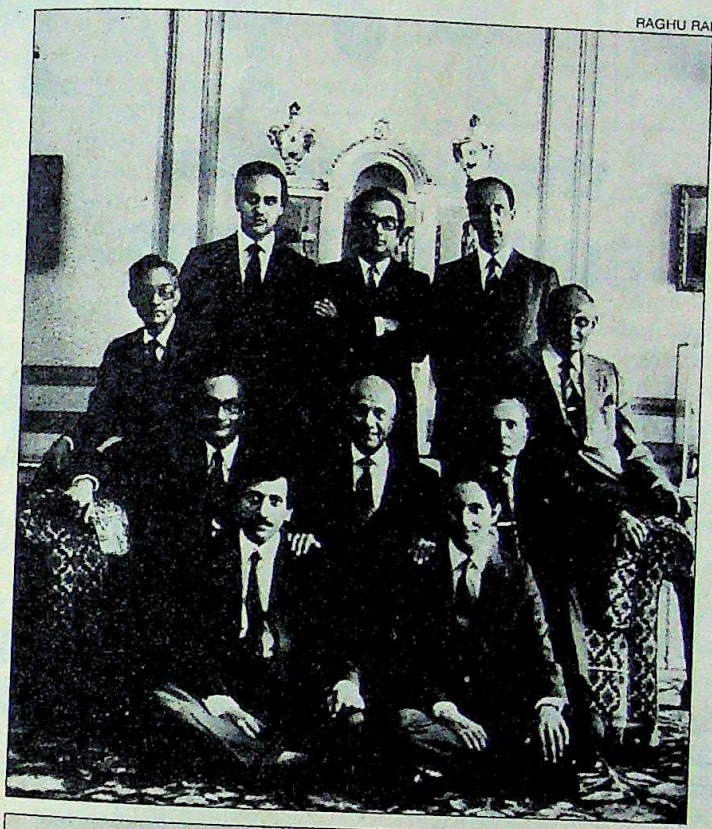
Slicing up the Cake

FOR a couple of weeks, Basant Kumar Birla had been telephoning the members of the clan, seeking a suitable date when they could meet. And on the appointed day they all trooped into the Alipur Road home in Calcutta of B.K.'s older brother Lakshmi Niwas Birla, wending their way past the circular staircase in the hall, into a large room inside. There, they quickly settled down to business: working out ways of undoing the complex network of financial connections that bind together one of the country's two largest business groups. At stake: assets worth a staggering Rs 4,000-crore, spread over business as diverse as textiles and tea, jute and sugar, cement and shipping, and engineering goods.

The 10 Birlas present talked things out for about an hour. There was no visible rancour, the youngsters deferred to their elders, those who spoke did so in calm, even tones. But the tensions were never far below the surface.

That first meeting was inconclusive, and the clan met again the next day for another hour. And the basic decisions were eventually taken: the members of a group that had held together for close to seven decades would not exactly part company, but companies in the sprawling group would be apportioned to individual members on the basis of who was already managing which company, and each member's business would be detached from the others through an inordered series of sales and purchases of shares. One of those present stressed that this was not a breaking up of the group: "It is not a partition, but a separation."

The *modus operandi* for working out the separation is still not finalised. However, it seems likely that B.K. Birla's suggestion on this will carry the day: that the various Birla investment companies swap their shareholdings in the operational companies, at agreed prices. The operational companies too have cross-holdings, and these will be bought and sold at the ruling market prices.


RAGHU RAI

Companies in the sprawling group will be apportioned to individual members on the basis of who is already managing which company.

Three years ago, shortly after group patriarch and figurehead G.D. Birla had died, his second son K.K. Birla (*see family tree*) had ruled out any such separation, arguing that the capital gains tax burden inevitable in such an operation would make matters difficult. Birla had then told INDIA TODAY: "It is not easy, even if someone wants to, and I don't think it is going to happen." But now it has happened, and the total tax burden is expected to be between Rs 25 crore to Rs 50 crore.

The one branch of the family that could have seen turmoil in this whole process is G.D. Birla's. Of the four sons of group founder Raja Baldeodas Birla, Jugal Kishore had no children. Rameshwar Das had two sons, but one of them (Gajanan) was virtually excluded from the group following his decision to remarry while his first wife was still around. Gajanan's son Ashok was given his share of the family business some time ago. Rameshwar Das's second son, Madho Prasad, has no children. And Brij Mohan Birla again had only one son, Ganga Prasad, who in turn has only one son, Chandrakant. In none of these branches are there multiple claimants to the companies in the sub-group. This exists only in the case of G.D. Birla's own three sons, L.N., K.K. and B.K. Birla.

Predictably enough, the sub-branch of G.D. Birla's family that gains the most from the decision to straighten out group holdings is B.K. Birla's (including son Aditya). Both had been G.D. Birla's favourites, and they already had managerial control of four of the six biggest companies in the group (Gwalior Rayon, Hindustan Aluminium, Century Spinning and Kesoram Industries). At the latest family parleys, they could conceivably have been ousted from at least some of these, but this would inevitably have led to great rancour, unsettled the companies involved, and gone against G.D. Birla's own wishes. Keeping all this in mind, matters were left as they were. And now, for a relatively small sum (in relation to the earning power of these companies), B.K. Birla and Aditya Birla will get full shareholding control over these companies. One estimate is that the B.K. Birla branch is getting over half the clan's total business.

There is little doubt that there is some heartburn on this question in the other branches of the family. But, as an observer commented, this has not come in the way of a non-acrimonious parcelling out of the family wealth.

Some of the unequal control of assets

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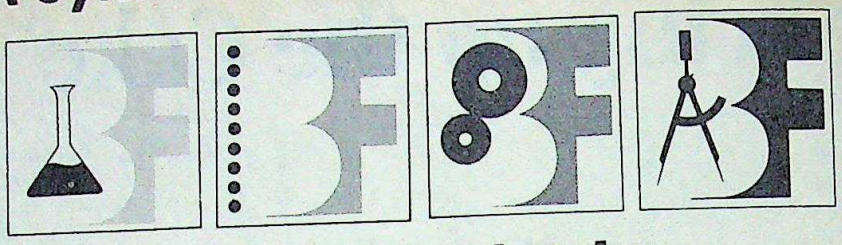

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in G.D. Birla's own family had been corrected around the time of his death in 1983. The L.N. Birla branch of G.D. Birla's family had got little by way of assets till then (partly because of the nationalisation of the insurance and coal mining business, and partly because of the failure of a company like Hind Cycles). But shortly before and soon after G.D. Birla died, L.N. Birla's son Sudarshan Kumar Birla was given charge of Mysore Cement, Saurashtra Chemicals and Jiyajeerao Cotton Mills, while Sudarshan's son Sidharth was given the Central India Machinery Manufacturing Company (CIMMCO).

The branch of G.D. Birla's family that may have got a raw deal is the one led by K.K. Birla, who has inherited almost none of the companies that G.D. Birla founded and ran. Instead, virtually all the companies with K.K. Birla (Zuari Agro-Chemicals, Texmaco, India Steamship, the sugar units) were founded, acquired or managed from the start by K.K. Birla himself. The absence of an inheritance may be partly because K.K. Birla has three daughters and no sons, partly because K.K. Birla had turned down offers from G.D. Birla to move into one of his companies, and partly because father and son did not always see eye to eye.

K.K. Birla has meanwhile decided to give his companies to his daughters (unprecedented in the Birla clan, and with perhaps only a couple of precedents in the whole Marwari community). One daughter, Shobhana Bhartia, in fact moved on to the board of the Hindustan Times last year, and in fact has interviewed prospective candidates for the editorship of the paper. Chandrakant Birla, as it happens, was keen to get control of a newspaper, but he did not at any stage ask his uncle K.K. for the Hindustan Times Ltd. However, a businessman close to Chandrakant is now one of the main shareholders of *The Daily*, sold recently by R.K. Karanjia.

K.K. Birla's daughters may, as a matter of fact, get more on their plates than might have been expected. For a little over a year ago, the childless M.P. Birla's companies were placed under the protective umbrella of a newly-formed M.P. Birla Foundation. Interestingly enough, the chairperson of the new trust was K.K. Birla's daughter, Nandini Nopany, while the other two daughters (Shobhana Bhartia and Jyoti Poddar) were also made trustees. This does not automatically mean that K.K. Birla's daughters will get control of M.P. Birla's companies. Nandini Nopany as chairperson will probably exercise greater say in the affairs of the various companies than any of the other trustees. All three daughters of K.K. Birla are said to be close to M.P. Birla, but Nandini is said to be the closest to him.

While this is the first time that Birla daughters are entering the family business, it is not the first time that women from Birla households have done so. M.P. Birla has not been well for some time, and it is his wife who has been looking after affairs. She already sits on the board of his flagship unit, Birla Jute.

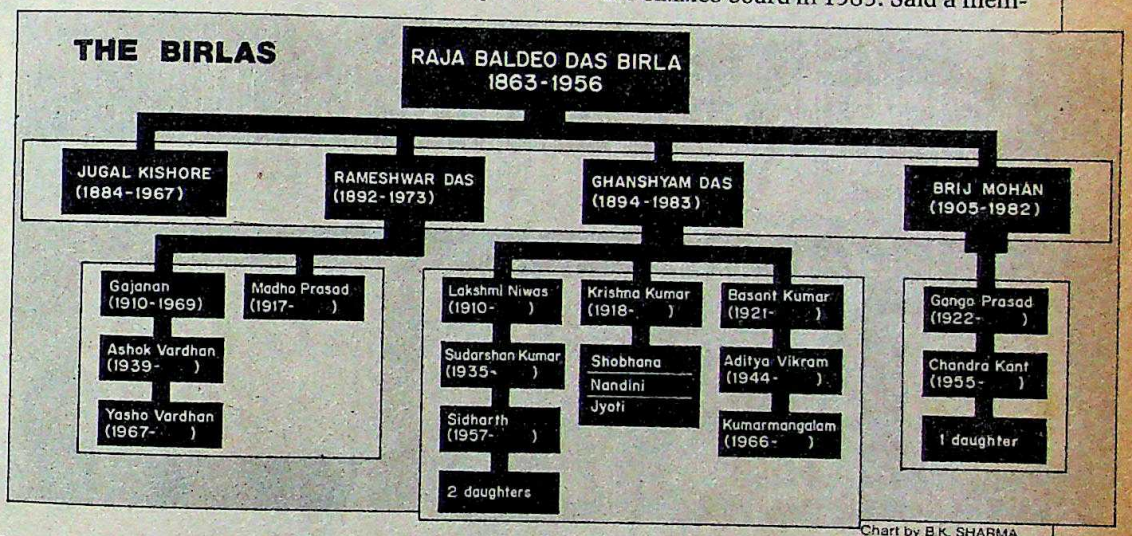

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

IRONICALLY enough, while M.P. Birla's companies will remain part of the Birla group (because these will be run by a Birla trust), this will not be the case with K.K. Birla's companies once his daughters take charge at some future date. Since the daughters are supposed to have been 'married off into other families', the companies that they run will no longer be considered Birla family companies, and they will all have to move out of the group's towering corporate headquarters in Calcutta.

But contrary to press reports, informed sources say that K.K. Birla will continue to look after the affairs of his companies for some time, and that he has not announced which companies will go to which daughter in the future. It is also explained that this move has not met with any resistance from other members of the clan, that this was not an item for discussion at the recent meeting of the family council, and that the suggestion that his companies should move out of Birla Building came from K.K. himself.

Meanwhile, some members of the Birla family also explained that the basic decisions on control of companies within the group were taken three years ago, that the latest meetings were only meant to work out the modalities of formalising the existing parcelling out of work by adjusting shareholding patterns, and that even these decisions will be implemented only over the next three years. Thus, it was pointed out that Shobhana Bhartia has already moved on to the board of Hindustan Times, that the M.P. Birla Foundation was set up a year ago, and that Sidharth Birla moved on to the CIMMCO board in 1985. Said a member of the Birla family: "The changes began three years ago, and they will continue for another three years.

Whatever the case, there is little doubt that one of the two largest business houses in the country is now in the midst of a major transition. With such great wealth at hand, the stakes are higher than they have ever been in a succession battle. And if there has been less rancour than might have been expected, and no great stress on an equal sharing of the wealth, it is most probably because there is enough and more for everyone, and a dwindling number of inheritors down the line. As one observer pointed out: "God has given the Birlas everything except sons." If one excludes Ashok as being outside the main family, all the branches of the Birla family are now running out of male heirs, excepting Aditya Birla, who has a 20-year-old son Kumarmangalam. And it is no surprise that it is Aditya's branch of the family that has got the lion's share of the Birla cake. —T.N. NINAN

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LALIT MOHAN THAPAR

Arresting Actions

THE waves that the case has created in the judiciary and the business world are an indication of the stature of the man involved. The arrest of Lalit Mohan Thapar, 58, the high-profile bachelor and well-connected chairman of the Thapar group of industries by the Enforcement Directorate, on charges of foreign exchange violations, shook not only Indian industry but also the Finance Ministry. The event quickly snowballed into a major crisis for Finance Minister V.P. Singh as well as the judiciary. While Singh huddled with Revenue Secretary Vinod Pandey and Bhure Lal, the now dreaded head of the Enforcement Directorate, to get a fix on the case, judicial history was being made a few kilometres away, at the residence of Justice E.S.Venkataramiah.

In an unprecedented move, the Supreme Court judge decided to hear the bail plea on Thapar's behalf at 10 p.m. on September 5 and ordered Thapar and his co-director Shyam Sunder Lal to be released on a Rs 50,000 bond each. But the two were forced to spend that night in Delhi's Tihar Central Jail because the authorities said no prisoners could be released after 6 p.m. Earlier in the day, a lower court had rejected the bail application. Using this precedent to make a point, an advocate filed a motion seeking similar priority treatment for all bail applications pending in the court. Rattled by this unexpected move, a division bench of the Supreme Court was forced to direct Thapar to go back to the lower court for a final bail application. At the session court his bail was again refused and Thapar has appealed to the high court where the case is pending. Although Thapar's passport is impounded and relevant company documents are in their possession, the Government continues to oppose his bail.

Thapar's journey to Tihar was the outcome of a series of dramatic moves in which more than 200 officials of the directorate raided about 20 premises of his companies, located in New Delhi, Phagwara, Bombay and Calcutta. Acting on a year-old tip-off that the Thapars had failed to repatriate foreign exchange earned by their companies abroad, Revenue Department investigators began a detailed examination of all the export commitments of the company. The department now claims that more than Rs 6 crore earned by the companies abroad had not been repatriated to India for over three years. Sixteen of 40 Thapar-run companies are involved in the export business.

Thapar is a Doon School-educated industrialist reportedly having close ties with influential people in the ruling party. He is chairman of the Doon School Board of Governors and shared the dais with Rajiv Gandhi at functions during the school's internationally publicised Golden Jubilee last November. Enforcement sources say they struck at his companies only after collecting "irrefutable evidence". According to officials, none of the Thapar companies operating abroad has been able to remit the entire amount of foreign exchange earned by it. Examples:

► In 1978 Karam Chand Thapar & Bros (KCT) entered into a consultancy contract with a joint venture company Ailee Development Corporation (ADC) for putting up a hotel in the Seychelles. KCT was to receive Rs 67.50 lakh as a consultancy fee, part of which was to be used for equity in the ADC. The Government probe revealed that Thapar invested only Rs 6.30 lakh in ADC's equity and failed to repatriate the rest of the money his company had taken as the consultancy fee.

► The Thapars floated a subsidiary in the Seychelles by the name of Ailee

Thapar's arrest has lent weight to the widespread belief that the finance minister is on the warpath again.

Thapar being brought to Patiala House by enforcement officials: curious timing

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Recreation Ltd. as part of the hotel project without Reserve Bank permission. Enforcement officials allege that part of the unrepatriated foreign exchange was used for floating this fully-owned subsidiary.

▸ BCT exported building equipment worth over Rs 1.43 crore to the Seychelles during 1982-1984 but money was never received in India; Ballarpur Industries Limited (BIL) also exported raw material worth Rs 46 lakh to Phoenix Pulp and Paper Company of Thailand in 1984 but not a penny has been received in India. BIL running a joint venture in Malaysia and had contracted to receive an amount of Rs 1 crore as commission till 1984 but it has so far sent only Rs 1.25 lakh.

▸ BIL had rendered technical services to another Malaysian firm, Ballarpur Tam Oil Ltd. and was expected to receive an amount of Rs 35 lakh between 1982-85. But none of these earnings in foreign exchange were repatriated to India.

Enforcement officers maintain that these initial charges are just the tip of the commercial iceberg and that ongoing investigations will yield even more investments in foreign companies.

But the Thapars and the industry insist that the Government has no case. All the trade associations condemned the Government for harassing "one of the country's top industrialists with a proven track record of fostering industrial growth along healthy lines". While Thapar was not available for comment, a company spokesman issued a statement claiming that "there is nothing irregular we have done and this talk of irregularities is just to tarnish our image. We are a house with a rich reputation of clean dealings in business." While the case clearly appears to involve technical violations of foreign exchange repatriation regulations, the authorities have yet to make a clear case showing that the Thapar group fraudulently squirreled away money abroad through practices like the under-invoicing of goods. Most of the Government's case so far is based on the very declarations and commitments made by the Thapar group itself to the Government.

While it is now for the courts to pass judgement on the integrity of the Thapar group, the incident has lent weight to the widespread belief that the finance minister is on the warpath again. And there is good reason to believe this. The ministry is under fresh pressure to raise additional resources for meeting the enhanced wage bill on account of the pay commission's recommendations. As the pressure increases, revenue intelligence agencies will redouble their quest for the geese that lay the golden eggs. But the exercise would be counter-productive if, in this over-zealous mood, they wind up killing them. But other sources maintain that the Thapar arrest is one more indication of groupism and internecine warring between high officials and politicians close to the prime minister. It is curious, they point out, that Thapar was arrested at a time when both the prime minister and his tough lieutenant, Arun Nehru—who is known to be a political foe of the finance minister—were both abroad.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

THAPAR GROUP

Rapid Growth

A conglomerate of 40 companies, the Thapar Group is one of the nation's top 10 industrial houses in terms of sales and assets. Headed by Lalit Mohan Thapar, the group has diversified interests ranging from aviation to building equipment. With an investment of over Rs 13 crore abroad, the group ranks second after the Birlas in terms of foreign financial involvement.

Equally important is the fact that the house of Thapar serves as the Indian representative for several leading multinational corporations manufacturing defence and aviation equipment. Because of its diverse nature, the Thapar group has achieved a rapid growth rate during the last two decades. While its turnover grew from Rs 155 crore in 1970 to Rs 838 crore in 1984, the value of its assets rose from Rs 136 crore to Rs 699 crore during the same period of time. And its profits shot up considerably, from Rs 11 crore to over Rs 40 crore. The company paid a dividend of 16 per cent in 1984 as against 11 per cent two years before.

Contributing to this phenomenal growth are Thapar companies operating in areas such as paper manufacturing, vanaspati, engineering goods, textiles, electricals, electronics, sugar distilleries, mining, real estate, investment, industrial consultancy as well as international trade.

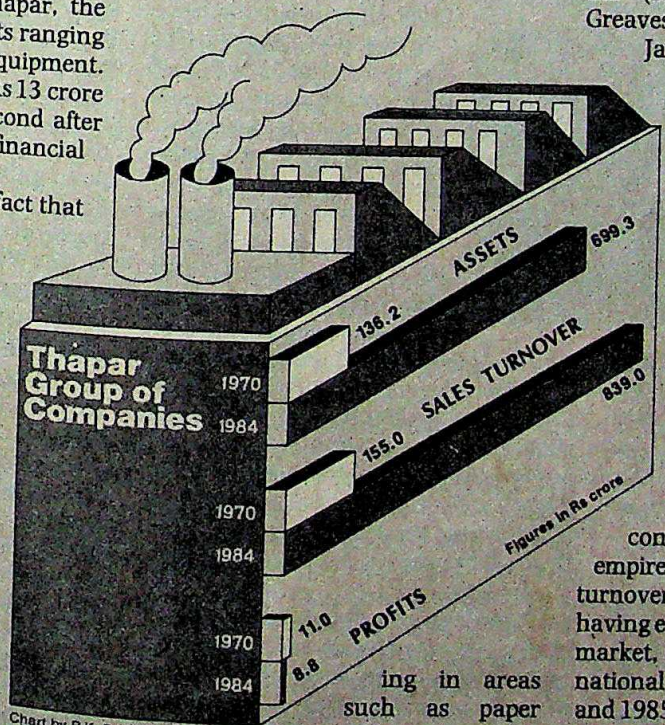

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

The group has more than 40 holding and subsidiary companies. But the major flagships are Ballarpur Industries Ltd (BIL), Crompton Greaves Ltd, Greaves Cotton and Company and Jagatjit Cotton Textiles Mills (JCTM). Of these four the money spinner seems to be BIL. It has a turnover of over Rs 230 crore and accounts for 12 per cent of the country's paper production. Other profit earning ventures are said to be Crompton Greaves and Greaves Cotton with a combined turnover of over Rs 300 crore. Between the two, Greaves Cotton wields the financial clout due to its aviation business which has grown by over 300 per cent over the last six years. Also contributing to the growth of the empire is its textile unit, JCTM, with a turnover of over Rs 150 crore. After having established itself in the domestic market, the Thapar group went international in the late '70s. Between 1978 and 1985, the group floated over half a dozen joint ventures in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Seychelles, Tanzania and Thailand and began offering technical services in the field of hotel construction and engineering.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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STAMP PAPERS

Short Supply

PATIENCE is fast evaporating into the September heat and a mini-stampede breaks out in the queue each time the vendor announces intermittently: "Rs 2 stamp paper out of stock", "Rs 3 stamp paper out of stock." Tempers are frayed as people who have waited for hours are forced to buy Rs 10 non-judicial stamp paper instead of Rs 2 denomination paper. "I've never seen a shortage like this," says a besieged Prem Kumari who has been selling stamp paper for the past eight years at Delhi's Patiala House courts.

Non-judicial stamp papers used for routine legal documents (which need not be filed in court unlike judicial stamp papers) have been in short supply for several months, and more so in the past few weeks. Says Delhi High Court lawyer Jagdev Singh: "I haven't seen a Rs 2 stamp paper at the vendors for the past three months."

The shortage is particularly acute in papers of lower denomination due to their higher demand. A minimum of 10,000 Rs 2 stamp papers are sold in Delhi every day, the number shooting up to 15,000 during certain periods, like before school admissions when the demand for birth certificates peaks.

Tracking down the cause for the shortage is literally a paper chase. The public sees retail vendors as the villains of the piece. The vendors accuse the treasury for not producing enough to cope with the demand. The treasury officials say they are helpless in the face of inadequate supply from the India Security Press Nasik. Lobbying at Nasik and in the Department of Economic Affairs in Delhi to increase supply has been futile due to a shortage of watermark paper stemming from a lock-out at the Titagarh Paper Mills. Currently the Delhi treasury receives only 30 to 40 per cent of their indent. The amount finally allotted to them depends on the watermark paper stock at Nasik.

Rather inevitably, other additional factors contribute to heighten the scarcity. The stock of papers for Delhi are loaded on the Punjab Mail at Nasik but most times there is no room for them there. Meanwhile, when the stock arrives at Delhi station, it goes uncollected as the railway receipt despatched from Nasik has not reached Delhi in time.

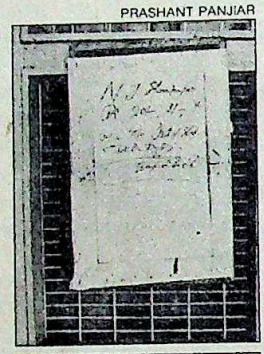
Also, there is the element of corruption. In the notary around the courts where it is possible to purchase anything for a price from the ubiquitous touts, corruption is inevitable. If affixation of adhesive stamps can be expedited by payment of Rs 50 to Rs 100 as 'express money', the sale of "out of stock" stamp papers at a premium is more than likely.

"I have told the collector to raid these vendors. There is some hanky-panky. Many lawyers have told me that these vendors give the paper in black to the typists," says Hari Chand, president of the Delhi Bar Association. "These typists have created chaos; they are in league with the vendors and buy in black," says advocate B.S. Tokas. Typists at the courts buy stamp papers in bulk from the vendors as people approach them rather than advocates for routine documents.

But even without this black-marketing, thousands of rupees are wasted as people are forced to buy papers of higher denominations as the lower ones are out of stock. With demand on the increase and no visible effort to find an alternate supply for watermark paper, this harassment of millions at the very doorstep of justice is only likely to get worse.

—TANIA MIDHA

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Out of stock notice at Patiala House courts; (bottom) people crowding to buy stamp paper

MALHOTRAS

House Divided

TROUBLE in the competitor's company is always welcome news. But when the competitors happen to be the Malhotras, first family of Indian razor blade manufacturers, it becomes cause for celebration. Last fortnight, news of a Malhotra split thrilled managers in Wiltech and Sharpedge, which have been struggling to hold their own in a market where over 80 per cent of the customers prefer Malhotra brands.

"The old Malhotra days are gone," said M.A. Bakre, chairman of Asian Cables, whose subsidiary Wiltech has been unable to break the Malhotra charm despite liberal infusions of foreign technology and the Wilkinson Sword name.

True to form, the Malhotra clan was expectedly cagey about the reported division of assets, manufacturing plants and, most important, the market leader brands in their inventory. Rajender K. Malhotra, the brother who is widely credited with having brought it about, is unwilling to comment.

Surinder described it as a mere administrative reorganisation. He explained that the management of each of their plants at Calcutta, Bombay and Hyderabad was always handled independently by him and his three brothers, adding that the only change which has now taken place is the allocation of different brands among the factories to prevent overlap. "Talk of a family split is just so much nonsense," he said.

His protestations notwithstanding, it was clear that there was more afoot than a mere managerial exercise. Information gleaned from employees and competitors suggested that Rajender, the youngest of the three brothers currently at the helm, has taken over Vidyut Metallics, the factory near Bombay, together with the Supermax brand of blades and shavers. Ved, the eldest, now controls the Indo-Swing plant at Hyderabad, though he and Surinder appear not to have parted ways. Between them, they have

Malhotra House: split within

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sale rights to two new but growing brands, Laser and Gallant. And the family's original plant at Calcutta, Harbans Lal Malhotra and Sons, remains common family property along with Toppas, the blade which rings in over Rs 18 crore worth of sales.

Already, salesmen representing the different factions have begun to compete to establish the fledgeling brands. "But why should people look askance at this?" queries Surinder Malhotra, "the tussle between our salesmen is very healthy inhouse competition." Their competitors see it differently, chortling delightedly at the spectacle of the Malhotras taking each other on instead of ploughing unmindfully through the opposition.

For all the glee, the Malhotra family split is unlikely to cost the group its cutting edge in the market-place. The leading blademaker's brands account for 73 per cent of the roughly Rs 62 crore annual market for blades and twin-track shaving systems, and the clan controls another 8 per cent of the market through Centron, a sailing manufacturer which it took over in a technological and marketing collaboration in 1984.

Efforts by competitors to unseat the family from its number one position have been notoriously unsuccessful. Hindustan Lever's marketing expertise could not raise the market share of Sharpedge's dynamic range over 8 per cent, and Wilkinson Sword's Indian collaborator, Ultratech, now has a market share of 8.5 per cent but is in the red.

Their competitors like to blame their bad luck on the Malhotras near-legendary dirty tricks department, but the fact is their brands cost 40 per cent less than competing brands in each range present in the market.

But the recent split in the ranks is clearly bad news for the family. Coming just when the Podar-Gillette combine, Indian Shaving Products, has launched its double-edged blades, the division of assets and brands has caught the clan at its most vulnerable stage. Last fortnight, reports suggested that efforts were still afoot to reunite the brothers, and octogenarian patriarch Harbans Lal Malhotra, who had retired, is likely to come forward to mediate.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

SWRAJ PAUL

Share Scheme

IF THE Government believed that after three-and-a-half years of futile battling, a weary and embittered Swraj Paul would have little energy left to look for loopholes to exploit in his "compromise settlement" with Escorts and DCM, it underestimated the energy of this rotund non-resident. Always a shrewd operator, this time Paul has got the taxmen furiously on his trail while he makes his exit with a neat two-tier sale deal to avoid nearly Rs 2 crore in capital gains tax on his sale transaction.

Having managed to get a selling price of Rs 96 for each Escorts share and Rs 100 for each DCM share, against his average purchase prices of Rs 62 and Rs 60, respectively, to compensate for the interest lost, Paul was faced with a situation where he would have had to pay 40 per cent capital gains tax on the meaty Rs 7.1 crore margin—the difference between his final sale proceeds of Rs 19.7 crore and his investment of Rs 12.6 crore. Obviously in no mood to dish out another Rs 3 crore at the exit gate, Paul worked out a novel sale plan.

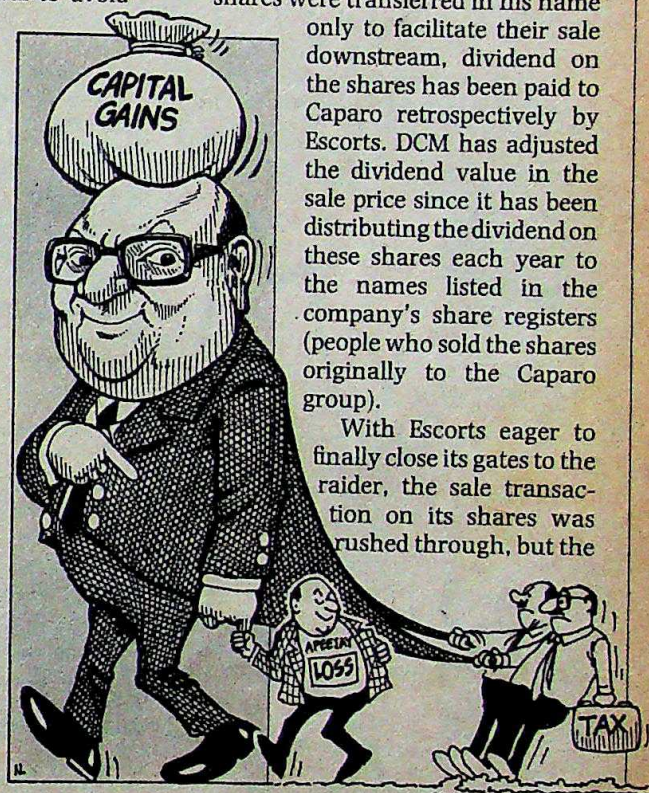
According to the scheme, the Caparo group would sell the shares at Rs 75 to companies of the Apeejay group belonging to Paul's brothers in India which would then sell the lot to Escorts and DCM at Rs 96 and Rs 100. In this way, the capital gains applicable to Paul would be only Rs 15—the difference between his purchase price and the sale price to the Apeejay group—and the capital gains tax on the balance would be applicable to five Apeejay companies—Surrendra Overseas and Steelcrete Private Ltd in the case of Escorts shares, and Apeejay Development Private Ltd, Northern Enterprises Ltd and New Bombay Park Private Ltd in the case of the DCM shares.

Here came the catch. These buffer Caparo companies are losing ones; and capital gains for Indian companies can be set off against losses. So while the Caparo group would have been taxed on the entire price difference in a direct sale, a large chunk of the profit margin could be avoided via the Apeejay route.

Paul is, of course, fighting against paying tax even on Caparo's Rs 15 margin. He says that since it was a "negotiated settlement" the normal rules would not apply and this tax should be offset against his losses on account of interest and the 35 per cent devaluation of the rupee since he purchased the shares. In Delhi last fortnight for a short holiday, Paul maintained indignantly: "I have not owned the shares for even a day. So where is the case for capital gains?" But the argument does not stick, for though the shares were transferred in his name only to facilitate their sale downstream, dividend on the shares has been paid to Caparo retrospectively by Escorts. DCM has adjusted the dividend value in the sale price since it has been distributing the dividend on these shares each year to the names listed in the company's share registers (people who sold the shares originally to the Caparo group).

With Escorts eager to finally close its gates to the raider, the sale transaction on its shares was rushed through, but the subsequent application for permission for an identical deal with DCM has been held up in the Finance Ministry as it assesses the precise ramifications of the unusual method chosen. The bureaucrats are divided between those in favour of the split sale (as this would involve a smaller remittance of foreign exchange: only Rs 75 per share against Rs 96) and those putting their foot down against the massive tax loss to the exchequer if the deal goes through in this fashion. But the general mood of the Government seemed to be summed up in the words of a North Block official, who screwed up his nose at the mention of yet another Caparo twist and said: "I don't know if he's tired or not, but we are. Give or take a couple of crores, let's just get over this mess."

—TANIA MIDHA



Cartoon by AJIT NINAN

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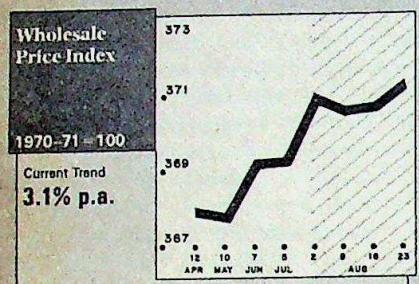
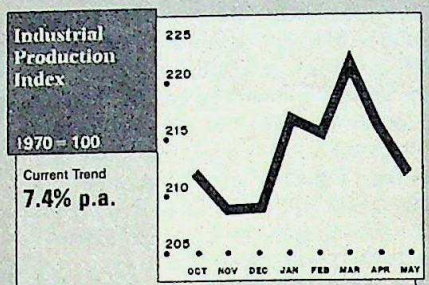
THE economy is not doing very well: industrial production growth has slowed down, so has activity in the manufacturing sub-sector, and the number of new letters of intent and industrial licences has also dropped considerably. Power generation too is growing slower than before. The resulting gloom on the stock-market may be understandable.

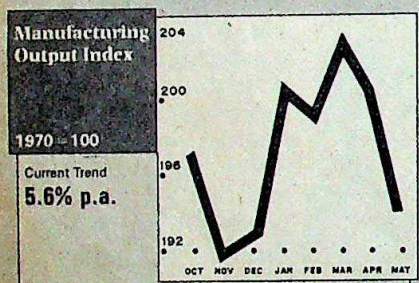
All data are seasonally adjusted. The current trends are computed on the basis of the last six months data to which a regression is fitted.



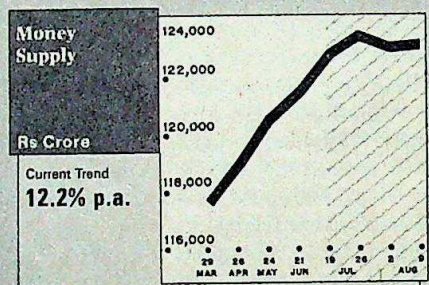
After dipping in early August, wholesale prices have resumed their upward march. Inflation remains under control, at just over 3 per cent.



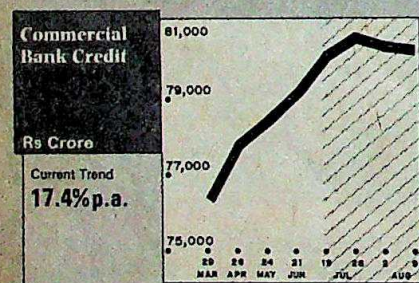
Industrial production has dipped for three of the last four months for which data are available. The trend rate is still fairly comfortable.



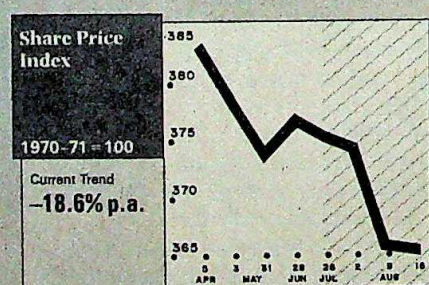
The manufacturing sector has seen slackening activity in three of the latest four months. The trend rate is barely respectable at 5.62 per cent



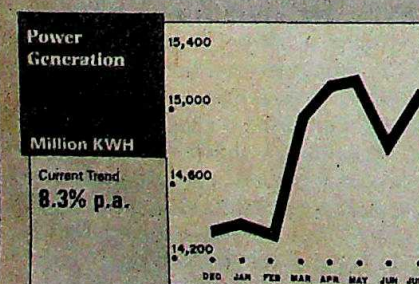
Money supply contracted marginally in the latest fortnight, but the trend rate of growth remains steady at slightly over 12 per cent.



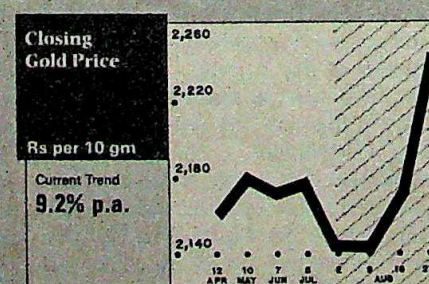
After expanding fairly rapidly from March to July, there is a slight dip in commercial bank credit. Demand for funds continue.



Share prices nosedived in the latest fortnight, and the negative rate of growth in stock values seems to spell gloom for investors.



Power generation has been fluctuating. Result: the trend rate of growth has dropped from 11.2 per cent to 8.3 per cent.



After sliding down the price curve, gold has regained some of its lustre, climbing steadily through most of August.

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

Growth of Items in May, 1986

	% Growth
Synthetic Rubber	124.88
Footwear	37.16
Rubber Footwear	32.11
Metallurgical Machinery	23.27
Earth-Moving Machinery	17.78
Coffee Curing Works	17.43
Watches & Clocks	16.18
Insecticides & Pesticides	14.93
Cosmetics	13.18
Razor Blades	12.41
Mining Machinery	11.69
Tea Machinery	10.97
Cement Machinery	10.52
Fertilisers	9.57
Dairy Products	8.93
Air Gas Compressers	8.05
Paints & Varnishes	7.92
Synthetic Resins & Plastics	7.69
Paper	6.75
Sugar Machinery	6.13
Tyres & Tubes	6.02
Hurricane Lanterns	5.70
Artificial Leather & Oil Cloth	4.89
Soaps & Glycerine	4.61
Mining & Quarrying	4.16
Organic Chemicals	3.96
Hydrogenated Oil (Vanaspati)	3.58
Dairy Machinery	3.17
Inorganic Chemicals	3.16
Telecommunications	2.78
Electrical Machinery	2.71
Explosives	2.52
Dye-Stuffs	2.2
Internal Combustion Engines	2.11
Salt	1.97
Met Prod Excl Machinery TPT Equipment	1.95
Electrical Fans	1.79
Motorcycles & Bicycles	1.55
Power-Driven Pumps	1.3
Linolium & Similar Products	1.17
Dry Cells	1.15
Railway Locomotives	.8
Paper Board & Straw Board	.69
Electric Light & Power	.39
Non-Ferrous Basic Metal Industries	.1
Airconditioners & Refrigerators	–.69
Cotton & Blended Mixed Fabrics	–1.05

Of the 86 series considered, 45 of them with a total weight of 39.278 had a positive growth and 41 of them with a total weight of 48.6998 had a negative growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1986	1985
Crude Petroleum Thousand Tonnes, August	2513	2336
Petroleum Refinery Products Thousand Tonnes, August	3792	3651
Call Money Rate Per cent, August	10.0	10.0
Letters of Intent Issued Numbers, August	70	107
Industrial Licences Issued Numbers, August	47	87

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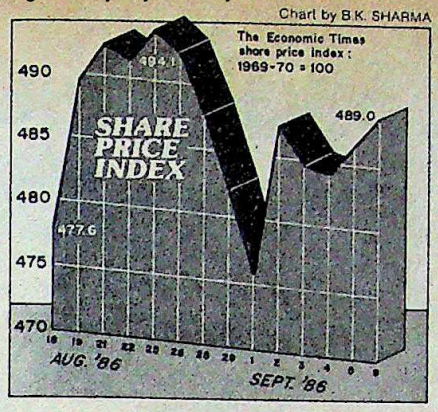
THE MARKETS

Late Rally

THE good news finally began to trickle into the trading ring last fortnight, first in the form of a brief buying spree by the cash-rich Unit Trust of India (UTI) and then as increased dividend payments by companies like Premier Automobiles and Bajaj Auto. Maharashtra Scooters, linked to Bajaj Auto, also announced a handsome bonus issue. Moreover, Reliance Industries reduced the proposed premium on its impending equity issue.

The run of good corporate news and the prospect of further buying by UTI made the battle more even between the till now rampaging bears and the so far frightened bulls. Though several shares lost ground in the fortnight, there was a late rally and *The Economic Times* share price index recovered from a low point of 475.8 to 486.7. Among the scrips that gained in kerb trading late in the fortnight were Tata Steel, Premier, Reliance, Associated Cement, Orkay, Gujarat Fertilisers and Tata Tea. There is now reason to hope that the bulls may get a piece of the action once again.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



The counterplay to the optimistic developments was provided by the market authorities themselves, who took fresh action in the case of Reliance, Tata Steel, Associated Cement and Premier so as to force brokers to reduce their outstanding commitments—a decision that at the moment helps the bears.

Due to this and other developments (like the arrest of Ballarpur Industries Chairman L.M. Thapar), the market's mood remains uncertain. The pattern of trading in the coming weeks could easily swing either way, especially since the recovery has just begun and is yet to gain strength. Most of the recovery last fortnight was achieved on a single day—September 2—when UTI entered the market. But UTI's equally quick withdrawal (perhaps momentary) left the share price index hovering uncertainly.

Nevertheless, UTI has enormous amounts of money to play around with (it has collected no less than Rs 140 crore on its India Fund share issue, and could rake in still more through its mutual fund unit scheme, due to be launched in the near future). These sums must inevitably be deployed on the market, and could provide just the kind of boost that it now needs to recover from the bear hammering of recent weeks.

For the moment, however, the bears have not yet given up the battle. One indication of this was the lack of immediate buoyancy following the sharp hike in Bajaj Auto dividend (from Rs 20 to Rs 50 per share) and the reduction in the premium on the Reliance share issue. Both scrips gained ground only after some time gap. But in the final analysis, the market seems to have got safely past the stage when it could be subjected to effortless hammering by the bears.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1986 HIGH	1986 LOW	1986 CLOSE 8.9.86	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	45.00	25.00	25.50	1.50 –
Asian Paints	280.00	130.00	200.00	2.50 –
Associated Cement	389.00	186.00	204.00	8.00 –
Atlas Copco	97.00	64.00	88.00	4.00 +
Avery India	146.00	100.00	131.00	4.00 –
Bajaj Auto	3975.00	1950.00	3825.00	500.00 +
Baroda Rayon	490.00	260.00	271.25	1.25 +
Bata India	91.25	54.00	91.00	14.00 +
Bayer	680.00	445.00	580.00	nil
Bharat Forge	86.00	48.00	62.00	14.00 –
Blue Star	110.00	75.00	82.50	nil
Bombay Dyeing	123.00	77.00	93.00	2.00 +
Britannia Ind.	150.25	85.00	138.00	3.00 –
Brooke Bond	96.75	56.00	75.00	2.50 +
Ceat Tyres	520.00	240.00	515.00	40.00 +
Century Spinning	1690.00	710.00	745.00	10.00 +
Chloride India	132.00	86.00	120.50	2.50 –
Colgate	350.00	200.00	297.50	2.50 –
DCM	58.50	26.25	30.50	6.50 –
Dunlop	74.50	49.75	64.00	0.25 –
Escon	127.00	80.00	102.50	2.50 +
Escorts	117.00	69.00	92.50	0.50 +
Finolex Cables	97.00	36.00	87.00	2.50 +
Food Specialities	375.00	215.00	334.50	14.50 –
Garware Nylon	61.50	35.00	37.00	1.50 –
Grasim India	88.00	59.00	80.00	4.00 +
G.E. Shipping	38.00	13.00	15.00	nil
Gujarat St. Fertilisers	182.00	92.50	153.00	2.00 +
Hind. Cocoa	170.00	97.50	145.00	12.50 –
Hindustan Lever	184.00	124.00	168.50	4.50 –
Hindustan Motors	128.50	37.75	41.75	0.95 –
Hind. Dorr	660.00	310.00	330.00	20.00 –
ITC	84.50	61.50	65.75	0.50 +
Indian Hotels	157.00	90.00	100.00	nil
Indian Organic	97.00	63.00	73.00	1.00 –
Indian Rayon	151.00	100.00	122.50	0.50 +
Indrol	455.00	200.00	390.00	5.00 –
Ingersoll-Rand	505.00	250.00	270.00	7.50 –
ITC	76.50	53.00	66.00	0.75 +
J.K. Synthetics	132.00	90.00	108.50	3.50 –
Kinetic Engineering	385.00	220.00	305.00	10.00 –
KSB Pumps	495.00	205.00	225.00	10.00 –
Lakme	195.00	120.00	140.00	7.50 –
Larson & Toubro	204.00	111.00	120.00	4.50 –
Lipton	69.00	46.50	58.00	3.00 +
Lohia Machines	70.00	21.00	22.50	0.50 –
Madura Coats	92.00	51.00	55.00	nil
Mahindra & Mahindra	86.00	46.00	48.00	2.00 –
Motor Industries	1000.00	605.00	845.00	12.50 –
National Organic	840.00	530.00	765.00	22.50 +
Nirlon	77.00	29.00	35.00	1.00 +
Orkay Silk Mills	192.00	111.00	153.00	4.00 +
Peico Electronics	104.50	48.00	59.50	1.50 +
Polychem	235.00	105.00	216.25	3.75 +
Ponds	390.00	200.00	330.00	17.50 –
Premier Auto	975.00	555.00	885.00	2.50 –
Ranbaxy	160.00	105.00	130.00	2.50 –
Raymond	97.00	72.00	78.00	nil
Reckitt & Colman	152.00	81.25	131.50	2.50 –
Reliance Industries	392.00	226.00	268.00	17.00 +
Shriram Fibres	88.00	40.00	45.50	0.50 +
Sandoz	135.00	62.00	104.00	nil
SPIC	184.00	51.00	60.50	1.00 +
Tata Steel	1610.00	1090.00	1242.50	12.50 –
Telco	910.00	575.00	655.00	45.00 –
Vulcan Laval	162.50	52.50	52.50	nil

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	7.7833	7.7106
Austria	Schilling	100	88.3058	87.5687
Bahrain	Dinar	1	33.3780	33.3089
Bangladesh	Taka	100	42.3186	42.1908
Canada	Dollar	1	9.0930	9.0209
Denmark	Kroner	1	1.6426	1.6288
Egypt	Pound	1	15.1199	15.0983
France	Franc	1	1.9029	1.8993
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	1.6188	1.6066
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	1.0999	1.0800
Iran	Rial	100	16.2118	16.1909
Italy	Lira	100	0.8630	0.8598
Japan	Yen	100	8.1443	8.0809
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7440	0.7339
Kuwait	Dinar	1	42.3786	42.3110
Malaysia	Dollar	1	4.8648	4.8184
Mauritius	Rupee	1	0.9330	0.9229
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.5832	0.5770
Netherlands	Guilder	1	5.5059	5.4646
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7299	0.7110
Singapore	Dollar	1	5.8588	5.8091
Spain	Peseta	1	0.0983	0.0900
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4199	0.4086
Sweden	Kroner	1	1.8384	1.8226
Switzerland	Franc	1	7.6825	7.6217
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.6883	0.6799
Thailand	Baht	100	47.9900	47.4782
UK	Pound	1	18.9681	18.8448
USA	Dollar	1	12.6425	12.5550
UAE	Dirham	1	3.3780	3.3660
USSR	Rouble	1	17.3700	17.3118
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	6.2383	6.1768

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 5.9.86.

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VAIDYA ASSASSINATION

Big Breakthrough

THE BEST of investigating agencies can do with a lucky break and last fortnight it was the turn of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to be so favoured. Hot on the trail of the killers of General A.S. Vaidya, the CBI was close to zeroing in on the owners of the red Ind-Suzuki motorbike used by the killers when fortuitous circumstances presented them with the assassin of the former Indian Army chief who was gunned down on August 10. Even as CBI chief Mohan Katre flew down to Pune at the head of a posse of officials to carry out the interrogation, officers of the CBI and the Pune police could barely hide their elation. "With the nabbing of Sukhdev Singh, the backbone of the gang of Harjinder Singh Jinda has been broken," said a visibly pleased police official.

Sukhdev Singh, alias Pradeep Kumar alias Rakesh Sharma, and another member of the gang, Nirmal Singh, were arrested by an alert police inspector after the red Ind-Suzuki on which they were returning to Bombay collided with a truck in the industrial township of Chinchwad, some 20 km from Pune. As the two were flung off the bike, used in the killing of General Vaidya, the truck-driver and other onlookers rushed to their aid. But they were startled to see two hand guns stuck into their trouser belts protruding from within the disarrayed shirts of Sukhdev and Nirmal. Realising that they were in trouble, the two got up hurriedly and Sukhdev whipped out his Chinese-made Mauser 9 mm pistol with which he shot General Vaidya and shouted at the shocked bystanders: "Watch out, we are the killers of General Vaidya." Sukhdev Singh even tried to shoot directly into the crowd but luckily his Mauser misfired.

With the crowd totally paralysed by fear, the two ran down the Bombay-Pune highway, with Sukhdev limping from the injury sustained in the bike accident, and disappeared towards the railway line leading to Pimpri. An inebriated onlooker of the highway drama, Narayan Bajrang Pawar, took the incident seriously enough to go to Pimpri police station and give a sketchy account of what had happened to Inspector A.I. Pathan. "It is to Pathan's credit that instead of shooing away a drunk, as police officers often do, he rushed out in a jeep with his men," said a police official.

Pathan came across the two terrorists walking along the road to Pune city, from where they apparently intended to jump into a bus and head for Bombay. Though Sukhdev drew his Mauser again when the police party approached, Pathan, sub-inspector B.P. Nimbalkar and constable G.S. Sable—all of whom were later rewarded—managed to overpower the two without a shot being fired. A search of Sukhdev and Nirmal, who was carrying a black leather bag with him, revealed a revolver, two pistols and 31 live cartridges.

General Vaidya's assassin, Sukhdev Singh, was one of the three marksmen in the dreaded gang of Harjinder Singh Jinda. With his fortuitous arrest near Pune, CBI officials are now very hopeful of nabbing the other terrorists in the group.

Sukhdev and Nirmal returned to Pune, say CBI officials, to collect their weapons and motorcycle, which were lying inside a ground-floor flat (G-21) they had rented last January in Salunke Vihar, a large housing complex developed, ironically enough, by the Army Welfare Housing Organisation. According to CBI sources, they took this risk partly because their photographs were not among those of the four wanted men released by the police—the police list had Bhola, a Sukhdev lookalike—and partly because they had come to have a superstitious belief that the Mauser, used by them in innumerable killings, would protect them. It was this trust in the Mauser and the confidence in his marksmanship which made Sukhdev reply, on being asked by interrogators when he realised that General Vaidya was dead: "I knew he was dead with the first shot."

In fact, it has now been revealed that Sukhdev had pulled the Mauser out of his right boot, shot General Vaidya and put the pistol back in a leather bag. After the killing, Sukhdev and his accomplice who was driving the bike—it was not Nirmal but the police won't say who it was—headed straight for the Salunke Vihar flat and not towards the railway bridge as a motor mechanic had maintained earlier. Nor, it is learnt now, were there any other accomplices on a Lohia scooter accompanying them.

Officials of the CBI are particularly jubilant at the capture of Sukhdev Singh, described as a "cold-blooded criminal whose ruthless desire to kill had made him an indispensable member of the terrorist group." Sukhdev, who grew up in Ganganagar, speaks and reads English, and is said to have turned a terrorist even before Operation Bluestar. After Operation Bluestar, he escaped to Pakistan where he was given the Mauser pistol. After his return, among the crimes he has had a hand in, are the killings of Lalit Maken and his wife and Arjun Dass in Delhi. Nirmal, a cousin of Jinda, used to be a truck-driver in Delhi, where he still has relations, before he joined Jinda's gang. The 10 or 12-member gang, of which, police officials now suspect, Jinda is only the second-in-command while an unnamed person is said to be the leader, has two other very dangerous gunmen.

Gang members—also responsible for a spate of bank robberies across the country—are suspected to have taken refuge in terrorist hide-outs in Punjab after General Vaidya's murder. But with General Vaidya's killers now in their custody and being subjected to intensive interrogation at the heavily-guarded Pune cantonment police station, the CBI is hopeful of nabbing the rest of the dreaded Jinda gang.

—M. RAHMAN in Pune

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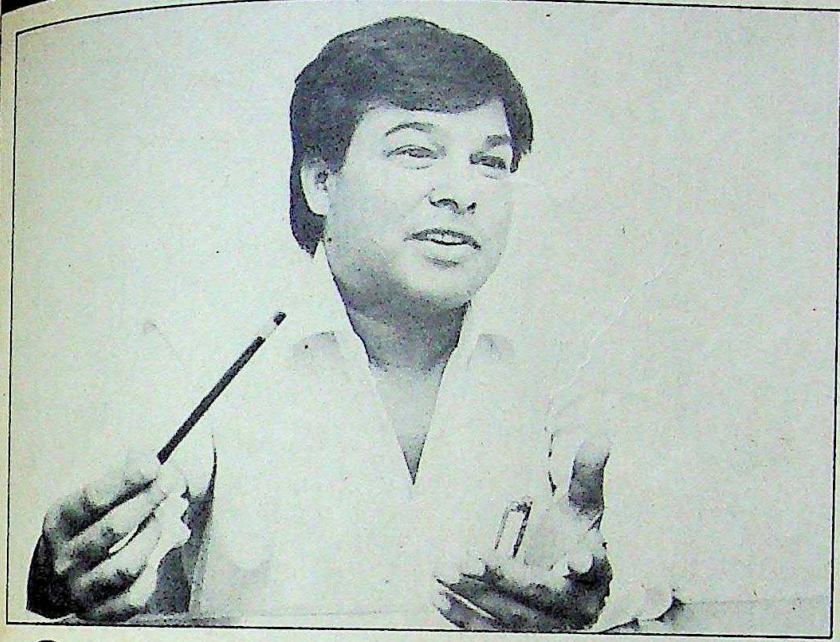
A Commitment Fulfilled



"OPERATION: 100 DAYS"—a comeback after a major fire in a hundred days flat, seemed at first an impetuous commitment", says Mukesh Aggarwal, 31 year-old owner of Hotline. And as if not to lose any further ground quickly cuts in, "but when all is lost, you could either look back or look forward".

The Fateful Night. April 23rd 1986, a fire struck the prized Hotline TV unit at NOIDA and razed it to the ground. Ironically, Mukesh Aggarwal was in Korea at that time striking a deal for massive diversification and expansion. "All was lost except the spirit of enterprise", reminisces Aggarwal.

To come through fire, as it were, Hotline even created a sensational new TV set.

Deadlines. Determination. Dedication. Aggarwal is chronic for targets and deadlines. He's always saying "if you don't set dates, you don't know whether you've arrived".

Within days a team of dedicated professionals got down to rebuilding from scratch again. Production on a limited scale began in Hotline's adjacent building. And barely two weeks after the fire, Hotline TVs were back in the market.

Production levels were sustained at around two-thirds of pre-fire levels. With Quality Control and After-sales service continuously maintained at their highest standards.

Hotline 2001 Digital makes a spectacular return. One of Hotline's biggest achievements has been the reinstallation of all the specialised machinery for the manufacture and testing of the Colour T.V. '2001 Digital'. By mid-July 1986 the Company was able to put it back into the market and see an amazing rise in sales on this very fine performer, made in collaboration with Nordmende of West Germany.

In this period, to come through fire as it were, Hotline even created a sensational new colour TV set with a vertical format called 'EUROPA'.

"When all is lost, you could either look back or look forward."

Enter The New Factory. Fire destroyed and fire rebuilt. The fire of earnestness and enthusiasm planned afresh and on even a bigger scale. Hotline's new unit is a quantum leap in production facilities and technology. Firstly the building is infinitely larger than the old one with a production line that's totally state-of-the-art. The most up-to-date machines for both manufacture and testing have been imported from West Germany. Amongst these coveted assets are two new machines—The Computerised Colour Analyser and the Bump Test Machine.

With every modern input the Hotline Unit is now well poised to see a triple jump in its production capacity with greater levels of Quality Control at each and every stage of manufacture.

The future belongs to those who're there. Aggarwal has always had his eyes sharply focussed on the future. Hotline's successes have always come as a reward of his vision.

The new TV unit is a quantum leap in production facilities and technology.

Hotline is now set to launch 'Projection Televisions'. Two unique models—one which even works in daylight and another that does not require a screen.

As a part of its diversification plans, the Company plans to manufacture Telephone Instruments including a model without a handset. Dial a number and just sit back and speak. Another unique model incorporates a 'conferencing' facility that enables as many as four people to discuss and talk from their respective rooms.

People like you make great things happen at Hotline. In all these successes there has been the strongly felt force of encouragement, inspiration, support from Associates, Stockists, Dealers, Customers. "Each one has stood by us in our time of deepest trial."

Last but not least, if it were not for the ceaseless endeavour of each and every Hotline employee, the deadline of a 100 days would never have been met.

"Thank you for the hand!"

The will to achieve will always succeed **HOTLINE**

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MICR–from Sirpur
yet another winning move

MICR — in other words Magnetic Ink Character Recognition paper is a new concept in 21st century banking.

Made with the ultimate in quality raw materials, MICR is replacing ordinary security paper in use today e.g. Cheques, Dividend Warrants, Debentures and Bonds Interest Warrants etc. MICR has many advantages:

- Quick computerised cheque clearance
- The first step towards fulfilling the major objective of cheque clearance on a national level
- Better surface ensuring clearer printing
- Greater durability and longer life

And now Sirpur, the leaders in paper technology have through their expertise and modern know-how started manufacture of top grade MICR. With a nod of approval from the Reserve Bank of India.

The Sirpur Paper Mills Limited.

Sirpur—Kaghaznagar 504296 (A.P.)

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SPORTSWOMEN

Indian Apartheid

GRADUALLY but incessantly, women in India have been nibbling away at the sports headlines, historically a male-dominated arena. With Asiad fever on the rise, once again the spotlight is on women athletes as favourites for a major share of Indian medals at the Seoul Asian Games. Yet, despite their major contributions, sportswomen continue to be treated shabbily by the authorities. Increasingly, individual success stories are being written by determined women, not with the help of the authorities but despite the odds officialdom has placed before them.

Manifestations of this apartheid in Indian sport ranges from:

▸ **Sexual harassment:** Alpna Adhikari, a waterpolo player on her way to Delhi from Bombay for the national selections was molested on the train by a senior official of the Swimming Federation of India. The official denies it. Adhikari was dropped from the team. The waterpolo team, after qualifying for the world championships in the preliminary rounds, was denied permission to participate in the final round in Madrid though it was the only team in Asia to qualify.

▸ **Discrimination:** The Indian women's hockey team topped their Asiad gold with victory in the Asian Championships but were denied permission to defend their title this year.

▸ **Ad hocism:** Seven times national free-style swimming champion, Anita Sood was dropped from the Seoul Asiad squad despite the fact that her timings still remain far better than the rest.

These are not isolated instances but only more recent milestones on sports tracks where scores of similar stories lie buried in a heap of cynicism. Reacting to the innumerable complaints of sexual harassment that she has received as member of the governing council of the Society of National Institutes for Physical Education and Sports (SNIPES), H. Baxi said: "There are officials who would definitely try to take some sort of advantage when a team is to be selected. But the girls must fight back." She recalls the instance of a woman coach from the National Institute of Sports (NIS) Patiala complaining to her about another official making an advance. The coach resisted and this cost her a berth on the team for an international sports event at Tokyo. "I spoke to the director NIS and the president SNIPES that they must do something about it because there are far too many complaints on this, but no action was taken," Baxi recalled.

The players corroborate such discrimination. "Women who fight back are branded as fast," says Ayesha Misra, a lawyer who was dropped in the final selection camp for the Indian basketball team. She was later informed that she had been dropped because she "talked to boys" in the camp. "That's one point in Indian society where a woman is most vulnerable. So that is where they hit you," complains Ayesha. And Subina Arora, a former Delhi basketball player said equally despairingly: "It's during the selection stage that you're expected to please the coaches and selectors."

Rajbir Kaur, who is leading the women's hockey squad to Seoul, complained bitterly about the unjust denial of permission to participate in the Asian Championships. "It gets very frustrating since we give everything we have to our training and then they refuse permission for tournaments like this. We can't do a thing about it. That is why it is better to keep quiet," she said.

However, K.V. Sharma, the chief national coach of the Indian swimming team, explained away the attitude as being "traditional". Commenting on Anita's ouster from the Indian squad, he said dismissively: "No doubt Anita is the best but she can retire anyday. It is better to give exposure to the younger girls who will be of use to us longer." Retorting bitterly, Anita said: "I can understand the old making way for the new but only when the new are better," adding: "If I retire it will be out of sheer frustration." Acknowledging her brilliance, Eric Arnold, the Australian coach specially invited to groom the team for the Asian Games, said: "Without Anita, the Indian swimming team will be like Argentina without Maradona."

The story of harassment runs along similar lines even in athletics. Comments Vandana Rao: "There was a definite change in attitude after we became medal hopes." Bula Chowdhury, the teenage mermaid from West Bengal who had to struggle for private sponsors to finance her training after a futile wait for promised help from the state Government, said frankly: "If I had been a boy they would have been more interested." Asha Aggarwal, India's marathon star is still fighting to prove herself to the authorities. Forced to join the Asian Games athletics camp even though there were no adequate facilities for her, it was only when she protested at such a crucial juncture that the authorities finally asked her to attach her own coach to the camp. "What is really sad is that there is no encouragement from authorities," Asha said sadly.

Official denials of discrimination are scoffed at by the girls. Ayesha remembers the basketball camp at Patiala: "While the men were accommodated in the new hostel with attached bathrooms, the girls were put up in dirty rooms that looked like stables and bathrooms with flushes not working."

"In the ultimate analysis, it is a question of attitude, not just of the authorities but of the entire country," said Baxi. But if the results are anything to show, unless attitudes change soon, the explosive potential will continue to go unexploited.

—TANIA MIDHA

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Anita Sood

BHAWAN SINGH

Bula Chowdhury

Asha Aggarwal

Despite their major contributions, sportswomen continue to receive shabby treatment at the hands of the authorities.

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Smile. Skypak has just placed four aircraft at your disposal!

And this can revolutionize the way you've been doing business. These aircraft will help give your package a flying start to a guaranteed delivery within 24 hours for at least 70 destinations all over India!

How are we going to do it? Well, imagine this for a start.

Every day. Yes, every day 4 Vayudoot aircraft touching eight major airports, will converge at Nagpur.

They will exchange notes. And they will exchange documents and packages. And before the dust can settle they will be on their way back to their respective starting points.

Your packages therefore will be very close to their specific destinations while the night is still young! And at no point in transit will they be out of our total control.

So it's only obvious that we're calling it the Skypak Overnite. A special service that has suddenly taken the courier business beyond the horizons. Almost overnight.

SKYPAK OVERNITE

We've put time on your side.

SKYPAK OVERNITE: Off M. Vissanji Road, Marol, Andheri (E), Bombay-400 059. Ph: 6342853/6348226/6320881/6320354.

Please note: We don't carry non-commercial and personal material.

Avenues SC 285:86

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TELUGU SAMACHARAM

Media Massage

HIS detractors have often described the Andhra Pradesh Information Commissioner and Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao's media relations manager, Veliveli Saidulu, as the Andhra Mcluhan. And Saidulu, 49, seems to be living up to that sobriquet with his decree that an embossed picture of the turbaned Rama Rao is to adorn all official releases, ranging from display advertisements to invitations for state functions. Says he: "Rama Rao is the fountain-head of deep inspiration. He is the people's leader. His photographs enhance the value of our advertisements."

Horrified officials and opposition politicians see Saidulu as attempting to distort Marshal Mcluhan's dictum—the medium is the message—to making the media a massage for NTR.

The trend-setting publicity format was first seen in the invitation to the annual state film awards function in April. This was soon after Saidulu took charge and the information directorate was renamed Telugu Samacharam. Since then Saidulu, who worked in the Indian postal service for 24 years, has been stamping invitations, publicity pamphlets and the Government's public relations monthly *Telugu Velugu* with NTR's photographs.

The alarm bells first sounded when Saidulu decreed that all advertising by government departments and state-owned companies would be channelised through the Telugu Samacharam. Embarrassed executives of companies like Hyderabad Allwyn, Andhra Pradesh Scooters and Andhra Pradesh Travel and Tourism Corporation made a beeline for Chief Secretary Shravan Kumar with the complaint that their jurisdiction was being invaded. Some 17 state units with an annual advertising bill of Rs 3.5 crore finally managed to get their advertisements routed through private firms but the Telugu Samacharam continues to hold on to advertisements totalling Rs 6.5 crore.

But the controversy continues, the main point of contention being whether the Samacharam can claim the 15 per cent commission given by newspapers to advertising agencies. Saidulu claims it can, arguing: "Advertisements are being drawn up in a more professional way with clearer copy and better lay-out than the Government could get by paying the commission to some ad firms."

Invitations with NTR's photograph; (below) Saidulu with NTR: overkill

But the Indian and Eastern Newspapers Society (IENS), the body of newspaper proprietors which also gives accreditation to advertising agencies, continues to be apprehensive that the Andhra Pradesh Government will use the Samacharam as a lever to muzzle the press. It fears that by centralising state advertising, the Government will be able to starve newspapers not favourably disposed to it. NTR wrote to IENS President Basudev Ray allaying these fears but the newspapers continue to hold out.

Under Saidulu, the Telugu Samacharam has sprouted three other divisions—news service, research and reference and training. The news service division will appoint stringers at all 1,104 mandal headquarters to gather intelligence on government programmes and report official functions. These will be made available to newspapers also.

Saidulu has stocked his office with an assortment of books—on the British theatre, dictionaries and NTR's speeches. Said Saidulu: "In many cases, newspaper offices do not even have dictionaries so a research and reference library facility is to be set up at all mandal headquarters." Nearly 300 Telugu Samachara Vignana kendrams with an auditorium and a reading-room in one wing and the Government correspondent in the other have been set up. Buying books, building libraries and creating kendras is visualised in the run-up to what Saidulu calls "developing real journalists". But, in practice, with photographs of NTR displayed at all Samacharam offices, the exercise is only a plug for him.

Senior administrators object to this blatant publicity programme for the chief minister. Said one: "It makes sense to carry the chief minister's photograph with an appeal for funds for flood victims or listing the achievements of his pet welfare programmes. But it is ridiculous to carry his picture doing *namaste* to promote a tourist bus service. It demeans the office."

Saidulu dismisses the flak he is attracting as a motivated campaign by those who are against the chief minister or him. A former postmaster general claims he is " a generalist and not a journalist," but his detractors say he is just a sycophant. Recalled one: "He opened a post office in Rayalaseema in NTR's constituency before becoming information commissioner." Whatever the connection, Saidulu shows that old habits die hard by giving his mentor a blatant overdose of publicity.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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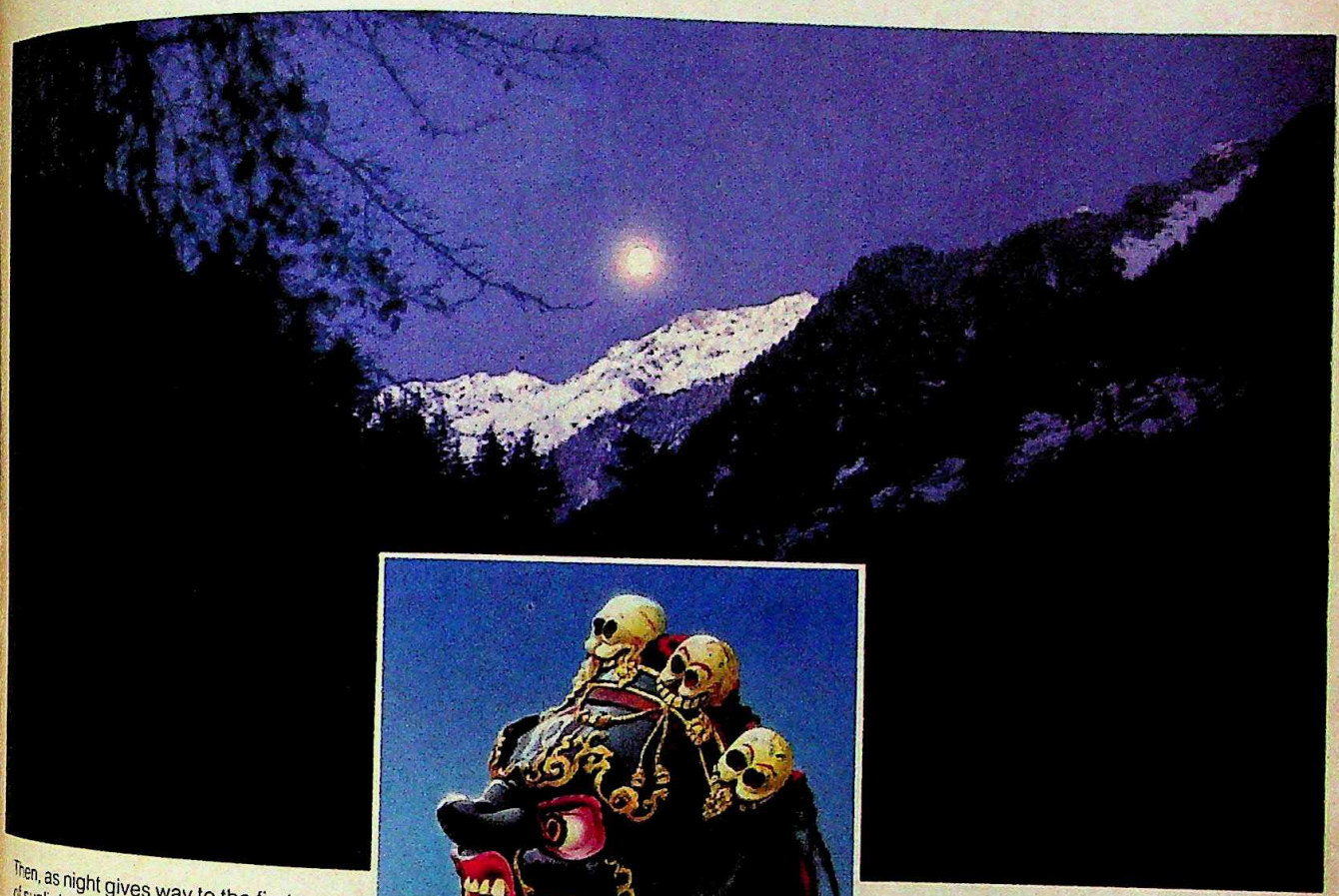
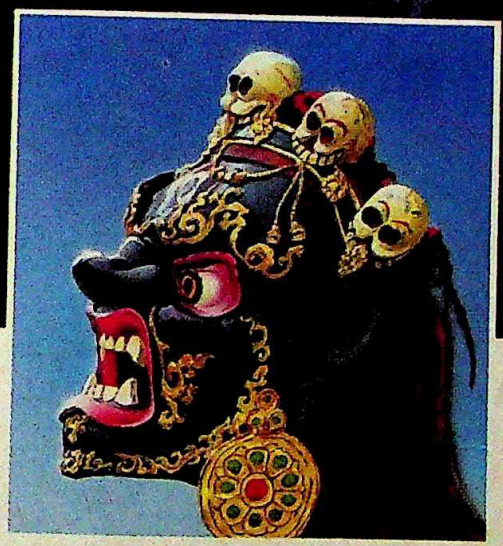
In the silence of the night you can almost hear the mysterious Yeti shuffle in the snow.





Then, as night gives way to the first rays of sunlight glinting off the icy peak of Mt. Khangchendzonga, the wonder of Sikkim unfolds. The dense green forest valleys come to life with rushing waterfalls, musk deer and the snow leopard. And the gentle religious people give you a renewed faith in life. Come, discover the magic of Sikkim.

ACCESSIBILITY

Gangtok, the Capital, is connected by Air and Rail. Bagdogra, the nearest Airport, is 124 km away. Siliguri and New Jalpaiguri, the railheads, 118 and 127 km respectively. Land Rovers and buses are available at these disembarkation points.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation is easily available at a number of Dharamshalas and Hotels. Reservations for Pemayangtse Tourist Lodge, Sikkim Guest House and the Gangtok Tourist Lodge may be made through: The Deputy Director, Department of Tourism, Gangtok, Sikkim, Ph: 292664. For further information, contact: Sikkim Tourist Office, Hotel Janpath, Room No.10, Janpath, New Delhi-110 001, Ph: 324589 or Tourist Information Centre, 4 C Poonam, 5/2 Russel Street, Calcutta-17, Ph: 295476.

TOURS

Conducted tours are organised regularly by Department of Tourism, Sikkim. For further information, contact the above addresses.

SEASON

Any time, but the best time for Sikkim is March – May and October – December.

SIKKIM

Discover India

Discover yourself

Department of Tourism
Government of India

In India you'll see the world.

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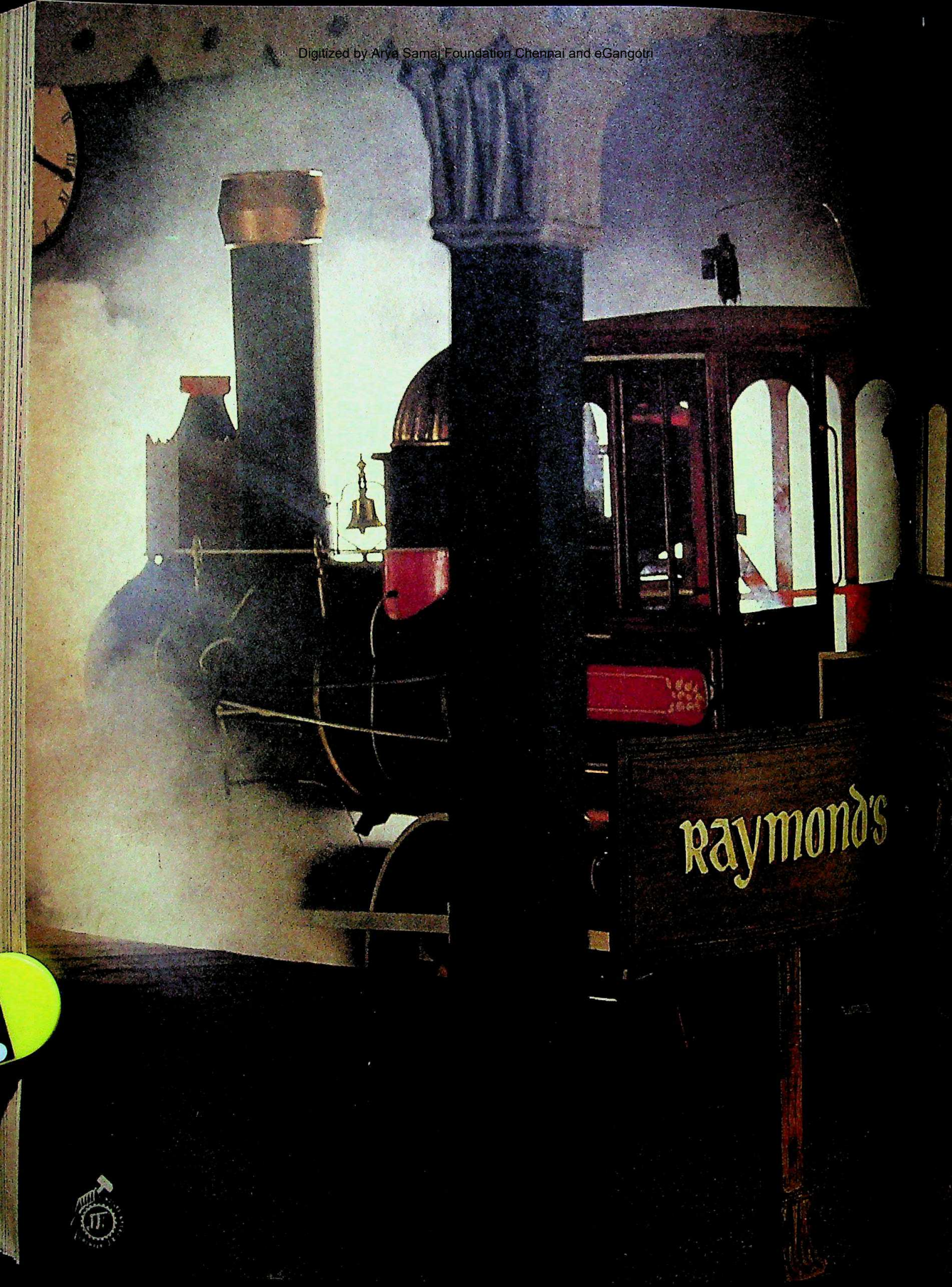

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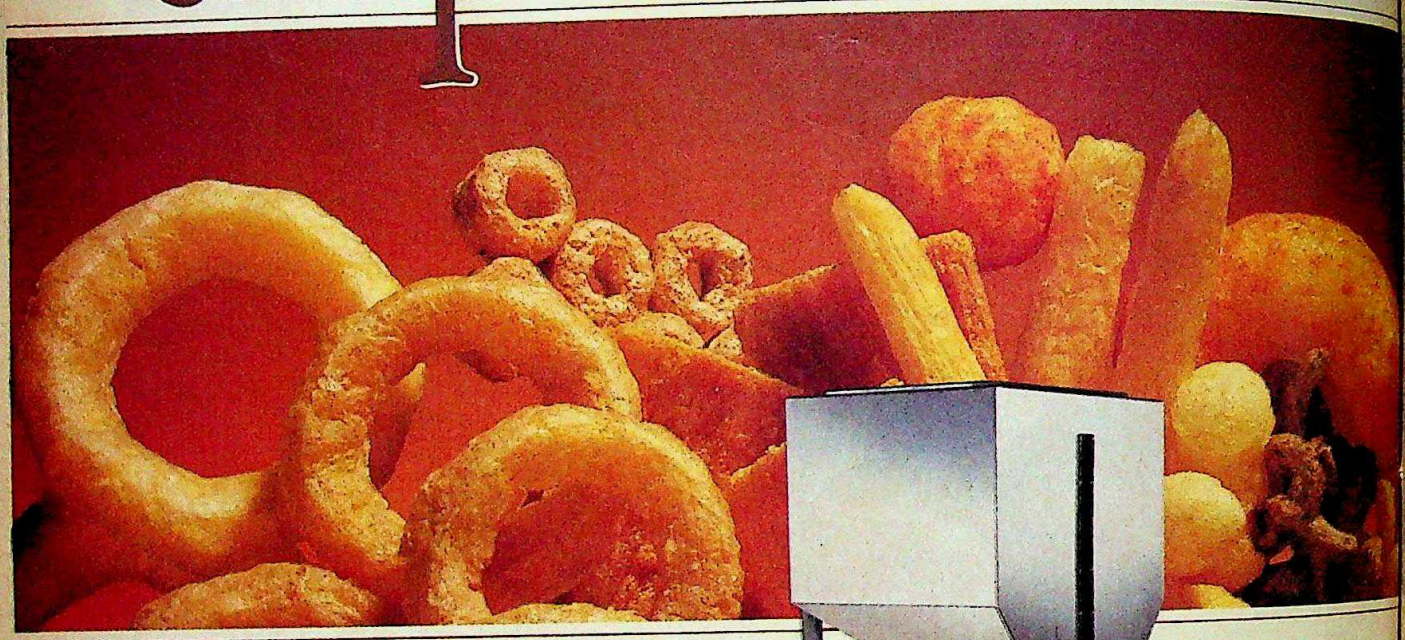
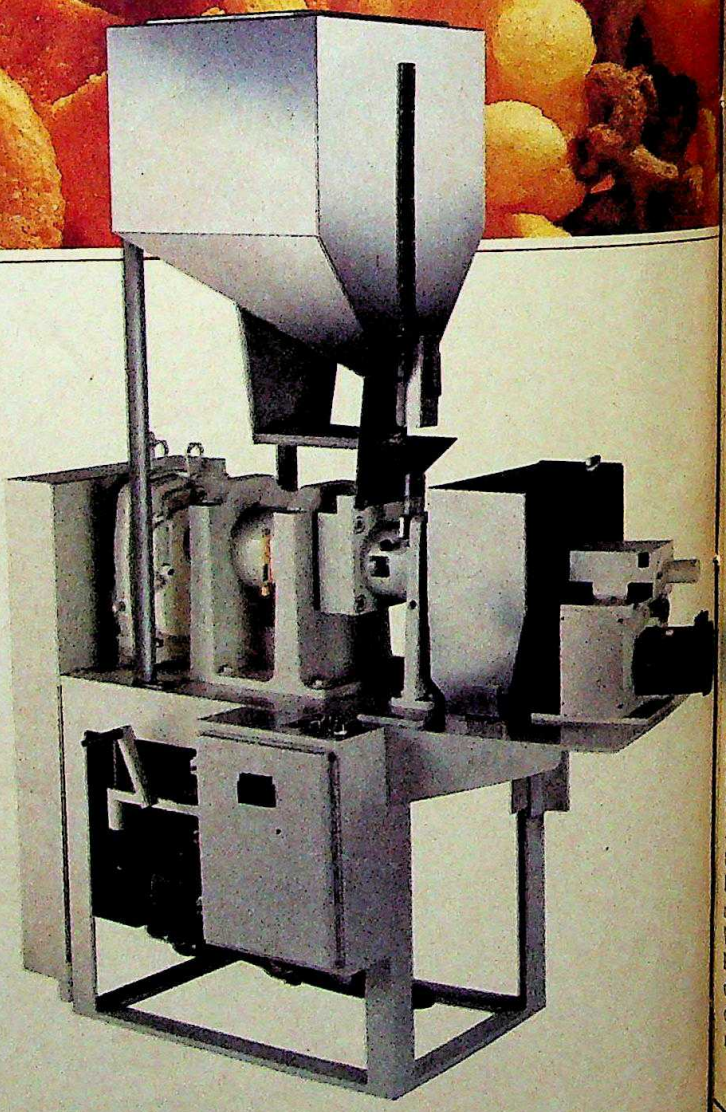
SOPHISTICATED Shapes





The AIB-300...Solid versatility, world proven technology.

For mid-range production needs, and for every type of direct-expanded snack shape imaginable, nothing meets your needs like the Adams AIB-300!

This extruder is perhaps the ultimate refinement of the technology that made Adams *the* name in snack extruders...worldwide.

The drive system, the tooling, the basic Adams extrusion principles have been proven by decades of international experience.

Mid-range production deserves top-notch equipment. Trust your snack profits to the proven technologies, and proven backup, of the first name in snack extrusion...Adams International.

For further information, contact your Adams' agency in New Delhi at: 33-111-31.

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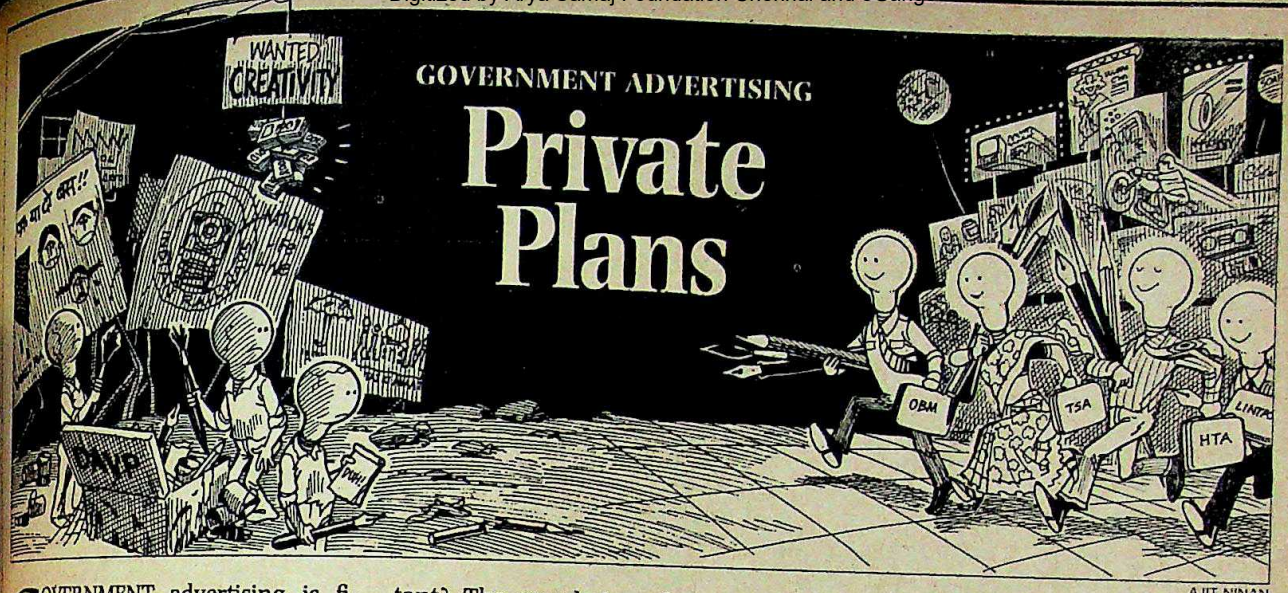

AJIT NINAN

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Private Plans

GOVERNMENT advertising is finally going glitzy. Being elbowed aside is the shabby, sloganeering era of the Directorate of Audio-Visual Publicity (DAVP), which narrowly escaped the guillotine recently. Entering is the world of private advertising. Madison Avenue, by proxy, has slunk into the musty corridors of power and patronage in New Delhi.

Increasingly, ministries are turning to the ad men, until not too long ago considered flagships of consumerism. Advertising budgets are being expanded or juggled by the ministries and ad agencies have formed new consortia to meet the Government's desire to be packaged in seductive new clothes, with the designer labels showing.

The Department of Tourism has enlisted about eight advertising agencies and hiked its publicity budget from Rs 2.5 crore last year to Rs 7 crore, nearly all of it for a blitzkrieg abroad. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare became a magnet for ad agencies with a fat Rs 105-crore for its family planning blitz. The External Publicity Division of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has also decided to throw out the frayed, Third World look of its advertising efforts and introduce the laminated, manicured look. The railways are chugging even faster on the private advertising track. And gingerly stepping behind them are the National Wasteland Development Board, the high-profile Ganga Development Authority, and the Department of Women's Welfare in the Ministry of Human Resources Development. Suddenly, in ministries and government departments, a feverish race is on to revamp image projection techniques.

Why has image become so important? The mandarins of government have realised that if image makes the man—and often presidents and prime ministers—it can also make government. Or at times even substitute for it. The big brother image of much government advertising has not gone down too well; family planning being the most conspicuous disaster zone. The government media campaign against dowry or alcohol or income tax evaders has left the people equally cold. The Government now wants to drop the big from big brother. And in its frenzied quest to hurry along social change, and hang on to the hem of the 21st century it needs the ad men. The logic: if you can sell soap suds to ultra conservative households, you can sell social attitudes. The Government's sudden reach for professional communications experts and advertising agencies is due in large measure to its realisation that 30 years of massive financial inputs into family planning have yielded little. Says Krishna Kumar, deputy minister for family welfare: "Thus far the family planning programme had an aura of a government programme—as if the Government was merely target-oriented, an army of government people pursuing the people. We would like to change this to a demand from the people themselves for family planning."

However, this was too tall an order for the Government's advertising boys. As the minister himself lamely admitted: "We have a media set-up in the Centre and in the states, but government scales being what they are, the talent is just not good enough....The message put out is trite and mediocre."

With a three-year intensive campaign all set to be launched this month, the ministry is in a hurry to find the right medium for the message. The situation was, therefore, tailor-made for the whiz-kids of private advertising agencies. A consortium of five advertising agencies—Hindustan Thompson Associates, Tara Sinha Associates (TSA), Ogilvy Benson and Mather, Lintas and Rediffusion—was formed to tackle various aspects of family planning.

A significant entrant into this charmed world is the MEA's External Publicity Division. To brush up the country's overseas image, the ministry turned to private communications firms and advertising agencies. The front runners are Visual Communications, Milestone and Rediffusion. In addition to the Rs 1.8-crore spent in the missions abroad, the publicity division's annual budget of Rs 2.4 crore was juggled around to give the necessary muscle to such an image building exercise.

The MEA, in collaboration with the BBC, launched *India Unveiled*—a film—outletted at 300 stations abroad. Through Asian Films a slot in the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) in the US was captured. And finally, to keep up the momentum of interest built up by the Festival of India, the Government has hired an American public relations firm. The Follow the Festival campaign has a budget of over Rs 1 crore.

In the railways too, the image-making exercise is going at full throttle. Ad agencies have been asked to design a new logo, replacing the familiar steam engine puffing down a curving track. The accent is now on a modern, abstract logo to go with the hi-tech image those in power want to project. There are also plans for a new railway mascot, along the lines of the utterly-butterly Amul girl

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or Air-India's maharajah.

Periodically, the railways has been projecting sports personalities—P.T. Usha, M.A.K. Pataudi and Michael Ferreira—who brightly inform television viewers that railway property is your property, and should be kept clean. Shyam Benegal has also been commissioned to make *Yatra*—the great train journey—to replace the forgettable *Safarnama*. Officials say that Hrishikesh Mukherjee has been asked to make a comedy series to be telecast next April.

Another advertising bonanza is the Ganga Development Authority's plans for Clarion, Ulka and Edge which have organised themselves into a consortium for the purpose. The Ministry of Human Resources Development, especially the Women's Welfare Department, has asked private agencies to conduct research studies on issues like child marriage and dowry so that they can become subjects for advertising campaigns.

The only casualty in this frantic race of hard-boiled communications professionals has been the DAVP, till recently the Government's chief window-dresser. Rumours that the department will be wound up has for the time being abated, but its functions in the future are likely to be somewhat altered and the organisation streamlined—and some of the employees shifted elsewhere.

Officials in DAVP and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting lament that they have been hamstrung by a shortage of money. The DAVP also finds itself constrained by the low advertisement rates fixed 10 years ago by the Rate Advisory Committee.

But all this hard sell notwithstanding, serious doubts remain about the nature of the product being marketed through the multi-crore build up. Says Tara Sinha of TSA: "I can go blue in the face talking about the need for family planning but if the man in the field does not do his job, nothing is achieved." Equally, tourists can be lured into the country but if the infrastructural back up is not adequate then they are hardly likely to return.

However, for the moment the window-dressing fever is in full swing; ministries are scanning brochures of professional outfits hoping that their packaging may deliver the goods which years of drab press hand-outs and dry newspaper pull-outs have not been able to achieve. Much to the amusement of ad men the Government has finally had to appeal to the world of advertising to help change its image.

—MADHU JAIN

'Desi' Artistry

GOAN VIGNETTES AND OTHER POEMS
by ASHOK MAHAJAN
Oxford University Press
Price: Rs 25; Pages: 64

THERE is no greater testimony to the health of the various versions of English flourishing in ex-colonial countries than the emergence of a continuous burst of new voices from continents all over the Third World. While nothing comparable to the output of writers in Africa, South America, the West Indies and the Middle East is produced in India yet, the signs in the last few years have been encouraging: Arun Kolhatkar's *Jejuri* and Vikram Seth's *The Humble Administrator's Garden* both picked up the Commonwealth Poetry Prize; Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and Farokh Dhondy have established their reputations in the realm of new fiction.

Whether or not Ashok Mahajan's first book of poetry, *Goan Vignettes and Other Poems* reaches other shores, it is a bouncing *desi* offspring with decidedly local features and colour. Mahajan is a telecommunications engineer in the Indian Army and a science writer as well. It's probably just as well he does not carry the burden of an English literature degree and the postures that come with it. Mahajan's heart, and more significantly his tongue, is in the right place—giving both his sentiments and his syllables a homely air. No picturesque romanticism for him but straightforward plain-speak:

Tourists note
Fresco-amber
in Ajanta art.
I know this pigment from
pools of bovine piss
at any vegetable mart.

Though his description sometimes tends to get wordy and dense, (*Sunset at Colva, Anjuna Beach*) Mahajan is a deft scene-painter. On the *Cortalim Ferry*

Up-river boats gleam like game
In forests of the dockyard...
While ships in harbour beyond
glow as lions on guard.

But it is really when Mahajan bumps into people that he springs into action, doing quick thumb-nail sketches and creating identifiable archetypes. *Seth Agarwal*, of the "dirt-laminated" footsoles, is a renowned hoarder and adulterator of Johri Bazar, Jaipur, adept "at cheating a rural clientele at the scales". The *Truck Driver* keeps going "on the hooch in his system" and "the crisp notes" with which he greases official palms. The *Rickshawallah*, who is "one more spoke in the felly of his rickshaw wheel", has a wife and child in the village "bonded to a *bhoomihar*".

Mahajan is even better in the vignettes on Goa, capturing the tipsy flavour, the salty tang, the ballad rhythms and the unashamed provinciality of the place. His Goan characters are true to their grain and their calling: the aunt who "has a horticultural air"; Joe d'Silva who loves soccer and dreams of being a "Dempo player"; School-teacher Philomena Rebello's "sartorial passion far exceeds her pedagogic zeal".

Mahajan is more successful when he is light-fingered, strumming the strings with a gentle irony and a quick wit. His attempts at weaving history and legend into the fabric of his poetry (*Vasco da Gama, Iberian Proselytizer*) do not come off convincingly. What Mahajan needs to guard against is his tendency to pick up bad habits from fellow poets whom he perhaps mistakenly envies as his betters and adopts as his mentors. Certain words in Mahajan's vocabulary have come straight out of a dictionary, contributing more to obscurity than illumination. Some line-breaks are arbitrary while the punctuation in some poems goes wayward in an attempt to be experimental. Mahajan has a good thing going for him if he remains true to his instincts.

—SALEEM PEER AHMED

EXTRACTS

Miss Veronica Dias
Was crowned Princess
At the October dance
Of Majorda Jaycees.
A unanimous choice
Of all the judges.
(So well-schooled in social graces,
Sparkles when she smiles.)
She danced in ten different styles,
No other girl bore her grudges.
Now her Mum and Dad
Are on the lookout
For a rich suitor from the States.
Or if that doesn't work out
They will settle for a match
From the Arab Emirates.
But a local boy has just no chance,
For Miss Veronica Dias
Was crowned Princess at the dance.

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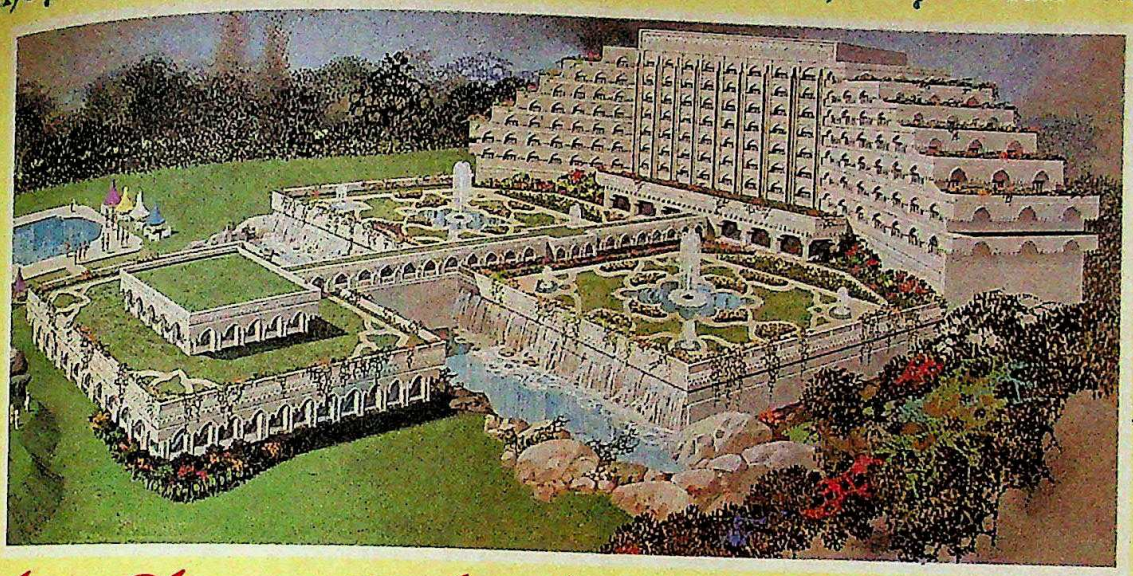
In the same mould as the legendary Oberoi hotels world-wide...



Krishna Oberoi, Hyderabad. Opening early 1987

Don't you want a share in a masterpiece of a hotel?

In early 1987, the 286 room Krishna Oberoi will usher in a new chapter of grandeur and elegance in hotels. Set in a 9 acre plot in Hyderabad's exclusive Banjara Hills, Krishna Oberoi has been designed as a "Garden Hotel" with the most modern facilities... every facet of the hotel a tribute to good taste and gracious living.

Oberoi Management — An assurance of excellent service

The Oberoi Group will manage Krishna Oberoi for a twenty year period. The Group has been synonymous with success in hotels. As many as 9 of the chain's 30 hotels in 9 countries figure among the world's top 300 hotels.

Already Krishna Oberoi staff is being groomed in various Oberoi hotels... So, when the hotel commences operations, it will have a full complement well versed in the exclusive Oberoi brand of service — so beloved of travellers round the world.

Booming Hyderabad — Just ripe for a Five Star Deluxe hotel

Krishna Oberoi is ideally located.

Hyderabad is in the heart of India. Besides, it has been rated as one of the fastest growing cities by the Government of India.

With the extensive industrialisation in and around the city... there has been an influx of visitors, many from abroad. A trend that is now further accentuated with international flights landing in Hyderabad.

This of course augurs well for the new hotel.

An excellent investment prospect

With Hyderabad's pressing need for five star accommodation, GVK Hotels — the promoters of Krishna Oberoi — is obviously a good investment prospect.

GVK Hotels is now offering the public a chance to participate in this exciting venture with a Rs. 180 lakhs Public Issue for the Indian Public and Rs. 50 lakhs Equity Issue for Non Resident Indians.

With all its advantages, there's a lot going for Krishna Oberoi. Why not cash in on it?

Issue Highlights

- 286 room 5 Star Deluxe Hotel in Hyderabad
- Operated by the Oberoi Group
- World-wide reservation facilities through Oberoi Hotels
- 5 Star Hotel facilities scarce in Hyderabad. High occupancy assured
- Exquisitely designed as per international standards
- Hotel inauguration — Early 1987
- 80 L, 80 M benefits under the Income Tax Act and exemption under Wealth Tax Act
- Easy Liquidity — Listing at Hyderabad, Bombay, Delhi and Madras Stock Exchanges

Issue opens for
Non-Residents: 6th October, 1986.
Indian Public: 15th October, 1986.

GVK Hotels Limited
Regd. Office: 6-3-249/10, Road No. 1,
Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500 034.

Issue managed by:
CHAMPAKLAL INVESTMENT & FINANCIAL CONSULTANCY LIMITED
Nariman Point, Bombay

Issue co-managed by:
Canara Bank
Merchant Banking Bureau
Himayatnagar, Hyderabad

Bank of India
Merchant Banking Department
Dalal Street, Bombay

GVK Hotels – You are backing the Oberoi brand of success

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PAL-System Colour TV
- 21 (54 cm) Grey Square Co
  Picture Tube
- 35-Key TV/Video Dual Re
  Control
- Top Tuning
- Deluxe On-screen Indica
- Audio/Video-In Termina

*TC-2160XR 8-System Mo
Available.

"Watching TV is important to me because it's part of my profession ... so I just naturally want to watch the best quality whenever possible. That's why I watch National. The 54-centimeter (21) TC-2160MR, for example, has a square-cornered picture tube that virtually eliminates distortion and image cropping ... and a cool, grey screen makes viewing easier on the eyes. Auto Tuning allows preset tuning of up to 30 channels. And a 35-key infra-red remote control controls not only the TV, but many National videos, too. And if something does go wrong, the National Service Network is there to back me up. Now I see what I'd been missing. You can see it too, at a shop that sells quality National electronics."

Mithun Chakraborty

National Authorized Service Centres in India

Indus Airconditioning Pvt. Ltd. (For home appliances only)
• 371, Cadell Road, Prabhadevi, Bombay 400 028 Tel: 4303719/4309270

Associated Electrical Agencies (For audio/video products only)
• Anugraha Apartments, "B" Block, Ground Floor 19, Nungambakkam High Road, Madras 600 034 Tel: 478559

Esquire Distributing & Servicing Co. Pvt. Ltd. (For video-related products only)
• Unit No. 1A & 1B Ground Floor, Rehmat Manzil, 75 Veer Nariman Road, Churchgate, Bombay 400 028 Tel: 234226/230311

National

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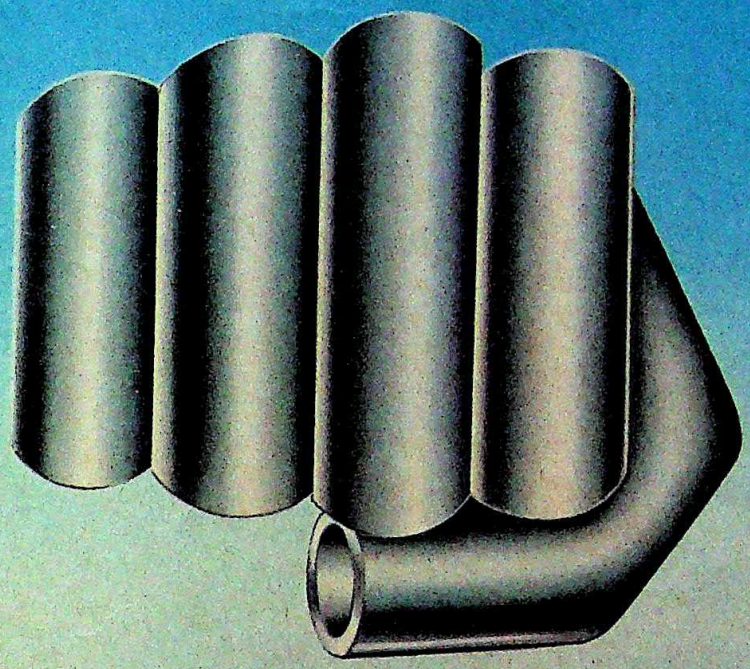
This is the Group, dynamism built



STEEL TUBES OF INDIA GROUP

And this is the success, professionalism has achieved.

Now the No. 1 precision steel tube manufacturer in India...
Having the largest capacity in the field for both ERW and CDW tubes. Pioneering the manufacture of small diameter tubes, a vital import substitution product.

Crossing the Rs.30 crore turnover mark
Taking over a sick unit in 1967 – having a Rs.10 lakh turnover, dynamic professional management has brought Steel Tubes of India to its present stature. And production is ever increasing.

Storming International markets with STI Singapore...which has now achieved the No. 1 position in precision steel tubes manufacture in Singapore...
With Indian management and technical know-how and the collaboration of two Japanese giants – Kobe Steel Ltd., and Tokyo Boeki Ltd., STI Singapore has captured international markets like Canada, Australia and China – with exports to the USA alone constituting Rs.12 crores – of a Rs.20 crore turnover.

Moving forward with backward integration – modern cold rolling mill
With an installed capacity of 25,000 tonnes per annum, Steel Tubes of India has started making its own raw material to meet its ever growing needs for quality and precision. This project was set up at a cost of Rs.9 crores.

Diversifying into double-walled copper brazed tubing – STI Biplus
The second unit in the country to produce these much sought after products for vital applications in auto and refrigeration industries. STI Biplus Tubing (India) Limited is a joint venture of Steel Tubes of India and Carl Froh Rohrenwerk, West Germany, a 75 year old international leader in the field. The Company, which also has the equity participation of Unit Trust of India has already commenced commercial production. Its products have been well received in the market.

Steel Tubes of India Limited
Steel Tubes Road, Dewas 455 001, (M.P).

Offices at: Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Bombay, Calcutta, Coimbatore, Delhi, Faridabad, Hyderabad, Indore, Kanpur, Lucknow, Ludhiana, Madras, Raikot, Sonepat.

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Power Jogger. If your soul is in fitness, this should be a perfect fit.

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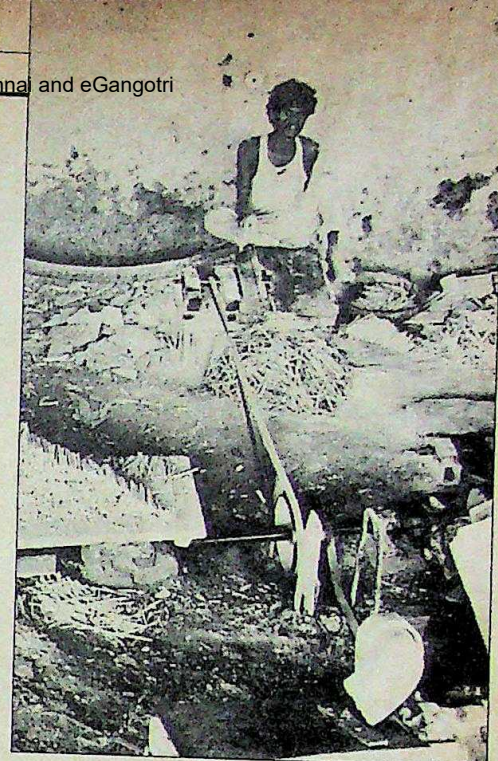
SILICOSIS CASES

Gathering Dust

A mini-Bhopal is being enacted every day in the slate-pencil industry of Mandsaur, in north-west Madhya Pradesh. More than 2,000 slate-pencil workers have died of silicosis, an incurable occupational lung disease, over the past 25 years. In the villages around Mandsaur, hundreds of others, afflicted by the disease, are doomed to the same dusty death as once a worker contracts silicosis there is no hope of survival. The village of Multanpura, a major centre of the industry, is referred to as 'the village of widows' because of the large number of women widowed by silicosis. But what is equally tragic is the legal implications behind a recent Supreme Court notice following a letter-petition made by a silicosis victim seeking relief to hapless slate-pencil workers.

The Supreme Court notice to the Madhya Pradesh Government on the plight of slate-pencil workers is a classic example of the fate of public interest litigation in the country. In spite of protests made by human rights activists and victims—a media campaign built up by 'crusading' journalists—which snowballed into a case and a judgement in the petitioner's favour, nothing has actually been achieved. Chief Justice P.N. Bhagwati's notice to the Madhya Pradesh Government last month in reality was no different from what his predecessor Y.V. Chandrachud had directed two years ago to put a stop to the horrifying mass deaths of workers.

An on-the-spot investigation made by INDIA TODAY revealed that barring only one, none of the directives of the Supreme Court, issued on February 6, 1984 in writ petition No 5143 of 1980 workmen of slate-pencil industry vs State of Madhya Pradesh and others), have been implemented so far. The judgement last month on the second letter-petition from Mangilal Porwal, 42, of Mandsaur, who was afflicted by the disease almost 15 years after he left the job as a slate-pencil cutter in Tholk industry, has now once again revived the issue. Porwal says he decided to move the Supreme Court because he felt that "the case I had filed for compensation in the labour court will be probably decided only after my death". About 100 compensation suits—some since 1978—are still pending in the labour court.



Porwal; and (right) state-pencil factory, Multanpura: slow death

Photographs by N.K. SINGH

In spite of protests made by human rights activists and victims, nothing has been achieved to put a stop to the horrifying mass deaths of workers.

The job-disease relationship was first established in 1968 following a medical survey. But attention was focussed on the problem only 10 years later when Indore Trade Unionist and free lance journalist Jawaharlal Rathore wrote a series of articles in *Nai Dunia*, the premier Hindi daily of the state. While Rathore diligently followed up the story with the zeal of a crusader, *Indian Express* front-paged the horrifying news in all its editions and later launched a campaign championing the cause of workers. Following the publicity, former prime minister Indira Gandhi wrote a personal "strongly-worded" letter to the state Government. The Institute of Occupational Diseases conducted a survey and the Indore Engineering College designed a device to reduce dust pollution which causes silicosis. The public concern culminated in a four-year-long legal battle in the Supreme Court which directed in 1984 that:

► "All slate-pencil manufacturing units should be asked to instal exhaust appliances specially designed by Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) for the industry. Licences of the defaulting units should be cancelled. It is not enough to prosecute employers for breach of safety regulations, which often result in imposition of small fines. Licences of factories guilty of violation of safety regulations should be revoked or cancelled.

► The chief inspector of factories will enquire into the efficacy of masks provided to workers as safety device and try to find a more effective substitute.

► Compensation cases filed by workers for injuries and deaths should be disposed of expeditiously.

► The chief inspector of factories will submit his report to the Government within three months about whether the factories have taken all the safety precautions obligatory under the Factories Act."

Interestingly except for the last—the chief inspector of factories submitted his report on May 2, 1984—none of the other four directives of the Supreme Court have been implemented. Apart from one factory which had already installed the BHEL-designed apparatus at the time of the order, none of the 140 units has bothered to spend money on this pollution control device. Most of them have installed locally-made devices which are barely effective.

On enquiry, the labour commissioner's office in Indore confirmed that they had not so far cancelled or revoked a single licence "under the

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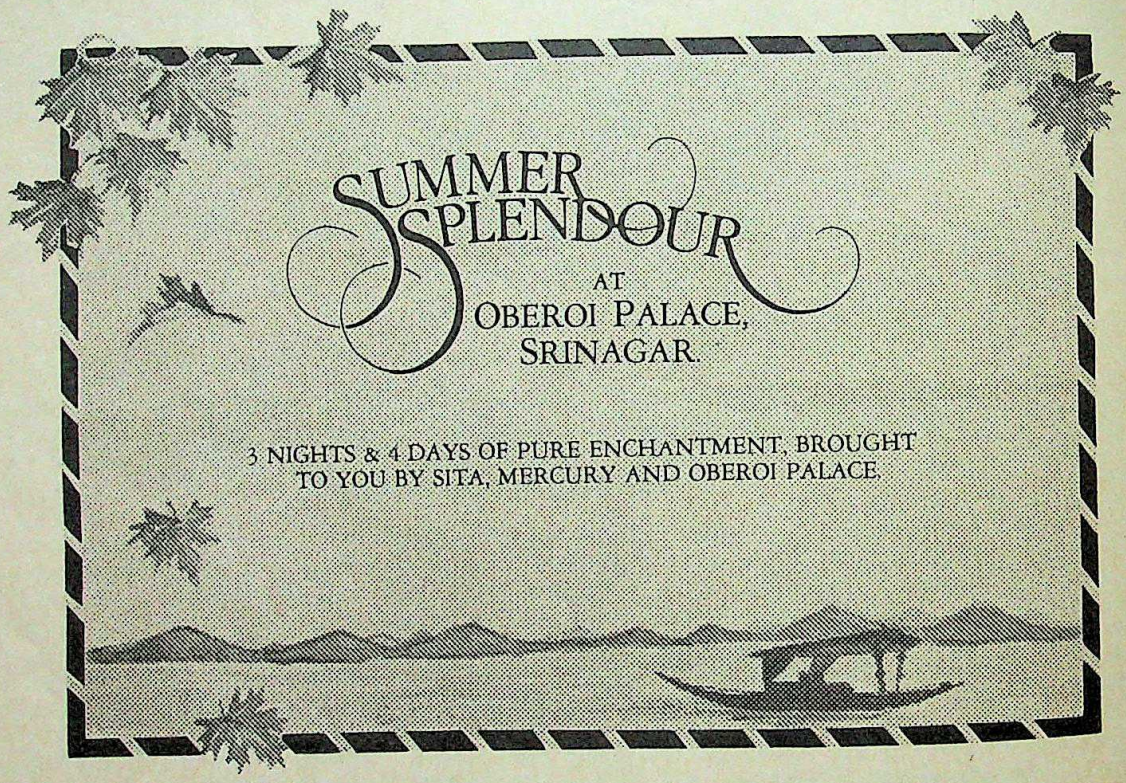
THIS COUPON CAN TAKE YOU AWAY TO A PALACE BY A LAKE IN A LAND IN FULL BLOOM.



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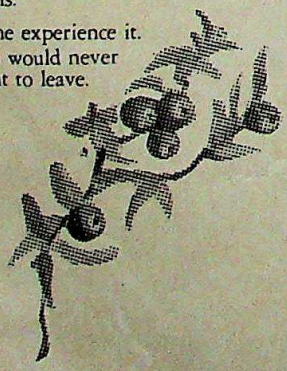

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Single occupancy: Rs. 1,460/- for 3 nights and 4 days.

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Factories Act". A spokesman of the department said: "The chief inspector of factories has no authority to cancel a licence." The labour officials say they have done their duty and "written" to the health department to enquire into the efficacy of the masks. Moreover, even the law the state Government had specially enacted to protect the workers from silicosis following world-wide publicity to the problem has not been enforced. On December 28, 1984, the state Government brought the slate-pencil industry within the purview of "dangerous operation" in the Madhya Pradesh Factories Rules, 1962, and ordered, inter alia: "The process of cutting slate-pencil stones shall not be carried out unless the cutting instruments are fitted with efficient exhaust draught to remove dust. Women or adolescents shall not be allowed to cut stones or make grooves on the stones. Packing or sorting of pencils and other operations shall not be carried out in the same shed in which stones are cut. Regular medical check-ups of the workers at the cost of employers will be a must. Workers declared medically unfit would not be allowed to work and would be provided with medical help at the cost of employers. No worker will be allowed to cut stones without a mask."

Unfortunately not a single rule has been enforced even after one and a half years. Labour officials posted at Mandsaur, when asked, pleaded their helplessness. "At the most we can start prosecution, which may linger for a long time and even if the defaulting unit is convicted it faces a maximum penalty of Rs 75," said the inspector of factories. Even more ironical is the case of the welfare fund constituted by a special enactment to provide relief to ailing workers. By a 1983 act the factory owners were asked to pay a welfare cess of Rs 2.50 per thousand packets of slate-pencils. The moment the law came into force, the production of slate-pencil units was lowered from one lakh packets per month to 15,000. But owners are not paying welfare cess even on this reduced production and prosecutions have been launched against 16 of them. Only Rs 16,000 has been collected in the fund so far as against the target of Rs 30 lakh per year. Even this amount is lying unutilised with the district administration.

The Supreme Court notice issued last month has this time brought about a marginal change. In the wake of the directive, cheaper but ineffective dust control devices have been installed by the majority of factories. The devices prolong the workers' life by a few years—earlier they used to contract silicosis within four years—giving them a breathing space of eight years. But ultimately in the final analysis death continues to stalk them as remorselessly as before.

—N.K. SINGH in Mandsaur and Indore

SLATE-PENCIL INDUSTRY

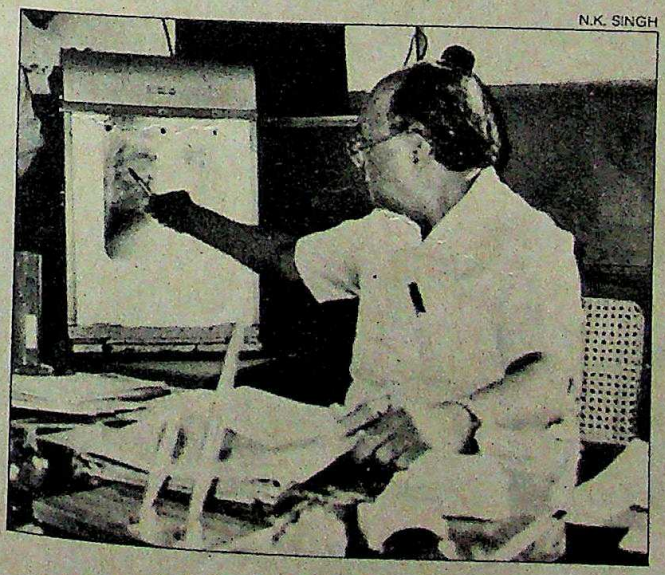
Deadly Bondage

TO THE workers in Mandsaur's slate-pencil workshops death by silicosis has become synonymous with their work. Investigations revealed that some were forced to work because they were bonded to their masters, paying off the loans with their lives. "I know that working in the industry causes death. But I've to do it because I had taken an advance of Rs 3,000 from the master for my wedding. The custom is that one cannot leave the job unless he repays the loan. I must work for the master otherwise I shall be beaten up," said Shaqoor, 18, a slate-pencil 'cutter' of Multanpura village.

Most of the workers are aware—they have seen hundreds of others die—that silicosis is deadlier than tuberculosis and is caused by breathing in silica dust while cutting soft stone to make slate-pencils. The dense dust thrown up by the electrically-operated saws envelop the poorly ventilated and primitive worksheds. Every person inside inhales the dust, which settles deep inside the lungs causing irreversible fibrous changes. The dust gradually eats the lungs away and the worker generally dies a painful death as there is no treatment for the disease. "Once silicosis makes it's appearance," says a study done by the National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH), "even the withdrawal of the worker from further exposure is unlikely to change the course of the disease."

Cutters working on the cutting edge—shooting a jet of dust barely 14 inches from the cutter's face—are more prone to the disease. No cutter is known to survive in the industry for more that 10 years. Even the others—including about 500 children—working under the same shed inhale the dangerous dust. Although the Government denies it, children of 12 years, sometimes even less, are forced to work in the sheds to sustain their dying parents. The NIOH study in 1982 revealed that 51 per cent of the workers had "positive evidence of silicosis". And even though the factories are virtual death chambers, there are about 12,000 workers employed in the industry (including mines), one-tenth of them cutters working in the 140 registered and an equal number of unregistered units.

N.K. SINGH



Lad showing X-ray of a victim

The pollution is not restricted to within the sheds. The dust naturally drifts out into the neighbourhood. "Many persons who never worked in a slate-pencil factory have been afflicted by silicosis," confirmed Dr R.K. Lad, the chief medical officer of Mandsaur Civil Hospital. All this horrifying evidence notwithstanding, precious little is being done to either change the situation or provide relief to the hapless workers.

—N.K.SINGH

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Today, instead of worrying about the quantity of work we get done, let's worry about the quality of work we do.

Numbers can be an amazing disguise.

Take India for instance.

Last year, we rolled out nearly seventy five thousand cars.

Almost a hundred and seventy thousand motorcycles.

Over sixty two lakh wrist watches.

Over six lakh colour television sets.

India in fact was, and is, one of the ten largest industrial nations in the world.

Impressive numbers.

But numbers which can't hide a truth.

For honestly, when was the last time you bought a product of top class international quality that was made entirely in India?

The point, friend, is simple.

The pursuit of excellence is a virtue that is coming in a poor second.

Making a fast buck is leading by miles.

But there is a lot to be optimistic about.

If people like you, in your own sphere push for that little extra.

Especially when 'there isn't any time' or 'profits will suffer'.

When you feel proud of the job you do.

When workmanship and care actually show in the product you make.

At least that's the way at Buckau Wolf see it.

We could have utilised all this space and money to emphasize the sophisticated machines we make.

Those difficult projects we handled with ease.

How profitable we are.

Our access to the technology of our West German principals, Krupp.

But of what use would that be if we continued mass producing the substandard.

Instead of setting new standards.

In addition to illustrating the countries to which we have exported our engineering skills, this map also illustrates how much our investment in quality consciousness has paid off. Today, Buckau Wolf is reaping the benefits of an international reputation in engineering excellence.

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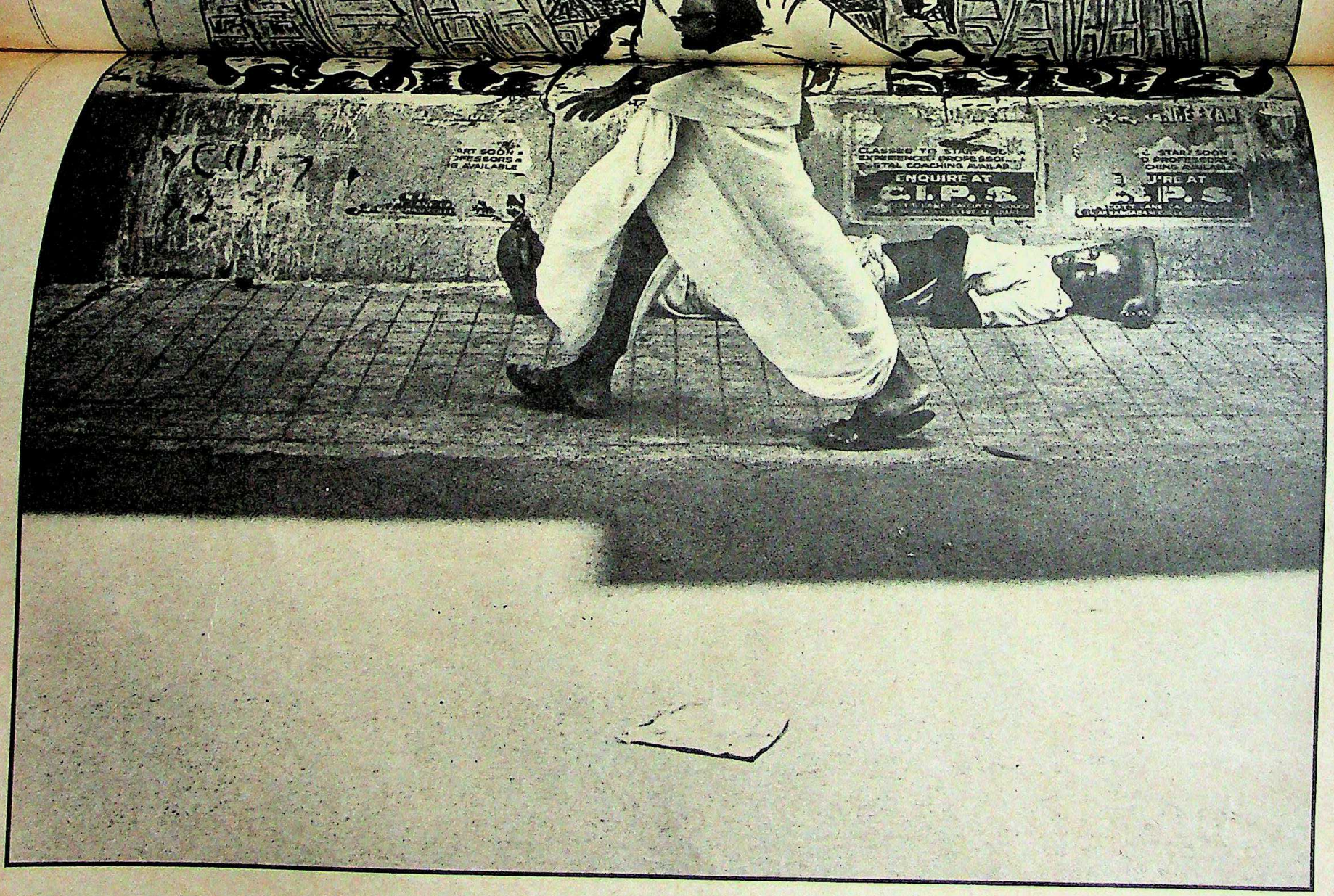

Snapshot is a new feature introduced in INDIA TODAY. The intention is to reproduce candid, off-beat black and white pictures, portraying India with a touch of humour. The magazine invites photographers, professional or amateur, to send in their contributions. Details on page 5.

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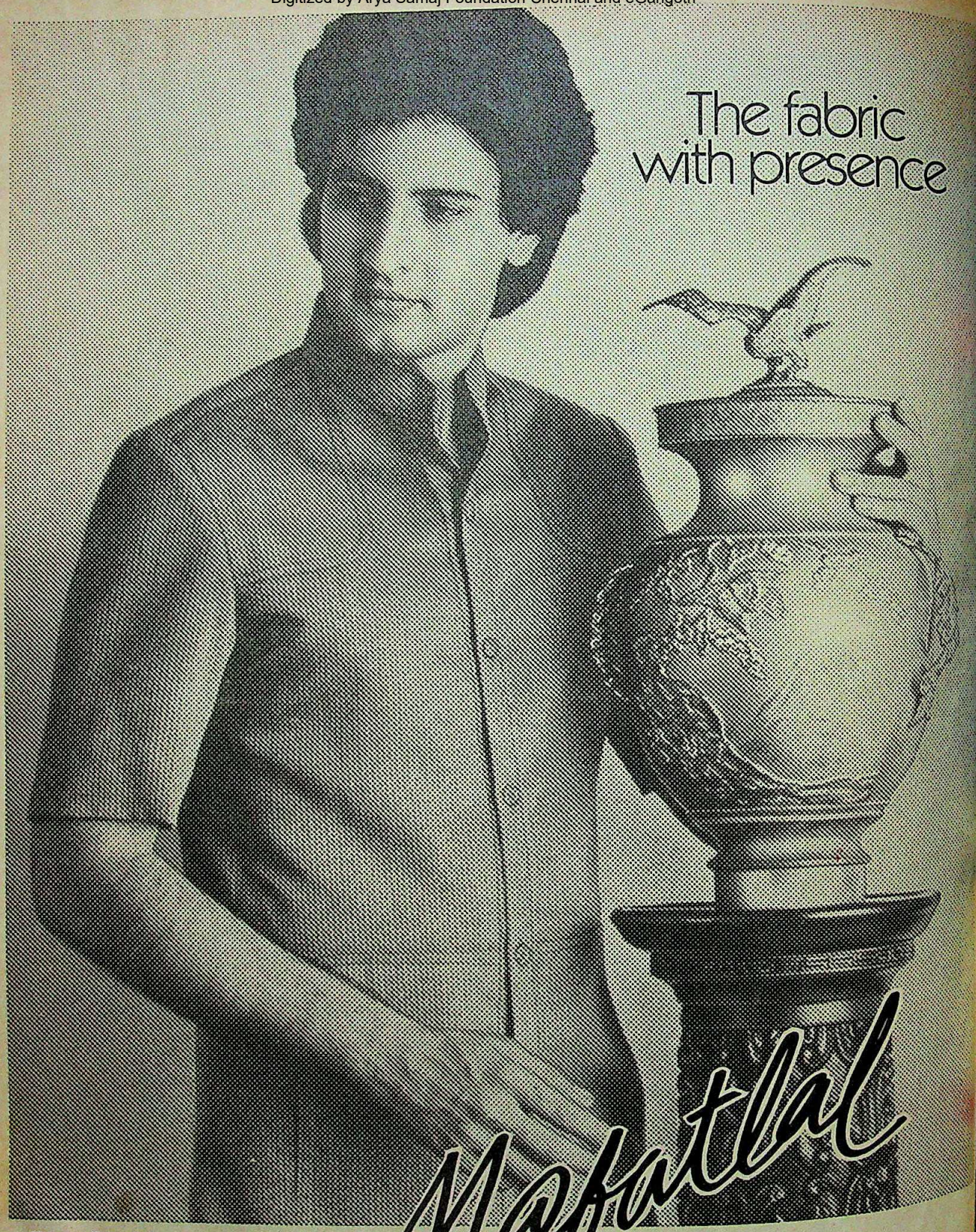

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DESIGN AND NIKY TASHA

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Take a technologist, an industrial designer and a panel of consumers.
Give them the subject of "Television and the Viewer."
And give them 100 days—to search, innovate and develop.
The result is a new idea in television design, integrating Sight, Sound and Touch in a unique televiewing experience.

NIKY TASHA
PRESENTS

THE TRIPLE SENSE SERIES

SIGHT ADVANCED DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Beyond the classic looks, beyond the modern, vertical format, the NT 30X and NT 15X are equipped with the latest Digital Tuning and Memory Systems. The result is locked-in, drift-free reception and a high-resolution picture, rich and vibrant in colour.

SOUND SYNTHESISED STEREO

Design breeds another first—twin detachable column speakers for synthesised stereo sound, plus a third built-in speaker. Full-bodied sound of 32 watts, unmatched by any other TV.

And another exclusive feature—individual Treble, Bass and Loudness controls for custom-made sound.

TOUCH MEMBRANE-ACTIVATED REMOTE

The first of its kind. The infra-red, membrane-activated remote incorporates total capability—colour, brightness, contrast, programme selection, volume, mute, standby on/off, even an 'Ideal' memory recall. Absolute command at your finger tips.

NIKY TASHA
It's a whole generation ahead.

NT 30X TWIN SPEAKERS
NT 15X BUILT-IN SINGLE SPEAKER

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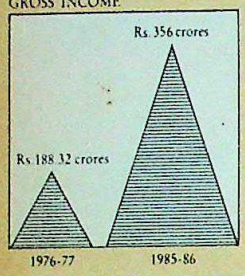
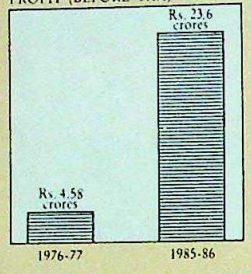
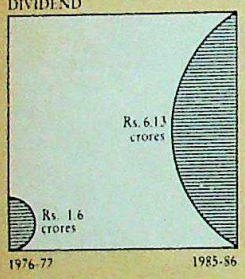
Growth is the essence of progress for a person as much as for a corporate body. We started as tea traders back in 1911 and today we have matured into a multi-product company making a sizeable contribution to India's prosperity.

All round growth

Over the years, more specifically in the last decade, we have grown multi-dimensionally. From 1977 to 1986, gross income increased from Rs. 188.32 crores to Rs. 356 crores; profit before tax from Rs. 4.58 crores to Rs. 23.6 crores; dividend distribution from Rs. 1.6 crores to Rs. 6.13 crores.





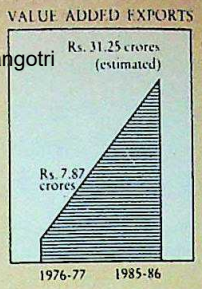


During the last decade our contribution to the national and state exchequers has been a cumulative Rs. 327.7 crores. Over the same period, the per capita income of our employees increased from Rs. 13,294 to Rs. 26,386 per annum. The Company's product range grew from packet tea to coffee, instant coffee, paper, spices, industrial machinery and mobikes. And all those associated with our growth have also become its beneficiaries.

Doing India proud in the world

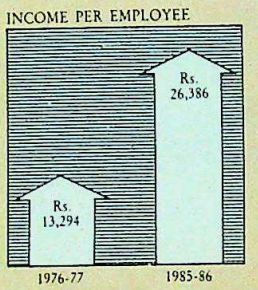
In accordance with the national priorities, we have shifted our emphasis from export of bulk

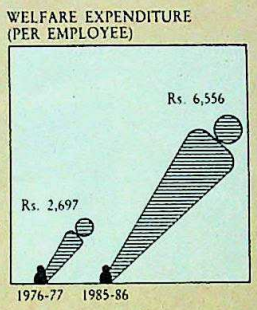
commodities to the export of value added products. Our success shows in the increase in the value added export earnings from Rs. 7.87 crores in 1976 to Rs. 31.25 crores in 1986 (estimated). In the last decade alone we have contributed Rs. 415 crores by way of export earnings from all our products.



Fair deal for Brooke Bonders

Healthy industrial relations have been the hallmark of our growth years with not a single all-India industrial unrest over the last two decades. Responsible for this enviable state of affairs is the maturity and foresight of the Brooke Bond





Employees' Federation, the apolitical apex representative body of over 8000 Brooke Bonders, and the Company Management. The aim is to provide security to all Brooke Bonders well beyond retirement, an objective that is further fulfilled by a life long pension scheme. In the Platinum Jubilee year of the Company, the introduction of an Employee Deposit Scheme will provide added security for Brooke Bonders in their old age.

Trend-setting landmark

And, now there is 'Brookefields', our new Corporate Complex at Marathahalli, near Bangalore, one of the few corporate complexes in India located in a rural setting. Built on a generous 20 acre site, the Complex comprises administrative blocks, a training centre, a club house with recreational facilities as well as residential accommodation for key management personnel. Our move away from the city is as much motivated by a sincere desire not to overstrain the already strained urban infrastructure as our determination to create a milieu conducive to better working conditions for Brooke Bonders.

Brooke Bond India Limited

Growth all round is our cup of tea.

The 'Brookefields' Corporate Complex, Marathahalli inaugurated by Mr. E.J. Verloop, Chairman, Brooke Bond Group, on 19th August 1986.

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A few words from Brooke Bond India- a company that has grown impressively in 75 years

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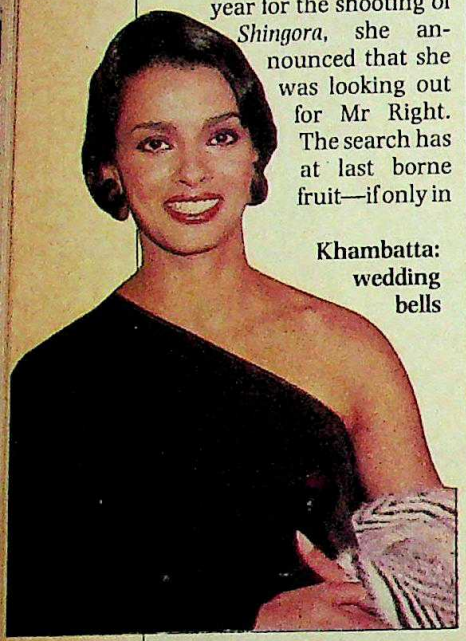
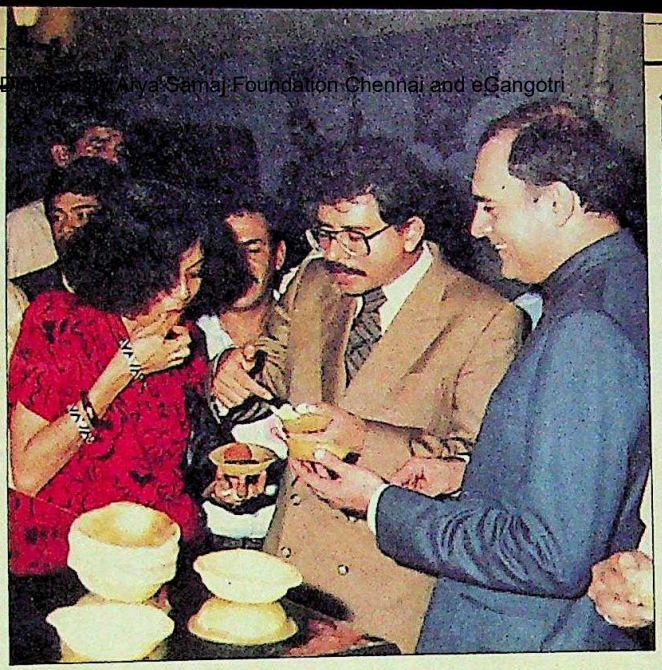
◆ The list of stop-overs on her star trek reads like a who's who of assorted stars and studs—from Sly Stallone to Kabir Bedi—not to forget the broken marriage en route. With her starship now on the other side of the constellation, **Persis Khambatta**, is set to find a permanent docking place.

On reaching Bombay last year for the shooting of *Shingora*, she announced that she was looking out for Mr Right. The search has at last borne fruit—if only in a detective agency in Canada instead of the arc-lit studios of Bombay. Prince Charming is a wealthy Gujarati called Naren Parekh who runs a private detective agency in Toronto. He has, according to Persis, other private credentials: "has eyes like Michael Caine's; is a very sexy man; I love him; it'll work this time". God, Hollywood and Bombay willing.



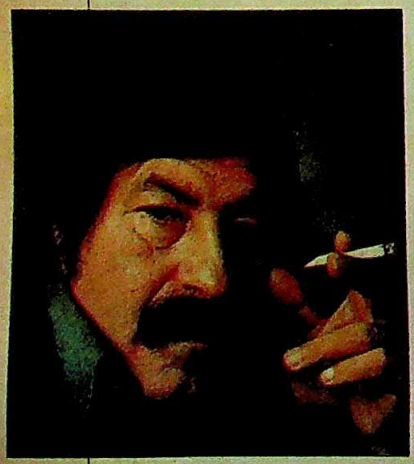
Khambatta: wedding bells



The Ortegas: sugar 'n' spice

◆ After the sugar, came the spice. And for Nicaragua President **Daniel Ortega** and his wife, it was India come alive in all its rustic flavours. It was during their goodwill trip last fortnight, when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi suddenly decided to drive down his guests for a *desi* afternoon at Pragati Maidan's special exhibit, *Hamari Gali*. Out came the red carpet, the bugles, Muhammad Yunus himself. As the guests slurped juicy rasgullas, gulped down giant golgappas and sipped Kashmiri kahwa, star bear Munna and a couple of monkeys did them a jig. For the first lady of Nicaragua there were green bangles and a liberal spread of *mehndi*. "The golgappas were delicious," murmured an appreciative Ortega. "Very good!" Now that's what's called chit-*chat* diplomacy.

◆ "Why not a poem about a pile of shit that God dropped and named Calcutta? How it swarms, stinks, lives and gets bigger and bigger," **Gunter Grass** had mused in *The Flounder*. Last fortnight, the West German writer, poet, artist and activist seemed to be getting his metaphors together for that poem as he moved into Calcutta—books, wife and baggage—to "write, draw, see, listen and yes, smell..." "For me to come to Calcutta is to come back to Calcutta," said the 58-year-old writer. "Calcutta is a city that's radically changed me."



Grass: poem for Calcutta

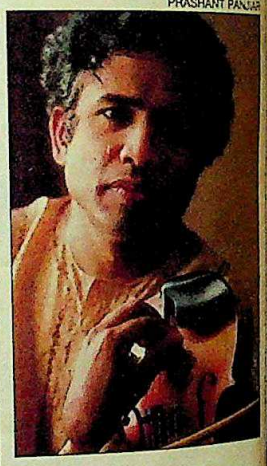
◆ There she was, the Princess of Wales beaming for the cameras on her Australia tour, in a £ 60 ready-to-wear dress bought from a common London boutique. And **Naresh Gujral** couldn't believe his eyes. Because that dress—and the 3,900 others like it—happened to be designed by Gujral, who produces garments for the French fashion house Rene Derhy. So much for royalty that prides itself on not wearing anything non-British. "It's such a compliment to have Lady Di wearing my dress. More so since she bought it off the rack without knowing whose it was," exulted the designer, caressing an assembly-line likeness.

Gujral: royal seamster

◆ But East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet. Don't tell Rudyard Kipling but as long as there's **L. Subramaniam**, they shall. The famous violinist's quest for fusion has now merged into a new stream—the score for ITV's film on the Ganga, *Pradakshina*. The California-based musician who was in the capital last fortnight, remains an Indian at heart. "I've done jazz selectively. My priority is Indian classical," he said and is now doing an anthology of classical music for the French Government.

—Compiled by MOHAMMED ASLAM

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Subramaniam: confluence

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IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

Record Breaking Games

The 10th Asian Games at Seoul have seen an unprecedented 111 sportsmen and women bettering the existing marks in the first week alone. India started poorly, however, and seems unlikely to repeat its performance at the New Delhi Asiad.

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Mixed Signals

There have been unexpected twists to the relationship between the President and the prime minister. Even though their ties have been strained for some time, Zail Singh sent a commendatory letter recently to Rajiv Gandhi. But the tensions remain.

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Militancy on the Move

Rising Hindu militancy is now being met with the formation of private Muslim armies (the Adam Sena, Ali Sena, Al-Jehad and the Jehadi Lashkar). These armies though small pose a threat to communal harmony—as was evident in the clashes in Delhi last month.

SPECIAL REPORT 82

The Reward Bonanza

A 15-month-old scheme for rewarding customs, excise and revenue intelligence officials with a percentage of the tax evasion they detect has resulted in handsome awards to many. But it has also resulted in new tensions within the tax-collecting departments.

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Transforming the Temple

Contrary to the fears of a backlash following the take-over of the Vaishno Devi temple, the move has been widely welcomed by pilgrims and Hindu groups, not the least because it has been accompanied by a major face-lift for the area around the temple.

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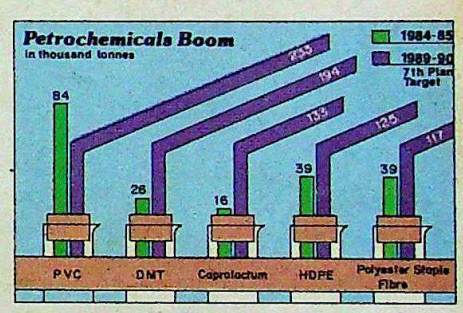

Boom Industry

Suddenly petrochemicals are the new rage in industry, with virtually every large business house rushing into a field that has seen phenomenal growth rates in the last five years, with the prospect of even faster growth in the next five years, and profits to match.

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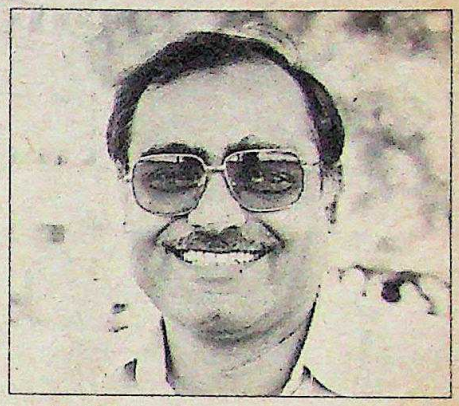
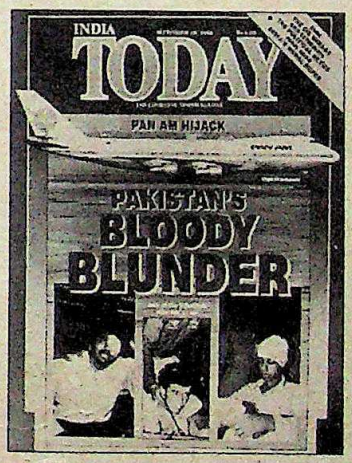
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

NINE years ago, when PRABHU CHAWLA, *40, started writing for* INDIA TODAY *as a part-time break from teaching economics, his main journalistic assets were initiative and drive. Over the years since then, he has matured into one of the finest investigative reporters, become a familiar face on the political beat with an array of contacts in high places that is the envy of his contemporaries, and repeatedly made news with his exclusive reports—on postal censorship in Delhi, jail deaths in Tamil Nadu, a timber scandal involving the then Himachal chief minister, and a great deal else.*



Last month, Chawla was among the two recipients of the Feroze Gandhi Memorial Award for 1985-86, receiving from Maharashtra Governor Shanker Dayal Sharma a cash award of Rs 11,000 and a certificate. The citation spoke of his "meticulous reporting of national affairs and investigative stories". Even in an age when awards for journalists are proliferating, there can be no disputing the professional recognition that has come to Chawla for a reportorial record that is difficult to beat.

LETTERS



HAM-HANDED

Your exhaustively researched cover story on the Pan Am hijacking ("Pakistan's Bloody Blunder", September 30) goes a long way in explaining what actually transpired at Karachi airport. After reading the plethora of bloody details in your article, one could not but agree with Rajiv Gandhi that the operations of the Pakistani security forces were nothing short of 'ham-handed".

New Delhi — **SUSHIL MEHTANI**

■ The Pan Am hijack once again focuses on the hazards of air travel in this era of lunacy and revenge. It may thus be advisable to provide all the passengers with bullet-proof vests so that at least some lives may be saved, in spite of lax security at various international airports.

Bombay — **N.K. SOMANI**

CORRECTION

In the report 'The Political Nexus' (INDIA TODAY, September 30, 1986), it was stated that Punjab Director General of Police J.F. Ribeiro had written letters to the Government naming Harcharan Singh Brar as among the politicians who were suspected to have been involved in trying to get the release of Waryam Singh, one of the suspects in the Muktsar killing and that the Faridkot SSP Rajan Gupta had been approached by certain politicians for his release. Subsequent enquiries have established that no such letters were written by Ribeiro and that Gupta had not been approached by Brar and that Brar was not involved in Waryam Singh's release. We regret any distress or embarrassment caused to Mr Brar or his family.

—**Editor**

UNFAIR CONCLUSION

Your article ("Twin Trouble", July 31) comparing the performance of our company with that of Nelco was unfair and the conclusions drawn erroneous. Tata Burroughs is one of the more successful companies in our industry. It has made profits from the very first year

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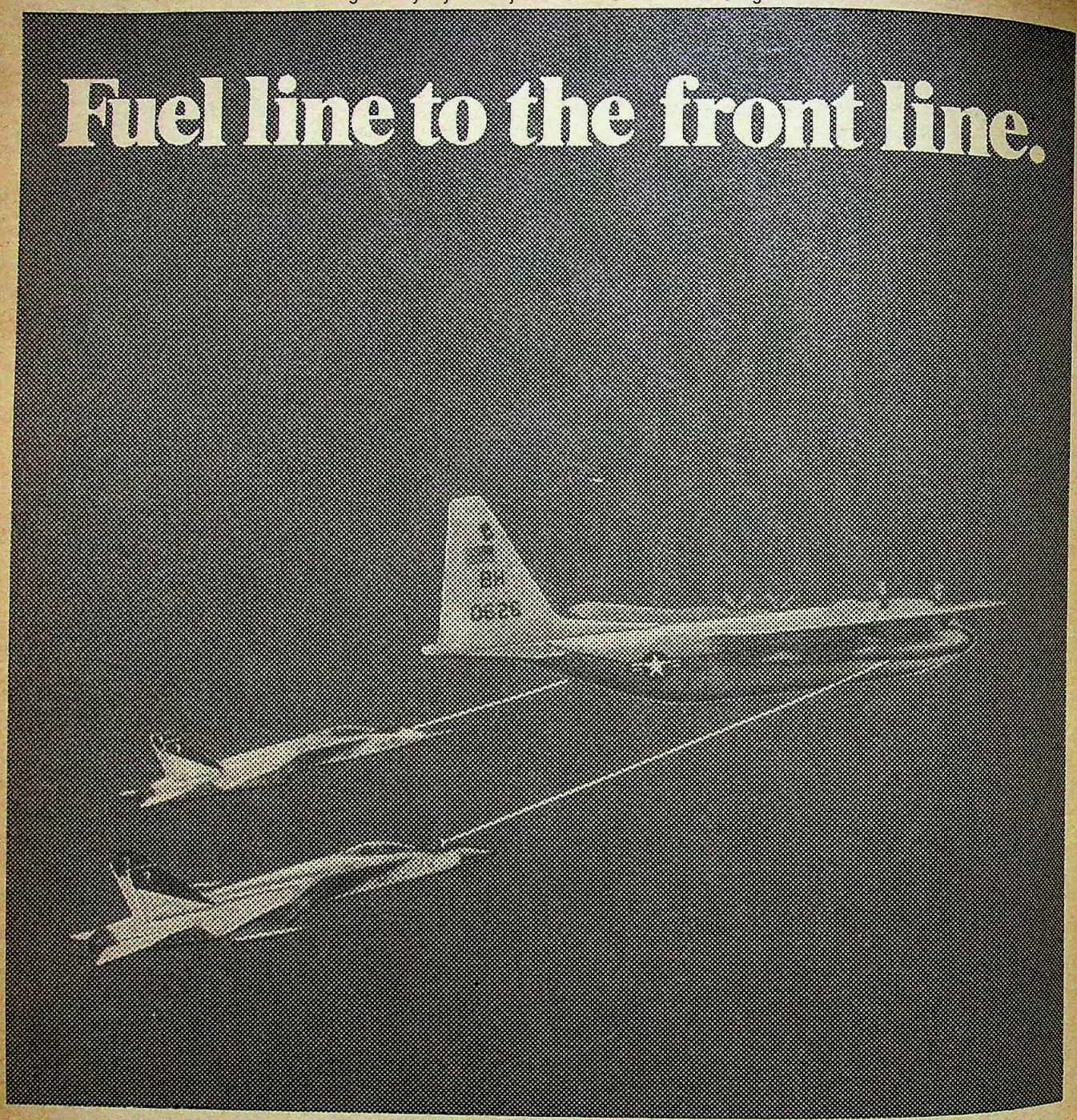
Fuel line to the front line.



Mid-air refueling may be the most demanding mission a pilot—or a plane—can take on. When one plane has to refuel different types of aircraft at different speeds, the demands multiply.

Which may explain why there are so many C-130 Hercules tankers in service around the world.

The KC-130's four turboprops give it the power to carry a 56,000-pound fuel load on a typical mission, and all the speed it needs for in-flight jet refueling. At the same time, the proven handling characteristics of the Hercules aircraft make it steady and stable at the lower speeds and altitudes required in refueling helicopters.

There's very little downtime with a KC-130. When there are no refueling missions scheduled, it can convert to a freighter in hours, and airlift 40,000 pounds of cargo to the undeveloped air strips other planes can't get into or out of.

At least seven of the world's air forces are flying the C-130 Hercules tanker today, and more have included it in their planning. They've learned that it delivers a lot more than fuel. It delivers confidence.

Lockheed-Georgia

Innovation
Giving shape to imagination.

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of its operations, declaring dividends every year.

In a fast growing business such as ours we need to change course periodically. As part of this process of adjustment we closed down our manufacturing plant in SEEPZ which was making printers. Contrary to the statement made by your correspondent the manufacturing business was throughout profitable.

Because we are an open company we made an immediate announcement of having offered a voluntary separation plan to 26 employees who were engaged in this activity.

This announcement of ours was unfortunately used by your correspondent to come to the conclusion that the company was in difficulty and was going the same way as another company in our group which has a different record.

Bombay — M.H. MODY
chairman, Tata Burroughs Ltd

MURKY DEALINGS

Your article on lobbyists ("The Hidden Persuaders, September 15), is a discerning expose of the murky goings-on in the bhawans of New Delhi. The Government that claimed to work and the one that claims to work faster are both trapped by the bureaucracy that quietly subverts any new system.

New Delhi — NIRMALA VAIDYANATHAN

■ Being a lobbyist myself, but from a non-military background, I can say this: the armed forces gives a rigorous training to their personnel in 'manoeuvres' which they utilise to great advantage in the 'strategy' of post-retirement lobbying and they deserve a *'sabash'*.

New Delhi — S.K. DACHAN

■ With reference to the remark that my company is "a big name in the arms business" in your article on "The Hidden Persuaders", I would like to state that since inception we have not sold anything to the Ministry of Defence and further that Lieutenant-General M.N. Batra in my company is dealing only with the energy sector.

New Delhi — M.M. BHAGAT

The error is regretted. —Editor

TROUBLED COMMUNITY

Your article has succeeded in factually depicting the tragic dilemma that Sikhs outside Punjab ("A Desperate Dilemma", September 15) face. If Hindus feel that the Sikhs have not 'boldly and vociferously' denounced terrorism, they are also not taking into account that Sikhs have also been deprived of their families and fortunes by rampaging mobs. Did the majority of Hindus 'boldly and vociferously' denounce that?

Pilani — SANDEEP MOOKERJEE

■ Your special report on the state of the Sikh community living outside Punjab is timely and thought-provoking. It is unfortunate that the hard-working and enterprising Sikh community feels alienated on its own soil. Sikhs at large must rise to the occasion and denounce the power-hungry politicians and vested interests exploiting the situation.

Hyderabad — G. VENKATESAN

■ Any right-thinking person would agree that the process of alienation was started by the Sikhs themselves and not by Hindus. And unfortunately, they are going further and further away by acts of terrorism and violence. They should ensure that their gurudwaras do not become a refuge for criminals and re-establish their credibility.

Secunderabad — P.S. CHANDRASHEKAR

FACETIOUS FACE-LIFT

Your report on the Indian Youth Congress ("The Rajiv Rage", September 15) has tried to trace the change taking place in the organisation. But the attractive faces and English-speaking "sophisticated" persons are as much alien to the masses as were Sanjay's "rustic rowdies".

Delhi — SURAJ YADAV

■ The Youth Congress jamboree was nothing more than a ludicrous and shameful exercise to get rid of Sanjay Gandhi's contributions to the party. The reorganisation would have been both more successful and meaningful had the young Congressmen instead laid down an ideal of working.

Patna — ASHUTOSH GUPTA

SOUR GRAPES

The launching of his own party by Gundu Rao ("Rabble Rousing", September 15) will not surprise those familiar with his style of politics. After his expulsion from the Congress(I) party, he is trying to capitalise on the disenchantment of the so-called Indira loyalists with the new leadership.

Bombay — G.C. PUJARI

■ It seems Gundu Rao and Pranab Mukherjee (expelled Congress-I members) are behaving like the jackal who condemned the grapes as sour when it failed to get them anything despite tremendous effort. If the Congress(I) led by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was so intolerably bad, why did they not leave the party much before voluntarily, without creating such a lot of noise?

Cuttack — ASHOK KUMAR SARANGI

BOLD ACTION

We agree with P.C. Sethi ("I am not crazy", September 15). Every telephone owner in India would want to kick the operator, but we are cowards and swallow humiliation without taking a stand. Sethi has actually done it without bothering about the consequences—he is a brave man and I congratulate him for it. I wish R.N. Mirdha would also occasionally show his face in telephone exchanges instead of coming on television every week.

Gwalior — KUNWAR JAI SINGH

■ Had I been the ex-home minister, I would have carried a Sten gun with me to complain to the telephone authorities. High-handedness is the only method they understand.

Calcutta — BHARAT SANGHVI

■ Whenever I visit Delhi and book a call home I never get to see my trunk call mature. Instead of undermining Mr Sethi's image nation-wide, he should have been congratulated for his efforts to single-handedly change things in the telephone exchange.

Korba — ROSHAN KUMAR

OVER-ZEALOUS DEFENCE

Your article on the economy ("The Reliance Example", September 15) overstepped to defend Reliance of its shabby deals. Mr Jha's attempt to exonerate Dhirubhai Ambani from the wholesale infringement of the country's business ethos, economy and systems is inconceivable.

If one Ambani is allowed to grow unchecked, then the country will have many more like him. And if the Reliance way of business is an answer to unemployment, why doesn't the Government legalise prostitution and smuggling as well? The licensing system should indeed be reviewed but Reliance also should not go unpunished.

Madras — K. RAJAGOPALAN NAIR

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POLL 4 RESULTS—INDUSTRY

A Premium on Business Ethics

IN the fourth opinion poll, INDIA TODAY invited its readers to nominate the person who, in their opinion, has been the top achiever in Indian industry, and to rank seven others in order of preference. Over 15,700 readers responded to the poll. For an independent assessment of the results, INDIA TODAY commissioned Dr V.L. Mote, a founder-professor of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, who also holds a doctorate in statistical methods from the State University of North Carolina in the US. His analysis:

RAPID industrial development has been a national goal since Independence, and the country has certainly achieved a great deal in terms of strengthening and diversifying its industrial base. As one result, Indian industry is no longer synonymous with textiles. The public, private and cooperative sectors have all contributed to this achievement, and also to some of the failings along the way.

This poll provided an excellent opportunity to understand the literate, urban Indian assessment of the men behind some of the achievements, of the values that are seen as worth cherish-

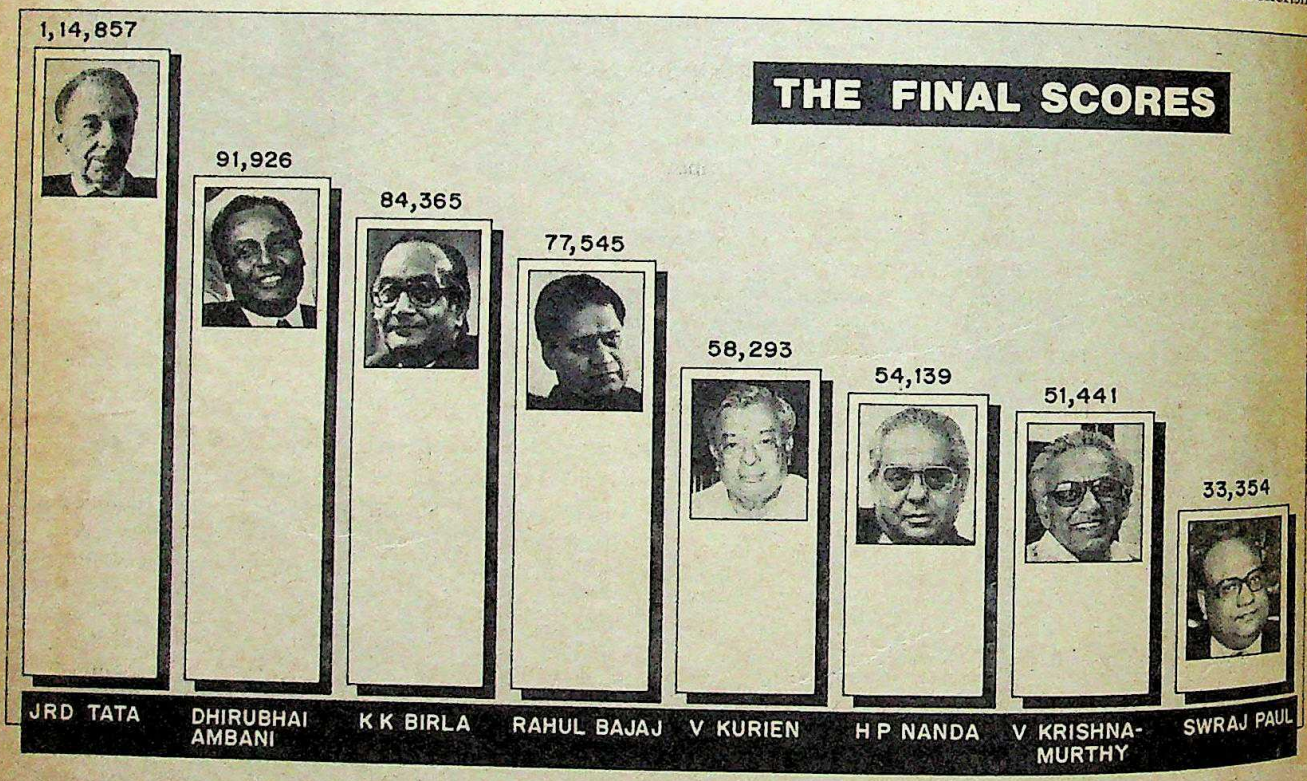

TABLE 1

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

The figures represent the percentage of total respondents who ranked each candidates at the various positions

Average Score*	Candidate	Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
7.31	J.R.D. Tata	1	65.3	19.8	6.2	3.2	2.3	1.1	1.5	0.5	100.0
5.85	Dhirubhai Ambani	2	24.3	21.9	19.6	11.7	7.4	5.5	4.9	4.7	100.0
5.37	K.K.Birla	3	1.7	32.9	21.8	15.2	11.2	9.1	6.1	2.1	100.0
4.93	Rahul Bajaj	4	2.0	8.7	25.8	30.0	18.0	10.0	4.0	1.5	100.0
3.71	V. Kurien	5	3.5	8.4	10.1	11.4	14.9	18.3	19.0	14.5	100.0
3.44	H.P. Nanda	6	0.5	2.4	6.4	13.2	23.2	24.8	22.8	6.8	100.0
3.27	V. Krishnamurthy	7	2.0	4.0	6.7	9.9	15.4	21.2	27.9	13.0	100.0
2.12	Swraj Paul	8	0.7	1.9	3.4	5.5	7.6	10.0	13.8	57.0	100.0
		Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

*Maximum average score attainable is 8.

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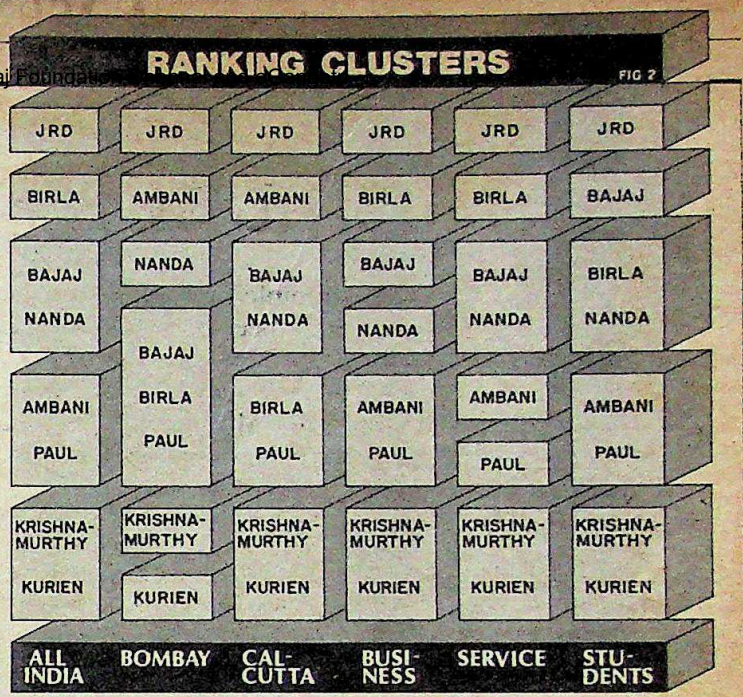
ing while striving for growth and profits, and of the 'qualitative' aspects of business achievement.

In this context, the final rankings that emerge from the responses of over 15,700 readers—and the reasons given for the rankings—are both important and revealing. For instance, financial success has not been an overriding factor, nor has growth. The participants in the poll seem to have cast their net wider, and taken seven broad yardsticks into account while making their assessments: quality of the products manufactured, customer orientation, concern for employees and the developing of people, concern for values and ethics in business, contribution to society as a whole, growth in profits, assets and returns to investors, and innovation.

The participants have placed J.R.D. Tata at the top, closely followed by Dhirubhai Ambani, while Swraj Paul has come last among the eight. (A record 90 participants had their responses tie in with the final rankings.) Tata seems to have scored very heavily on a number of counts: pioneering achievements in such areas as aviation, the continuation of the group's traditions of business ethics, the emphasis on developing people (recalling



A record total of 90 readers sent in entries that corresponded with the final national score. To select the three winners, a panel of four judges assessed the reasons they had given for ranking J.R.D. Tata first. The judges selected the winners on the basis of their understanding of the quality of Tata's contribution to Indian industry and business.

First prize:
Viswanathan Ramachandran
20, Venkatesan St. T. Nagar,
Madras.

Assessment: "Over the past half a century, JRD has made pioneering contributions in fields as diverse as aviation and atomic energy. He has a clean image and an impeccable industrial relations record. In short, through healthy industrial growth he has consistently taken care of the interests of society (employees, owners, government, consumers)."

Second prize: Venkat Ramesh
3/3 Twinkle Star, Chembur,
Bombay

Assessment: "JRD Tata has pioneered the establishment of several core sector industries. Today the Tata group headed by him is synonymous with enterprise, dynamism, nationalism and above all high ethical standards."

Third prize: Pankaj Adhikari
31/1 Radha Ballav Road, Naihati,
24 Parganas (North), West Bengal

Assessment: "JRD Tata's signal contribution to Indian industry is in building up an image that big business can be as clean as theirs. During his long and illustrious innings he succeeded admirably in inspiring respect, which is unique in Indian industry today."

Consolation prizes: Rajni Pani (Allahabad), Narayan P.D. Khandelwal (Bankura), Radha Singh (Nasik), V. Haridas Joisher (Kharagpur), M. Julius Selveyraj (Durgapur), P. Vijayalakshmi (Bangalore), Harvinder Singh Duggal (New Delhi), George Thomas Panackal (Ernakulam), Pradeep Chainwala (Allahabad), Nukala Venudhar Reddy (Yerjerla), Ranade Madhav Dhund (Bangalore), Sanjai Mohan (Dehradun), Anuj Kumar Goyal (New Delhi), Akshaya Mukul (Ranchi), Pandurang B. Palekar (Pune), Sivram Iyer (Bangalore), Sunit Kumar Ghosh (Calcutta), Lalitkumar Kedia (Bombay) Naresh Mankad (Rajkot), Dilip Bhatt (Madras), Manoj Agarwal (Guwahati), B.R. Chanakya (New Delhi), Tribhuwan Singh Bhoj (Bareilly), Irwin Kumar (Sirsa), Luxman Shankar (Damanjodi), Rajan B. Khare (Akola), Vishwa Bhushan Wadhwa (Jaipur), Vijay Patil (Sholapur), Rakesh Agrawal (New Delhi), Subhash Gahlot (Bikaner), Ajay Sinha (Delhi), Mahmoodulhasan Jubapu (Calcutta), Kiran Kapoor (New Delhi), Bharat Booch (Bombay), Puran Heet (Kota), S. Jayaraman (Bombay), Rajib Bhuyan (Shillong), Mehul Shah (Ahmedabad), Masood Raza (Patna), Ajay Bhatnagar (New Delhi), Kalpana Rajan Khare (Pulgaon), Vijay Kumar Sinha (Bokaro Steel City), Gaurang Urindavan Shah (Ahmedabad), S. Arumugam (Nagercoil), V. Sreedhar (Kheda), Shanbhag Pundalik (Bombay), Ravi Jacob Korula (Vellore), I.V.N.V. Prasad (Ahmedabad), M.S. Dayanand (4 Dharwar), Sanjay K. Pendharker (Jabalpur), Mira Ram Keswani (Bombay), Vijayan (Rajkot), Kajoli Thomas (New Delhi), Subhash Khanna (New Delhi), Anand Cavale (Bombay), Bijan Kumar Chaudhuri (Calcutta), Arun Mehrotra (Bhopal), Suresh Jaywant Mahajan (Bombay), Aparna Sukhtankar (Thane), Rajesh Khamesra (Udaipur), Vivek Ramakrishnan (Madras), Nanak Singh (New Delhi), Anil Kumar Grover (Delhi), Prabhjot Singh (New Delhi), Sunil Mittal (Neumunster-FRG), Sanjeev Kumar (Bhiwani), Yeswant Ratnakar (New Delhi), Shyamprasad (Bangalore), Shirish Srivastava (Baroda), Arjun Subramaniam (Bareilly), Ramesh Menon (Madras), Dwarika Prasad Gupta (Kota), Manjanath Govind Bhat (Saharanpur), Rakesh Khanna (Amritsar), Kishore H. Mistry (Bharuch), Mahmood Ali Khan (Hyderabad), Vinod Kumar Chitrapur (Mangalore), Wasan Singh Sukhdev (Sirhind), Rajesh A. Khambhayata (Rajkot), Pradeep K. Chowdhury (Pune), Shankar Sheo Jha (New Delhi), Flight Lieutenant Om Prakash Jain (c/o 56 APO), Major P.S. Bhalla (c/o 56 APO), Naveen Kumar Sharma (Delhi), Rajan Jaitly (New Delhi), Narahari Pravin Patel (Madras), Urvin Shah (Surat).

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Matsushita's motto: we do not make batteries, we make people), the fact that Tata products spell quality and reliability, and also that he has respected workers' suggestions, and kept the interests of society at large in mind while pursuing business objectives. Very clearly, money—and quick money—isn't all.

Yet, the industrialist who comes in second is Dhirubhai Ambani, a rapid-fire achiever if ever there was one. But once again, the poll participants have made canny observations of his achievements, pointing to the boost he has given to the equity cult and to his financial genius.

Agreement among the participants on the final rankings was greater in this poll than in the last one, with the 'coefficient of concordance' (going up on a scale from zero to one) being 0.47, compared to 0.37 for the last poll. A greater percentage of people also agreed on the No.1 choice in this poll than in the earlier ones. As many as 65.3 per cent of the participants ranked Tata first (Table 1), while only 53.3 per cent ranked Sunil Gavaskar first in sport and just 53.5 per cent ranked Rajiv Gandhi first in politics. Also, there was a high degree of unanimity among the participants concerning the ranks they gave to Tata. In contrast, there was greater variance in the case of Ambani, indicating that several participants don't agree on his ranking. This reflects the controversies surrounding him. Finally, the rankings were not very different in the three sub-groups of businessmen, students and salaried class.

A statistical scrutiny of the results reveals that some of the personalities have been ranked in the same way by a good number of the poll participants and hence form clusters. Figure 2 shows that V. Krishnamurthy belongs to the same cluster as V. Kurien, which means that the images and achievements of these personalities are related in the minds of participants, except in Bombay. Tata, however, is not clustered with any one else.

SAMPLES of respondents' comments on the seven candidates other than J.R.D. Tata give an indication of the reasons why they rate some businessmen ahead of others in terms of their contribution to Indian industrial development.

DHIRUBHAI AMBANI

Despite *Indian Express*, the fact remains that Ambani's Reliance has witnessed an out-of-the-world growth. Here is an industrialist who is innovative, go-getting and is committed to growth.
Jaipur — Jagdeep Singh

● Enriching the investor in an impedimental environment is genius. Instead of counting their family millions, all industrial houses should see what potential lies in the common man's support.
New Delhi — Ashok Goyal

● The spectacular growth of Reliance speaks for itself, and Ambani's achievement in this respect is unparalleled in Indian industry.
New Delhi — Abhijit Raja

K.K. BIRLA

Talk to anyone about Indian industry and the first name to be uttered will be Birla.
Bikaner — Alka Pareek

● His contribution to the Indian industrial world is immeasureable.
Mysore — Ramprasad

● He has contributed a lot in every sphere of business and in the upkeep of social culture.
Patiala — Kuldip Singh Virk

RAHUL BAJAJ

I rank Rahul Bajaj as the top achiever in Indian industry because of his total dedication to quality.
New Delhi — Vasanth Srinivasan

● Rahul Bajaj is one of the very few industrialists in India who has stood for self-reliance.
Calcutta — R.K. Bajoria

● Bajaj has put the middle class people's transport facility into a very healthy situation.
Kargal Colony — A.R.Seetha Ramu

V.KURIEN

Indians will be ever grateful for the milk revolution he has brought about.
Shahdol — Shridhar Dahake

● Dr Kurien is a born leader with business acumen who has organised the only successful cooperative model benefiting rural livestock owners and urban consumers.
Bangalore — B.U. Rao

● He has organised a fiercely independent-minded stratum of Indian society towards a positive goal, for purposes other than agitation.
Hyderabad — A.K. Prasad

H.P. NANDA

The Escorts empire which seemed lost was recovered, and the shake-up of other industrial empires has been halted.
Bombay — Vipin Parekh

● To become a legend in Indian industry from an ordinary refugee shows a man's courage, wisdom and determination.
Shaktinagar — R.S. Singh

● He heads the most systematically expanding group in the country.
New Delhi — S. Sundar Rajan

V. KRISHNAMURTHY

He has achieved as much as Birla and Tata, except that his efforts have been for the public and workers.
New Delhi — Sreelatha Prabhakar

● He is the right man to get things moving in the public sector. Results can always be achieved in the private sector, but in the public sector one requires skill and determination.
New Delhi — Pawan Puri

● By showing results in public sector undertakings, V. Krishnamurthy has done the most commendable job.
Bangalore — R.C. Purohit

SWRAJ PAUL

His rise from a commoner to the head of a multimillion dollar industrial empire in a foreign land proves his ability and entrepreneurship.
New Delhi — A.K. Agrawal

● He taught the resident businessmen the do's and don'ts of business.
Shimla — Vivek Mohan

● He has formed his own successful group in a foreign country where the competition is more intense.
Bombay — G. Devanathan

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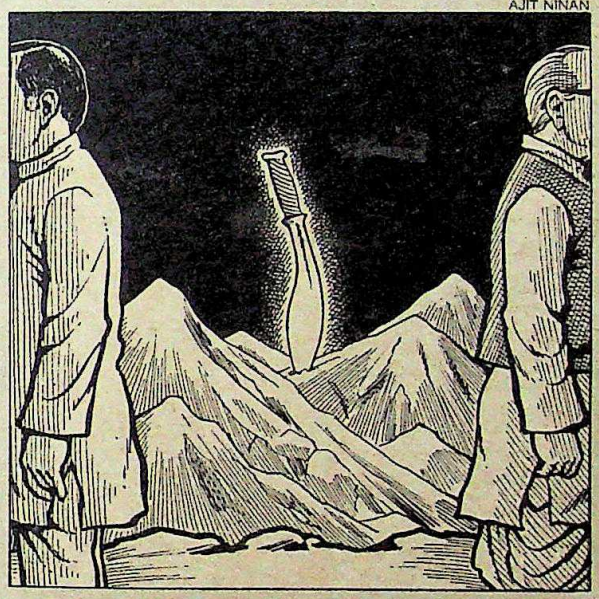
GORKHALAND

Dodging the Issue

THE Gorkhaland agitation has wedged West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu squarely between a rock and hard place. He is having to balance his party's traditional commitment to some form of regional autonomy for the Darjeeling area dominated by Nepalese-speaking people, with resisting any accommodation with the current leadership of the movement whose demands have far exceeded the original goal. But instead of helping to extricate him from his unenviable discomfiture in the national interest, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and his aides have chosen to play political football with the issue which, if left to bubble, could spread the poison of ethnic separatism throughout the land. Surely, the prime minister could not possibly want to relive the recent history of Punjab where party-oriented political expediency has created the havoc of today. The Congress(I)'s short-sighted game-plan in West Bengal has suddenly given respectability to the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF)'s Subhash Ghising, a former corporal of the Indian army who was barely six months ago regarded as an irresponsible crank. The Centre, in effect, has helped him to stake the claim of being the spokesman of the 15 lakh Gorkhas in and around the Darjeeling area. And he finds himself in the position of being able to play off the Centre against West Bengal in a situation where the two need maximum cooperation. Today, Ghising has been invited for talks by Union Home Minister Buta Singh—and he has a letter to prove it, which he gleefully flashes. This is a cruel slap in the face of Basu, who refuses to talk to him because he considers Ghising's GNLF "anti-national". Rajiv does not agree because, he says, the Union home and law ministries have examined the GNLF's literature and seen nothing there which is anti-national.


AJIT NINAN

This is patently absurd. Even though Ghising has lately been cooing like a moderate, his past record reverberates with hawk-like anti-national screeching. In the past six years of its existence, the GNLF has written letters to foreign heads of state and the United Nations seeking their help to end the Indian "genocide" of Gorkhas, and has appealed to the 40,000 Gorkhas in the Indian army to revolt. But Ghising has subsequently expressed regret over these acts. Corporal Ghising had even sounded a clarion call to observe Independence Day as a "black day" but later withdrew it on the eve of the occasion.

Basu is not the hard liner on the issue as he is being portrayed. He is committed to some form of regional autonomy, perhaps on the lines of a regional council. But he will not deal with anybody demanding a homeland for the Gorkhas or threatening violence. Some may view this attitude as a political ploy—a Jyoti Basu posture for the upcoming assembly elections, aimed at capturing the imagination of the people of Bengal who no doubt feel threatened by yet another movement to divide their state. But his choices are limited. The autonomy question can only be resolved by the Centre, but right now New Delhi seems more interested in watching Basu squirm politically than in suggesting workable and imaginative solutions. And there is little doubt that Basu must, at some point, talk to the Gorkha movement's leadership. But as of now, the only recognisable leader, Ghising, comforted by the new credentials of moderatism heaped on him by the Centre, seems in no mood to withdraw his more radical demands.

If the issue was not so serious Rajiv's stand would have been laughable. Displaying astonishing ignorance, he kept referring to all Nepalis as foreigners until he was corrected by Buta Singh. Next he said that the problem concerned only those Nepalis who were still not citizens of India and now want Indian citizenship. To reduce the complex Gorkha demands to this simplistic matrix is a gross lack of judgement. What Rajiv wants is that the state Government solve the problem within the framework of the Constitution, and adds disingenuously that the Centre will intervene only if the state expresses its inability to tackle the problem. But the Centre is indulging in double-speak on this issue. According to the Centre, giving regional autonomy to the Gorkhas, which will require a constitutional amendment, will open the floodgates for similar demands from other sections of the country. So, what exactly does the Centre hope to discuss with Ghising? If it is not prepared to concede the limited demand for a regional council, is it prepared to even discuss the much larger demand for a separate state? Is it not aware that even the promise of such talks creates hopes which if not met—and they cannot be met—will only fan the trend towards extremism? The impression is unavoidable that what the Centre is doing is indulging in one-upmanship.

Basu has an onerous responsibility. He must accelerate, implement and publicise economic development plans in that neglected region and begin a political dialogue with grass-roots leaders while being firm about the national interest. In the quest for this Basu, too, must not be diverted by narrow, politically partisan considerations. So far, Basu has failed to display any special acumen in tackling this issue. The ball is in his court, too. For now, he can rightly blame the Centre for duplicity, but in the end, he will have to take up the challenge of the Gorkhaland issue both as a politician and a statesman.

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Diplomatic Bang

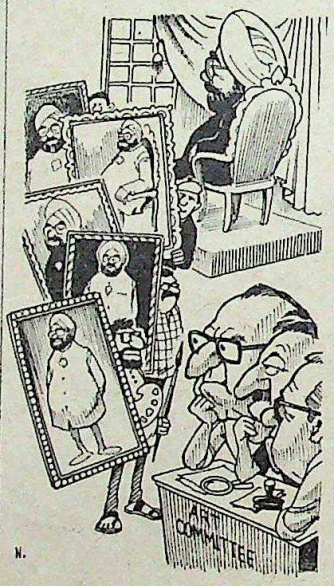
● The hawks in South Block have long been lobbying the Prime Minister's Secretariat to make some kind of bold gesture to show Pakistan that

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN

India is not going to stand by in dovish acceptance of its neighbour's continuous provocations since Rajiv Gandhi became prime minister. During the last two years, notwithstanding protestations to the contrary, Pakistan has speeded up efforts to build a nuclear device, amassed new troop formations along India's borders, given military training to Sikh terrorists in secret army locations, carelessly bungled the recent airline hijacking, and even revived talk about "self-determination" for Kashmir. There is little doubt that while Rajiv is no adventurous warmonger, he is steadily losing patience with Pakistan's President Zia-ul-Haq. As a demonstration of his pique and the fact that "India cannot be cavalierly pushed around", as one senior official put it, India is now planning, literally, the biggest fireworks display in history near the Pakistani border. Starting late this year, the entire Western Command of the Indian Army, tanks, supertanks, guns, superguns and all, will hold a massive exercise, using live ammunition "somewhere in the western sector", according to a Ministry of Defence official. And the Pakistani forces across the border will not even need binoculars to see it.

Tender Portrait

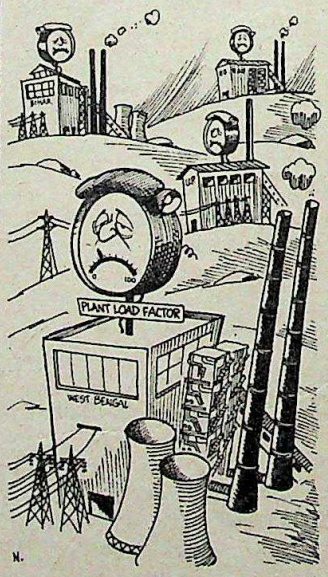
● India's Delhi-based artistic establishment, that is the governmentwallahs who sit on the various committees dishing out patronage and commissioning works of art, are just as prone to the ways of babudom as are the work-a-



day gnomes of North and South Block. Recently, a government art committee which oversees the artwork in Rashtrapati Bhawan sent letters to selected artists saying that it wanted to commission a portrait of President Zail Singh. The artists, all prominent in their field, should have been honoured by all accounts. But they wound up not being amused. In classical bureaucratic fashion, the letters from the art committee were in fact tenders—the sort that ministerial babus are used to sending out while inviting competitors to bid on various government projects. In this case, the letters from the committee asked the artists for sample portraits of the President drawn from existing pictures of his. The entrants would be judged and a final artist picked, apparently from a short-list. Quipped one insider: "If the President wants a dancer to perform at Rashtrapati Bhawan will there first be sample performances?"

The New Maths

● Either the prime minister is being wrongly briefed or he just cannot resist the temptation of playing to the gallery when it comes to the Marxist Government in West Bengal. During his trip there last fortnight, Rajiv Gandhi poured scorn on the state's performance in the generation of electricity, saying that the plant load factor (PLF) of the units in that state was as low as 30 per cent. Which would be disastrous; only it is simply not true. West Bengal's PLF for August was, in fact, 44.2 per cent, which is, admittedly,



lower than the national figure by almost 10 per cent. But there is no need for West Bengal to hang its head in shame: at least five Congress(I)-ruled states have a PLF which is much, much lower. They are: Uttar Pradesh (30.7), Bihar (29.7), Haryana (27.9), Orissa (27.9) and Rajasthan an unbelievably and shamefully low 12.2 per cent.

Raiders' Backlash

● Rarely has so much pressure been mounted on the Government as was done when the officials of the Enforcement Directorate arrested industrialist-bachelor Lalit Mohan Thapar, 55, chairman of the Thapar group of companies on charges of foreign exchange violations. Ministers, officials, leading politicians from opposition parties and several others put in their tuppeny-bit of wire-pulling to try and get the influential Thapar released.

But the most interesting reaction came from Washing-

ton, from where the newly-installed Indian Ambassador P.K. Kaul decided to send a lengthy telex message pointing out that the arrest had provoked negative comments in the US press. Kaul said that he had received several representations protesting vociferously against the sudden arrest. The campaign has had its effect. Hapless Finance Ministry officials have been asked to prepare a detailed note justifying their decision to arrest Thapar and the matter is to come under the close scrutiny of the prime minister himself, who made no bones about his displeasure in a conversation with businessmen during his visit to Calcutta last fortnight.

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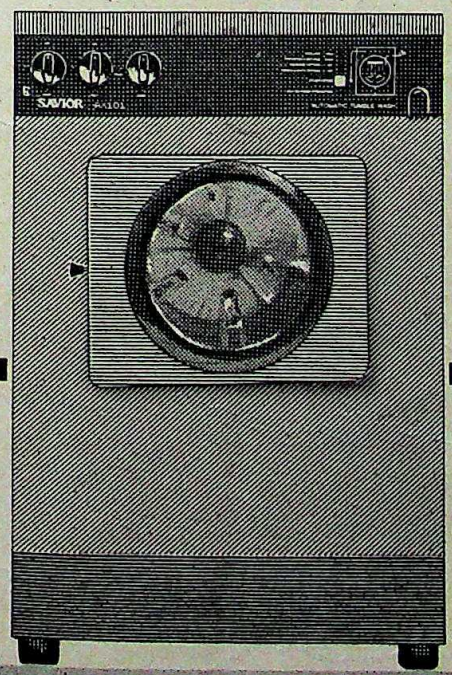

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■ R.P. GOENKA, industrialist, talking to Rajiv Gandhi in Calcutta, quoted in *Business Standard*

● *It is against my guideline. What happened recently was not as per my guideline.*

■ RAJIV GANDHI addressing businessmen in Calcutta, reported in *Business Standard*

● *Indira Gandhi was a political person. Rajiv Gandhi is a social climber.... You could differ with Mrs Gandhi's politics. Rajiv Gandhi has no politics, but personal ambitions.*

■ CHANDRA SHEKHAR, Janata Party president, in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

● *Many of these expelled Congressmen have been political turncoats in the past and I hope that like many others of their kind, they will be back sooner or later.*

■ P.N. SUKUL, Congress(I) leader, quoted in *The Statesman*

● *In the last 100 years, with both the British and the Congress regime, many new states were carved out but the capital always remained with the parent state. So now, if the capital goes to Punjab, why should we give something in exchange to Haryana?*

■ PRAKASH SINGH BADAL in *Imprint*

● *There is need to rake muck when there is muck lying around but the press should take care not to add to the muck. The greater the power of the press, the greater the need for restraint. Journalism as a form of excitement for the literate masses can be a cruel sport.*

■ ABU ABRAHAM in *Sunday Observer*

● *Between you and me, I have never been a man of property. I rent this place from where I function... there's a laundry below.*

■ R.K. KARANJIA in *Sunday*

● *With chicken you are never fooled. They look alike around the globe so we are choosing that.*

■ Indian sportsman on reports that 18,000 dogs had been slaughtered in Korea to feed athletes for the Seoul Asiad, quoted in *The Hindu*

● *Top players are bound to get absolutely tired, physically and mentally. We therefore wanted to preserve men of Sunil Gavaskar's calibre for the sterner battles ahead.*

■ CHANDU BORDE, chairman of the selection committee explaining why Gavaskar was dropped, in *Sportsworld*

● *Sponsors want us to make serials like Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi but critics want us to show a beggar or a mochi as he actually lives. Who the hell is going to pay to make such serials? Imagine Colgate sponsoring Nukkad when the serial is advocating Marxism!*

■ KUNDAN SHAH, film-maker, in *Society*

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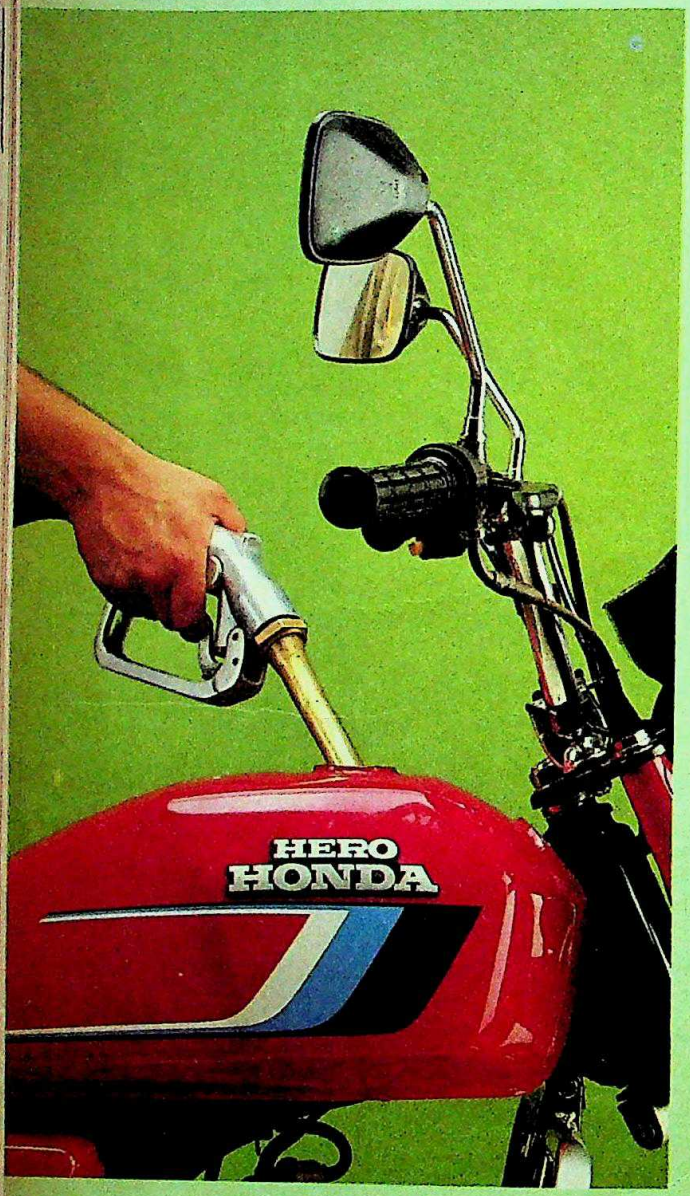

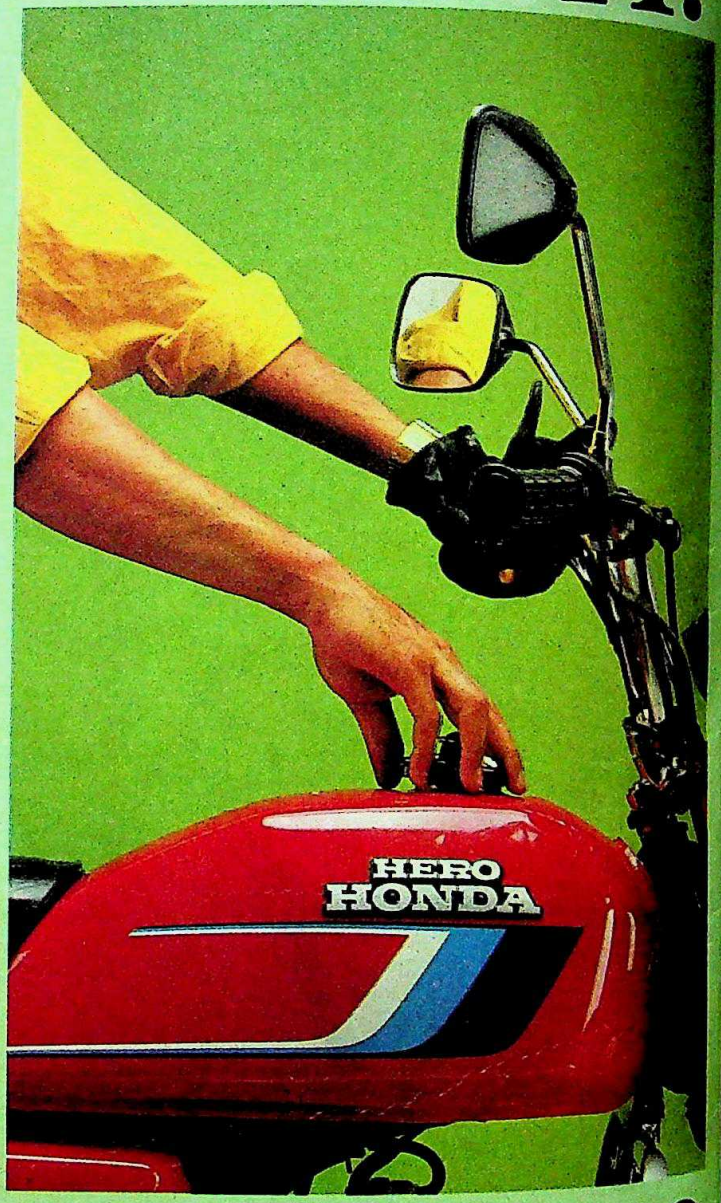

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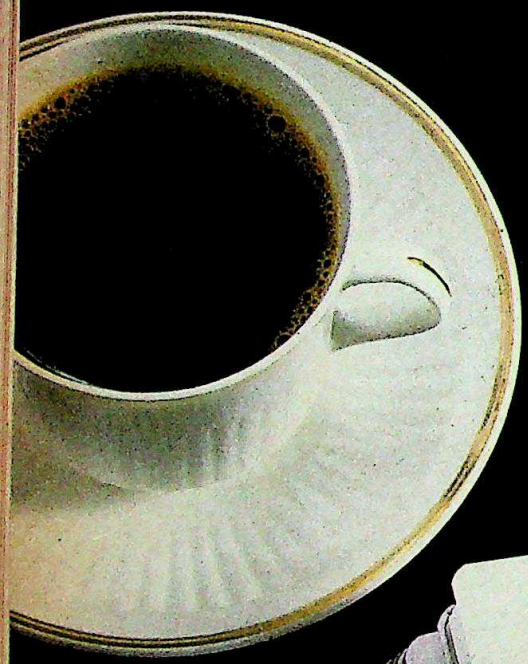

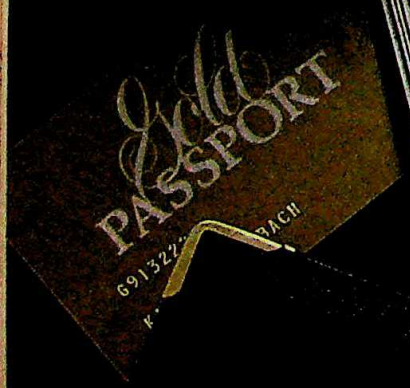

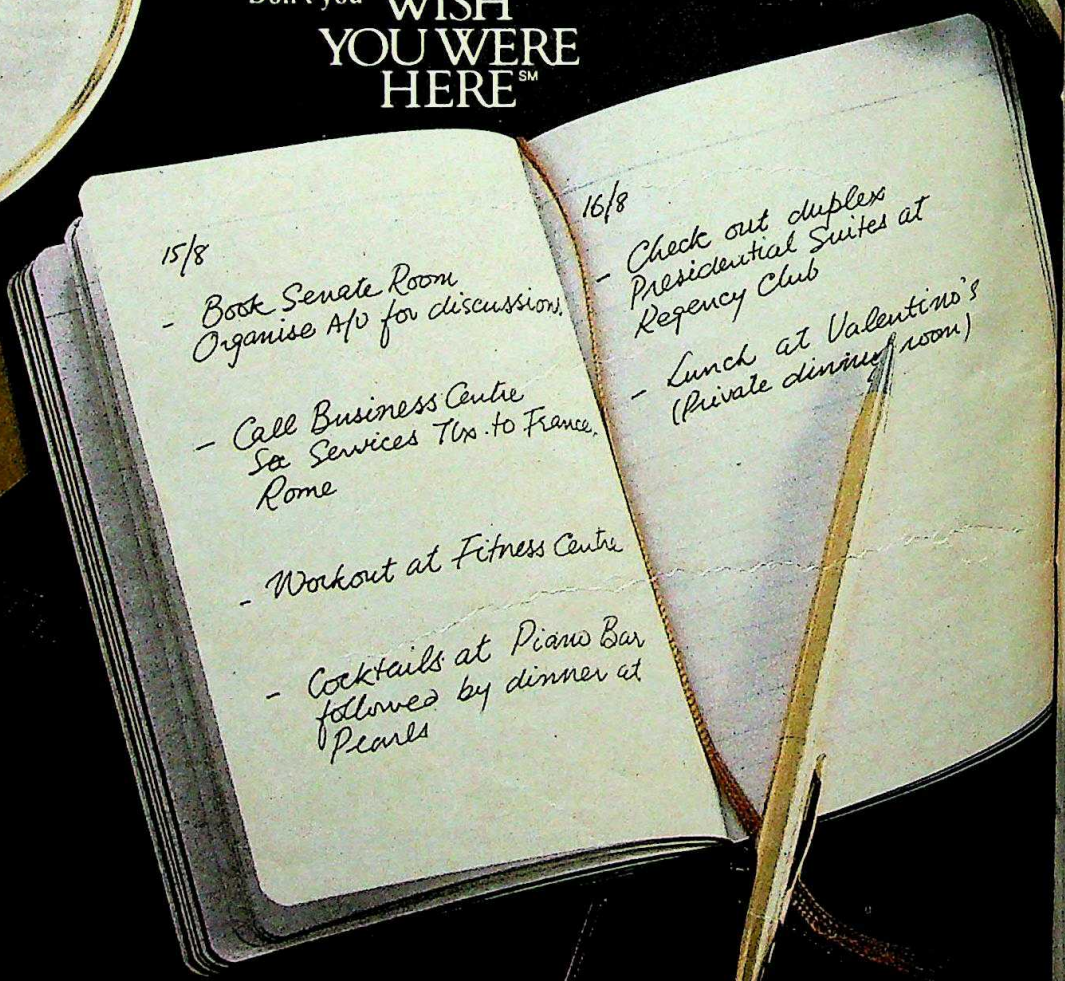

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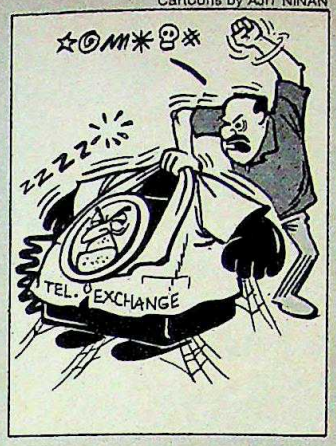
Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

RINGING TROUBLE

■ There is hard evidence to show that the citizenry takes its cue from its leaders. Former home minister P.C. Sethi will be pleased to know that his style is carefully noted and copied as far away as Chakradharpur, Singhbhum district.

When Ramavatar, a prominent trader, booked a lightning call to Calcutta, it failed to materialise. The lines were disrupted, he was told. Now, what could have been a more logical and reasonable explanation?



But Ramavatar, a restless soul, was not satisfied. He went a-calling to the exchange, rammed his way in and collared another Ram (initials R.D.), the telephone operator. But operators, who recognise that theirs is a hazardous profession, and that the public does not always behave in a democratic fashion, are quick to gang up in an emergency. In this case, too, they rushed immediately to their Ram's rescue.

The Bihar circle of the All India Telephone Traffic Employees Association now insists that the police take action against Ramavatar. It seems only a matter of time before this poor, much-maligned community is given a full-fledged course in self-defence as an integral part of its basic training.

PAYING IN KIND

■ While people are always discouraged from taking the law into their own hands, that is precisely what the villagers of Locharla village in Anantapur district did.

They were tired of being at the mercy of that all-powerful pillar of the community, the fair price shop dealer. It was palmolein oil that finally did him in. When they failed to get their quota for September on time, the villagers angrily wanted to know what the matter was. There was no satisfactory answer.

The villagers didn't trust what are generally called "higher authorities" either to bring the trader to book. After all, he could always pass on an extra dollop of palmolein under the table in the right quarters.

They adopted instead the only course open to them. The barber refused to trim his hair, the washermen declined to wash his clothes and everyone simply stopped talking or having anything to do with him. What was more, they imposed a fine of Rs 500.

While the conclusion of this tense drama is as yet unclear, one thing is for certain: one of the characters wears long hair and dirty clothes.

TALKATHON

■ Silence may be golden, but certainly not for 54-year-old Jayaraman, a beedi worker of Padrikuppam who recently talked his way into the record books. For almost an entire week, while people slept and woke up, went to office and came back, watched a serial on TV or just sat back quietly with their favourite book, Jayaraman simply kept talking.

One hundred and sixty five hours, said the clock, when Jayaraman finally called it a week. This should earn him a place in the Guinness Book of Records where the place of honour so far was taken by a Sri Lankan who, about five years ago, yakked on 159 hours non-stop.

While bombarding the ears of his hapless audience Jayaraman was constantly mindful—like all good showmen—that he should hold their attention. When the listeners tired of science, he turned to economics and then to politics. And when all else failed, Jayaraman adroitly switched to narrating stories from films. Time off was only five minutes every hour, as permitted by the talk rules.

While Jayaraman is probably at home nursing his throat, there is a moral to the story: a determined man can talk himself into anything.

MARRIAGE BY PROXY

■ The value of proxy is well appreciated by all students who have stood in for their absent friends in class. But Parameswaran, of village Nadathara, had a lesson to teach when he recently carried proxy to its logical and for him, highly satisfactory conclusion.

Like any 23-year-old about to get married, Parameswaran was counting the days. But a few days before the big event, the groom was taken seriously ill. He didn't lose heart, certain that he could leave his sick bed briefly to perform this pleasant but vital duty.

But doctors will be doctors. Spoil sports who can advise going off cigarettes, liquor and food can also advise against weddings. That is exactly what Parmeswaran's doctor told him: he was too sick to leave hospital.

It was a brief but exhausting debate that raged within Parmeswaran: should he be a good patient or a good groom? Just in time, he figured he could be both.

Off went his sister to perform the ritual on his behalf, thus proving incontrovertibly that a person can be at two places at the same time.

—Compiled by SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

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PRESIDENT

Mixed Signals

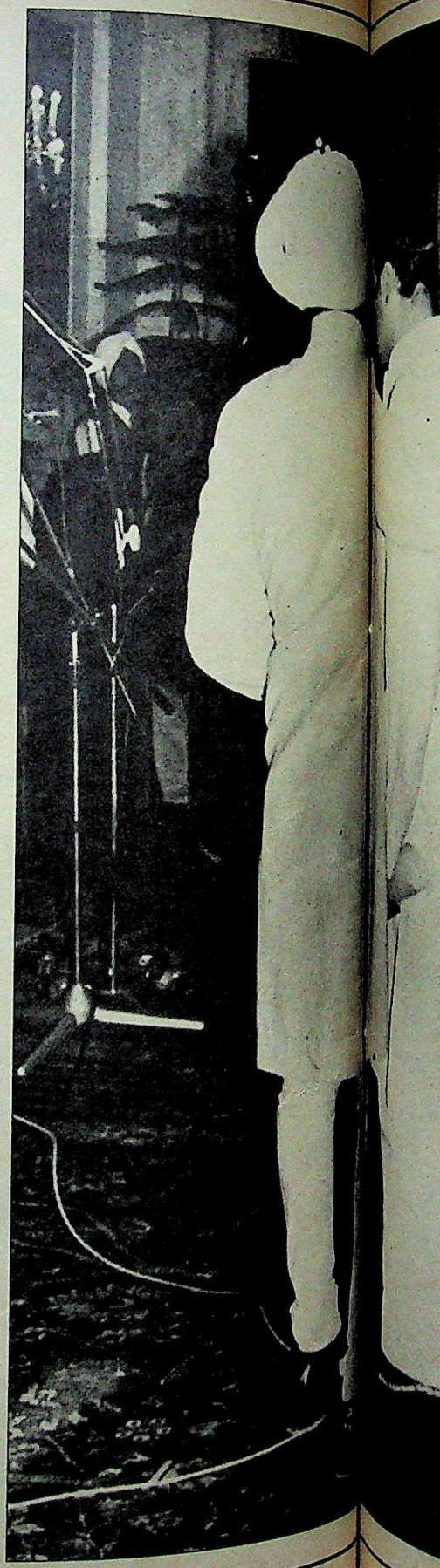
THE prime minister receives hundreds of letters daily from his admirers and critics. But one which landed last fortnight on his desk surprised even Rajiv Gandhi. The letter, signed by President Giani Zail Singh, showered praise on the prime minister's performance at the recently concluded Non-Aligned summit at Harare. "This has raised India's prestige abroad," wrote the President. The communication is being interpreted in knowledgeable circles as a move by Singh to normalise the relationship between him and Rajiv—a relationship which has soured continuously over the last 18 months. The official explanation given by a Rashtrapati Bhawan spokesman was: "As head of state the President has praised the performance of his Government. He has just put on record the appreciation which the prime minister rightfully deserved."

But whether the presidential adulation, aimed at paving the way for improved relations between the two, had served its purpose was not immediately apparent. The prime minister still refuses to brief Singh on important domestic and foreign affairs, and his party officials and MP's treat the office of the President with contempt. The most recent demonstration of this was the scathing attack on the President by 28 prominent Congress(I) MP's, and an open criticism of him by Union Minister of State for Public Enterprise K.K. Tiwary, following the appointment given to Congress dissidents Pranab Mukherjee and Gundu Rao by Rashtrapati Bhawan for presenting a memorandum against the Government.

The MP's who were critical of the President's actions included several from Punjab as well as from the ranks of the newly-elected members of the Rajya Sabha. Most of the signatures on the memorandum were collected by S.S. Ahluwalia, a freshly elected Rajya Sabha member from Bihar and a protege of Home Minister Buta Singh. Their memorandum, a copy of which was also sent to the President, noted: "They are (Rao and Mukherjee) meeting him in clandestine manner frequently, thus dragging him to serve the interest of the frustrated group of politicians and projecting him as their political godfather in the name of the loyalists. This move gains special significance at a time when the election of the President is to be held next year."

This is the first time that a ruling party, has openly criticised the President. According to Congress(I) circles, the statement was not only issued on the prodding of the high command but was also cleared by the prime minister's personal staff. But it was claimed later that the letter was signed not directly by, but on behalf of several of the purported signatories. R.L. Bhatia, general secretary of the All India Congress(I) Committee (AICC-I) whose name appeared on the memorandum, later denied even having seen a copy of the statement. But the damage was already done, and the President expressed his annoyance in no uncertain terms when he cancelled his engagements in Calcutta and returned to New Delhi to attend to the business of the rumoured cabinet expansion, a day later than his presence was required. Singh had been requested, through Cabinet Secretary B.G. Deshmukh, to consider the possibility of returning to the capital by September 13 so that the Cabinet expansion could take place on the following day. But the President returned only on September 14.

But this was not the only development to exacerbate tensions between the Government and the President. Earlier, the Prime Minister's Secretariat censored Singh's address to the nation intended for broadcast on the eve of Independence Day. The draft of the presidential speech had been readied on August 5. For eight days no one studied its contents. All India Radio and Doordarshan had recorded the broadcast on August 11 and 12, and the cassettes along with copies of the speech were despatched to all the missions abroad. But suddenly, followng Rajiv's return from Mexico, the Government discovered "mischief" in the speech. Rajiv summoned a meeting of the Political Affairs Committee of the Cabinet in which the speech was discussed for over three hours. In the process, the prime minister missed a dinner hosted by the former home minister, P.C. Sethi, attended also by the President. At 10.30 that evening, Buta Singh and Human Resources Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao drove down to



Zail Singh with Rajiv Gandhi: cold-shouldered

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T.S. ASHOK

Rashtrapati Bhawan and suggested to the President that he drop a part of the text which referred to the need for protecting the lives of the citizens. While the President saw nothing objectionable in the text, the Government ordered both AIR and Doordarshan to delete the sentences which read that, "it is the duty of the Government to protect the lives of its citizens". This was apparently done because the Government felt the statement implied that it had failed in ensuring the safety of the people.

SINGH'S main ire, however, is directed against Union ministers who show scant regard for his high office. Not only do they avoid functions attended by the President to which they too are invited, but they also ignore summons from Rashtrapati Bhawan. For example, Buta Singh recently called on the President to get his signature on the ordinance to amend the Commissions of Inquiry Act under which the Government sought powers to deny any inquiry report to Parliament. Before signing it, the President asked Buta Singh whether the regulation would mean the denial of reports to him as well. Presidential staffers, in that meeting, in fact quoted Article 78 of the Indian Constitution stating: "It shall be the duty of the prime minister to keep the President informed about the proposals before the Government." It was only after Buta Singh's assurance that the ordinance was not intended to keep the President out of the picture that Singh signed the document.

A week later a request from the President's office reached the home minister's office asking for the copies of the reports of the Mathew and Thakkar commissions. It received no response. Singh raised the matter with Buta Singh when the two met at a function in Rashtrapati Bhawan last fortnight. Again, the home minister promised the President that he would provide him the reports. He has not kept his word. Instead his supporters like Ahluwalia joined others in issuing the patently derogatory statement against the President. In February this year, Finance Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh was deputed to provide the President with a summary of the Mathew Commission report on the Punjab-Haryana territorial dispute. But the President insisted on getting the report and V.P. Singh assured him that he would get one soon. Eight months later, the President is yet to receive the promised report.

Ministerial defiance apart, Singh's major problem seems to be his inability to establish a rapport with Rajiv. Barring social functions both of them have not met informally alone. Also, the prime minister has broken the established convention of calling on the President before and after foreign visits. The Government also discourages the President from going abroad and prefers that the vice-president represent India in countries which have issued invitations to the head of state. The Government rather reluctantly cleared Singh's visit to Nepal and his proposed visits to Yugoslavia and West Germany only after Rashtrapati Bhawan raised a commotion privately. But the timing of his trip might clash with the winter session of Parliament during which the ordinance imposing President's Rule in Jammu & Kashmir has to be ratified. This may require the President's presence at home. If Singh is asked to postpone his visit, the misunderstanding between the two will only grow further.

Though both the President and the prime minister maintain that their relationship is absolutely cordial, it is well known that they mistrust each other. According to the President's supporters Rajiv has been made to believe that Singh has all along been encouraging the "old guard" party dissidents in order to create for himself a solid power base which will support his candidacy for a second presidential term. But Singh's admirers maintain that the wedge between the two is primarily because Rajiv heeds the advice of only a select group of advisers—excluding old-line Congressmen who relate to the President but are unable to get Rajiv to listen to them.

However, last month Arun Nehru, the minister of state for internal security, made a renewed attempt to re-establish contact between the two. During a "courtesy call" to Rashtrapati Bhawan, Nehru discussed with Singh ways and means of clearing the air with the prime minister and patching things up. Nehru then followed up these discussions in direct talks with Rajiv. In a gesture that appeared to herald reconciliation, the AICC(I) general secretary announced what amounted to a withdrawal of his signature from the petition signed by the 28 Congress(I) MP's, and the prime minister ordered an investigation into how the statement came to be issued. This belated gesture by the high command to wriggle out of an embarrassing position might appear a clumsy political manoeuvre. But it does indicate that while Rajiv and the President may not be immediately willing to kiss and make up they are at least exchanging glances.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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MARUTI ALLOTMENTS

Favoured Few

ON paper and in law, Maruti Udyog's board cannot be faulted. After all, at the end of a two-year court battle, the Supreme Court had not only permitted the country's most popular car manufacturer to make out-of-turn allotments of its vehicles to people who wanted to jump the customers' queue, the court had also spelt out which categories of people could get such special allotments: ministers, judges, senior government officials and armed forces officers, the physically handicapped, charitable institutions, and so on. And the company is now sticking faithfully to these norms while reserving 5 per cent of its total production for favoured customers.

Nevertheless, the people who have got the special allotments make an interesting list. For at the top of the list of out-of-turn allottees are judges themselves: one from the Supreme Court (R.B. Mishra), and as many as 65 from the various high courts, including some chief justices (Satish Chandra of Calcutta and S.S. Sandhawalia of Patna). Almost every fifth high court judge in the country has now got an out-of-turn Maruti allotment.

Bureaucrats have had their share of special allotments too: over 100 senior civil servants of the rank of additional secretary and above, including Expenditure Secretary R. Ganapathy, Petroleum Secretary G.V. Ramakrishna, Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Raja Ramanna, Director-General of Delhi Police Ved Marwah, University Grants Commission Chairman Yash Pal, member of the Central Board of Direct Taxes S.K. Roy, Additional Secretary in the Prime Minister's Secretariat Montek Singh Ahluwalia, National Security Guards Director-General R.T. Nagarani, and numerous others.

And the ministers who have asked for and got out-of-turn allotments include three chief ministers, such as Bihar Chief Minister Bindeshwari Dubey; Punjab Finance Minister Balwant Singh; Union Minister of State for Personnel, Administrative Reforms and Pensions P. Chidambaram; Uttar Pradesh Transport Minister Sanjay Singh; and Pondicherry Chief Minister M.O.H. Farookh. Other favoured politicians include opposition stalwarts Biju Patnaik, Sharad Pawar and Dr Farooq Abdullah.

The Supreme Court, while delivering its judgement on a writ petition by a consumer organisation that had protested about the out-of-turn allotments, had not specified in detail why such allotments were necessary to the specified categories of people. It had merely said that they were "in public interest". But Maruti itself seems to have carefully chosen people who might have to deal with issues concerning the company in their official capacity.

There is, of course, no

The people who got the special allotments make an interesting list— 3 chief ministers, 3 governors, over 12 central and state ministers, 65 judges, over 100 senior civil servants.

OVER 750 Maruti cars have been allotted out-of-turn to senior government officials and civil servants. Prominent among the names on the roll of honour are:

Politicians: Sanjay Singh, transport minister, UP; Balwant Singh, finance minister, Punjab; P. Chidambaram, Union minister of state for personnel; M.O.H. Farookh, chief minister, Pondicherry; S.S. Surjewala, irrigation minister, Haryana; Dr Farooq Abdullah, former chief minister, J&K; Bindeshwari Dubey, chief minister, Bihar; Chiman Bhai Patel, opposition leader, Gujarat; Sharad Pawar, opposition leader, Maharashtra; Liansuma, industry minister, Mizoram; Niaz Hasan, speaker, UP Assembly; U.A. Beeran, food minister, Kerala; Mufti Mohd. Sayeed, Union tourism minister; late Jagjivan Ram; Mohd. Usman Arif, governor UP; Biju Patnaik, opposition leader, Orissa; Yogendra Makwana, Union minister of state, agriculture and cooperation; Mangat Ram Sharma, speaker, J&K Assembly; Mrs Swarup Kumari Bakshi, minister, harijan and social welfare, UP.

Judges of high courts: R.N. Aggarwal, New Delhi; Amitav Banerji, Allahabad; S.Natrajan, Madras; R.B. Mishra, Supreme Court; D.N. Jha, Lucknow; V.A. Mohata, Nagpur; S.S. Chadha, Delhi; K. Sreedharan, Cochin; L.M. Sharma, Patna; S.A. Hakeem, Bangalore; D.P Gupta, Jaipur; K.K.Gupta, J&K; P.S. Shah, Bombay; T.R. Handa, Simla; A.N. Oberoi, registrar, Supreme Court; Satish Chandra, chief justice, Calcutta High Court; M.P. Verma, Patna; S.S. Sandhawalia, chief justice, Patna High Court; B.L. Loomba, Lucknow.

Civil servants and others: Ved Marwah, director-general of police, Delhi; S.K. Roy, member, CBTD; R. Ramanna, chairman, Atomic Energy Commission; R. Ganapathy, secretary, expenditure; R. Balakrishna, additional secretary, Cabinet Secretariat; Montek Singh Ahluwalia, additional secretary, Prime Minister's Secretariat; M.G. Katre, director, CBI; A. Rangachari, additional secretary, Finance Ministry; R.T. Nagarani, director-general, National Security Guards; R.K. Khandelwal, chairman, Joint Intelligence Committee; G. Krishnamurthy, Senior vice-president, Income Tax Tribunal; G.V. Ramakrishna, secretary, petroleum; D. Bandopadyay, Union secretary, labour; Yash Pal, chairman, University Grants Commission; S.S. Dhanoa, secretary, Health & Family Welfare; Mahesh Prasad, secretary, UP Government.

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saying that someone who gets a special allotment of a Maruti vehicle will take a decision in favour of the company if the occasion arises. Nevertheless, judges have been favoured by the company when cases are likely to be filed against the company for the manner in which it has selected its dealers. Some of the bureaucrats who have been chosen work in the Prime Minister's Secretariat, Customs and Excise Departments, Company Law Board, Central Board of Direct Taxes, Comptroller and Auditor General's Office, and the Department of Personnel. In the Department of Public Enterprises, the favoured customer is Minister of State K.K. Tiwary. The same thing has been done at the state level, and Punjab recently decided to reduce the sales tax on the category of vehicles produced by Maruti.

There may not be a quid pro quo in such decisions, and when questioned on the subject Maruti Managing Director R.C. Bhargava stated matter-of-factly: "We have gone strictly by the Supreme Court guidelines."

Oddly enough, a large percentage of those who have applied for and got special Maruti allotments already have official cars at their disposal. This includes all the ministers and judges, the presiding officers of Parliament and the state assemblies, some of the senior civil servants and police officials. So their need for a second car could hardly be very pressing. Many of the favoured politicians are also well-off, and can quite easily afford to buy a Maruti in the open market rather than jump a queue of people who have been waiting for three years since they booked their Maruti vehicles.

In fact, many of those awarded special allotments by the company had not even booked a vehicle when bookings were open. Earlier, before the court case, the company had been making out-of-turn allotments only to those already on its waiting list. This time around, however, this qualifying condition has been done away with, presumably because the Supreme Court did not make any mention of it. Thus, of the 800 cars marked for special allotment between May and September, as many as 750 have gone to people who did not book cars by making an advance payment of the required Rs 10,000. The thousands of people still waiting for their Marutis even three years after booking for them may have their comments on this, but the company itself is in the clear.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

NEERJA MISHRA

In Memory

THE saga of Neerja Mishra continues to unfold. Moved by the exceptional bravery of the Pan Am air hostess shot dead in the Karachi hijacking, more than 3,000 people have sent adulatory letters to her father, Harish Bhanot, *Hindustan Times* special correspondent in Bombay. Wrote Union Minister for Steel and Mines K.C. Pant: "They (the passengers) spoke in glowing terms about Neerja's courage, sense of duty and humanity." Wrote a Thane student: "We really loved her as a model and now we've begun admiring her as a courageous woman...we still love her, now even more."

Neerja: moving courage

From Keith D. Smith, Neerja's training instructor in the US: "She was truly the star of the class. Not only was she beautiful of face but also beautiful of spirit and intelligence." And from J. Hussey, a passenger from London who survived the hijacking: "In order that my family and eventually my grandchildren will always remember, I have planted a small maple tree in my garden. In the spring it will be yellow and in the autumn red and gold and I am having a plaque engraved in memory of Neerja Mishra and all those who died on that terrible day."

Last fortnight, Bhanot also fulfilled the sad duty of receiving from Pan Am Vice-President Martin Shugrue the golden wings Neerja would have received after completing six months as senior flight purser. Shugrue also gave a citation which said in part: "Her decision to take responsibility for the situation at hand was in the highest traditions of excellence and service to her fellow men."

It is now known that when the Jumbo was stormed, Neerja who was standing at the door welcoming passengers, rushed towards the intercom. But when one of the hijackers grabbed her by the hair, she shouted out the code number used to warn other crew members of a hijacking. Her cry was heard by another hostess who immediately informed the captain.

In the end, when the hijackers ordered the cabin crew to return to the back of the plane just before the shooting began, Neerja continued to station herself in the front row of the economy section. When the shooting began she was hit on the side but threw herself over three children who survived. Two more hits followed, one in the back and another in the arm. Still she tottered to the exit from where she was helped out by two crew members who had rushed back after evacuating passengers. She complained of pain while being taken into an ambulance but died before she could be attended to.

Bhanot, to whom she was deeply attached, is now busy writing a book on her life which he expects will be ready in two months' time. "When I heard about the hijacking I knew Neerja was in trouble," says Bhanot. "I knew in a situation like that she would take on the responsibility for others and show great courage. That ultimately cost her her life."

Bhanot has told Pan Am that he will not accept any compensation. Instead, he has persuaded the airline to set up a Pan Am Neerja Endowment to present an international award to any Indian woman who shows exceptional bravery. Contributions have started coming in from US citizens and Pan Am hopes to institute a major award.

—M. RAHMAN

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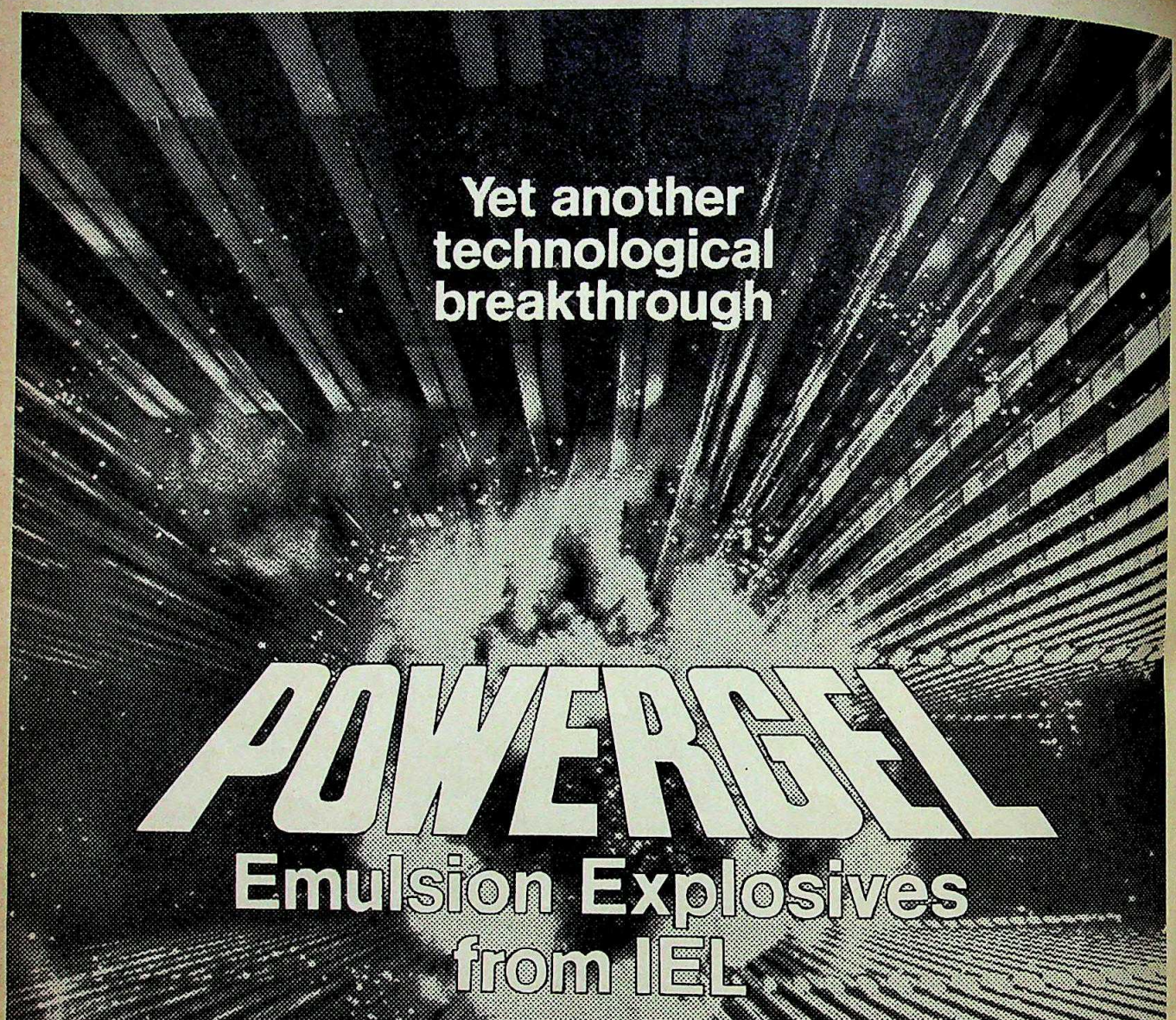

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PUNJAB

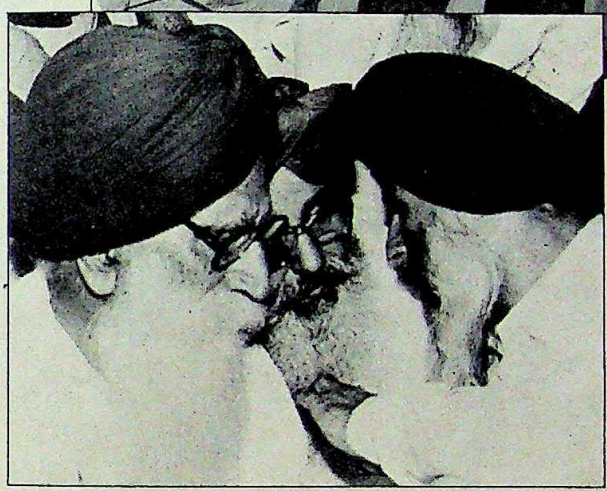
Ominous Shift

SIKH politics took a perceptible shift to a more militant, and clearly anti-Centre posture last fortnight. Setting the pace, surprisingly, was the octogenarian Baba Joginder Singh—an all but forgotten political entity. Presiding over the 'Shahidi conference' called by the Manjit Singh faction of the All-India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF), the father of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and president of the United Akali Dal exercised an almost mesmeric hold over the 15,000-odd Sikh youths who full-throatedly called for a 'war' to achieve the ideal of 'Raj Khalsa'. The biggest gathering of Sikh youth after the Sarbat Khalsa of February 1986, the conference resolved to "fight to the finish for the establishment of Raj Khalsa which the Sikhs established in the 18th century".

More ominously, arches had been erected outside the historic Manji Sahib—the venue of the conference—to honour three terrorists including the suspected killer of Sant Harchand Singh Longowal. Later the families of the three terrorists were presented with medals and General Vaidya's killers praised.

Also present at the conference were former chief minister Parkash Singh Badal and J.S. Talwandi, ostensibly to further their attempt at forging unity among the three Akali Dals and the two factions of the AISSF. Badal protested later that his presence did not make him a "party to the resolutions passed at the conference" but he did not protest when the killers of General Vaidya and Longowal were praised. Predictably, Chief Minister Surjit Singh Barnala seized upon Badal's presence to say that there was now no question of working out a unity formula. Said he: "Our friend Badal has joined those who are praising the killers of Sant Longowal. How can we hold talks with such people?"

But Barnala himself shied away from taking any action against the convenors of the conference. Confided a trusted adviser of the chief minister: "Any move against Baba would be counter-productive at this stage." That seemed to confirm suspicions that Barnala would like to keep his doors open to the militants.



Joginder Singh with supporters (top); and with Badal and son Harcharan

Barnala also sent his emissaries—as did Badal—to Anandpur Sahib, where the five head priests were meeting last fortnight to work out a unity formula. Interestingly enough, the idea of getting the five priests together is a brainwave of Barnala's Finance Minister, Balwant Singh. Obviously, opportunism continues to be the pivot of Akali politics.

In contrast to Barnala's prevarication, the response of the Damdami Taksal leadership—which also was not represented at Amritsar—to the conference was swift and significant. Obviously seeing the need to counter Baba's growing following among the Sikh youth, the Taksal replaced Harinder Singh Kahlon (now in jail) as the convenor of the AISSF faction owing allegiance to the Taksal, with Gurjit Singh, a relative of Bhindranwale wanted in several cases of murder. For good measure, the 'Khalistan Commando Force' announced that Sarabjit Singh Ropar—who was holding the fort in the absence of Kahlon but has been missing—was in its custody and had confessed to helping the authorities arrest several terrorists including Tarsem Singh Kohar (ex-commander of the force) and Waryam Singh (one of the Muktsar assassins).

What is most worrying, meanwhile, is the message underlying the return of Joginder Singh. He had extensively toured the countryside for the last two months, preaching one message: "The Centre is a fox out to destroy the Sikhs. Barnala and Ribeiro are tools to do the job. Let all Sikhs unite and fight against the enemies of the panth." The response was revealing: even in G.S. Tohra's village in Patiala district and Barnala's home town, people turned out in force to assure Baba of their support.

Equally significantly, the "amrit prachar" campaign in the rural areas being conducted by the Taksal leadership and, lately, by the Manjit Singh faction of the AISSF as well, is also gathering momentum, even though all "amritdharis" straightaway come under the surveillance of the police. Most prachar meetings of the Manjit Singh faction are addressed by Harcharan Singh, Bhindranwale's brother.

Buoyed by the evidence of growing support, Joginder Singh was in total command at the conference, offering the highest award to the killers of General Vaidya, and saying: "They will inspire others to avenge the atrocities." Despite the notable successes of the offensive against terrorists, it is clear that the mosaic of Sikh politics continues to take on more and more militant hues.

—GOBIND THUKRAL

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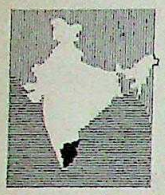
TAMIL NADU

Tongue Trouble



IT was a routine circular from the New Delhi headquarters of the Press Information Bureau exhorting its offices to use only Hindi in the Hindi week observed last month and informing them that all letters from New Delhi would henceforth be in Hindi. This was meant only for Hindi-speaking states, but when it mistakenly found its way to Tamil Nadu, it stung the state to the quick and led to an outpouring of anti-Hindi and anti-Centre passion not seen since the violent anti-Hindi agitation in the mid-'60s.

Construing it as an attempt by the Centre to impose Hindi, thousands of students in towns across the state took out processions to district collectorates and burnt effigies of Rajiv Gandhi. Leaders of the ruling All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), normally docile with the Centre, and the opposition Dravidra Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) angrily demanded that the circular be withdrawn. Said Finance Minister V.R. Nedunchezhiyan, holding the fort in MGR's absence: "I have pointed out to the Centre that the continuance of the circular would adversely affect the law and order situation in the state." Warned DMK leader M. Karunanidhi: "Tamil Nadu is preparing itself for yet another intensive anti-Hindi agitation." Even as Rajiv assured Tamil Nadu MP's that the Government would honour Nehru's commitment not to impose Hindi on non-Hindi states till they wanted it, it seemed that the circular had proved again that the anti-Hindi sentiment in the state is still very strong.

But the truth seems to be quite the reverse. Available statistics show that every year more Tamilians are voluntarily learning Hindi. As knowledge of Hindi widens their employment opportunities outside the state, thousands of students, employees of the Central Government and public sector undertakings, and even employees of private firms are appearing for exams conducted by the various bodies promoting Hindi.

In Madras itself, according to the Dakshin Bharata Hindi Prachar Sabha, the number of students passing the six exams conducted by it has gone up from 12,149 in 1981 to 18,682 in 1985, an average annual increase of almost 13 per cent. Even state-wide figures show an increase in excess of the population growth rate. Between 1981 and 1985, the number of students passing the Sabha's exams went up from 41,818 to 49,471—a rise of almost 20 per cent. Says P. Ananthakrishnan, general secretary of the Sabha: "Even qualified Tamil pundits have begun to learn Hindi and some of them are able to speak it better than our *pracharaks* (teachers)."

"Tamil Nadu is preparing itself for yet another intensive anti-Hindi agitation."
M. KARUNANIDHI
DMK leader

"Even qualified Tamil pundits have begun to learn Hindi and some of them are able to speak it better than our *pracharaks*."
P. ANANTHAKRISHNAN
general secretary, Hindi Prachar Sabha

Informed sources say there is a steady annual increase of 10 to 15 per cent in the number of people passing the exams of the Central Government's Hindi teaching scheme for its offices and public sector undertakings. Said T.R. Kashyap, the scheme's assistant director in Madras: "We have 47 Hindi teachers for all of south India, of which as many as 30 are in Tamil Nadu."

The motivation for this trend is almost entirely pragmatic. Ambujam Ayyapan, an assistant in a Madras pharmaceutical unit, says she enrolled for the Hindi Prachar Sabha because, "I can try for a job in any other place if my husband, who is a banker, gets transferred." Others have less ulterior motives. Says N. Shahjahan, an employee in the accountant general's office in Madras and a Sabha student: "I am learning Hindi because it is the language spoken by the largest number of people."

In fact, the leaders now denouncing Hindi from the roof-tops are themselves guilty of double-speak. Most AIADMK and DMK leaders send their wards to English medium schools in Madras where, Hindi is usually taught as a second language. MGR's grandchildren from his adopted son were students of St Bede's Convent School. Electricity Minister S. Ramachandran, Law Minister C. Ponnaiyan, Food Minister S. Thirunavukkarasu, Industry Minister K. Rajaram and the Assembly Speaker P.H. Pandian all had sent or are sending their children to the Don Bosco Matriculation School. Even Karunanidhi's two sons studied at the Madras Christian College High School.

Their double-speak has begun drawing critical comment. Says V. Selvaraj, a Madras haircutting saloon owner who had been active in the 1965 agitation: "It's all right for these politicians to rave and rant about the imposition of Hindi. But it is unwise for anybody in Tamil Nadu not to learn Hindi because Tamil has no currency beyond the northern frontiers of the state." Selvaraj's sentiments reflect the increasing awareness in the state of the wisdom of learning Hindi. Either the politicians are unaware of this or, more likely, they ignore it for political points. But the cue for the Centre is that Tamil Nadu is, willy-nilly, imbibing the national language.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

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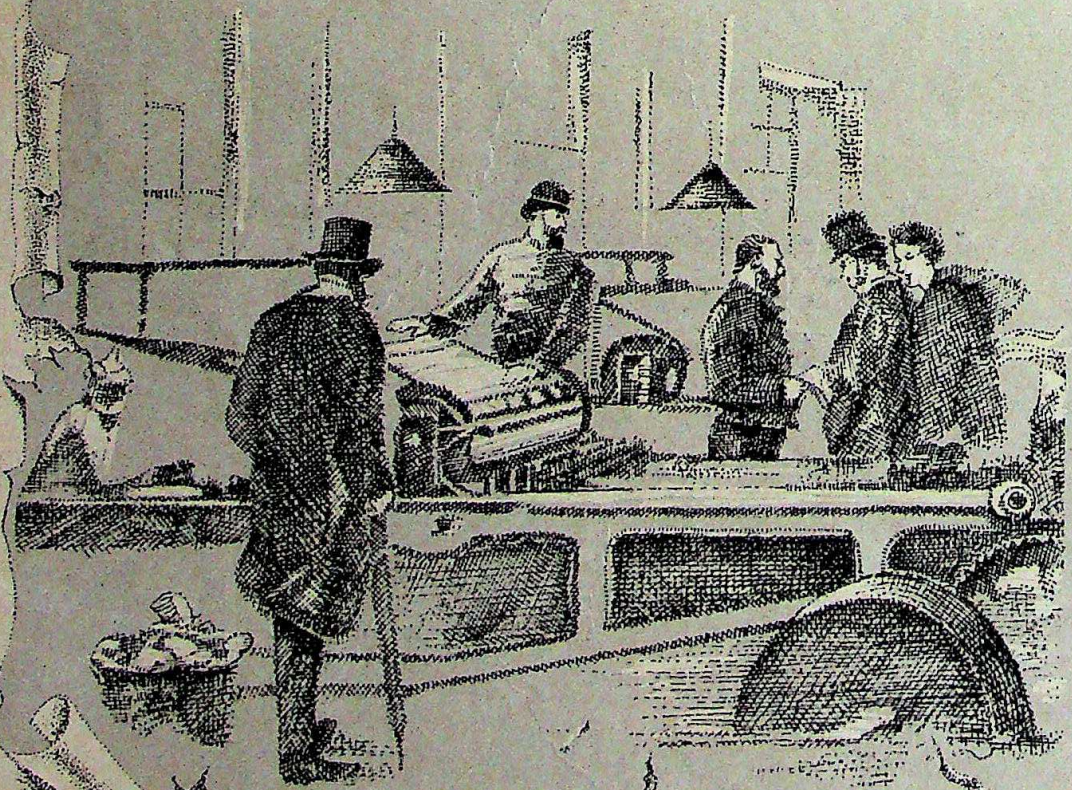
Did you know 4

The world's earliest bank notes were issued in Sweden by Stockholms Banco in July 1661.



The early bank notes were promises to pay the bearer a specified sum from the funds of the Bank, which were private banking concerns. The Bank of England issued the first currency note in 1695.

In India, first currencies were issued by the three Presidency Banks—The Bank of Bengal, The Bank of Bombay and The Bank of Madras from the time of their inceptions till 1862. Between 1862 and 1935, the Government was issuing the currency. Since the forming of the Reserve Bank of India in 1930, the currencies of the country are being issued by this single authority from the year 1938.

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IMPLEMENTATION MINISTRY

Ambiguous Role

LAST September, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had attempted a major overhaul of his government's ministries: several of them were renamed, some were restructured and a 28th—the Ministry for Programme Implementation (MPI)—created. A year later, very little is still known about what the MPI does. What sectors of the economy does it monitor? Which programmes does it implement? What has been its impact? An assessment by Assistant Editor AJAY KUMAR.

PERHAPS the most brutally frank performance appraisal of the MPI comes, significantly, from its own Secretary, Prahlad Kumar Basu. "The slippages have, in fact, gone up," he said referring to the time schedules of the projects and programmes the specially-created ministry was supposed to monitor and implement. But while Basu believes that the MPI still has a vital role to play, most secretaries and chiefs of public sector undertakings candidly describe it as superfluous. Said a minister bluntly: "I don't know what the MPI does that adds to what we already know." Admitted an official in the Prime Minister's Secretariat: "Secretaries are not sure if the MPI is helping them to solve problems or tattling to the prime minister's office."

On the face of it, the MPI has a lot of work. With a staff of 11 officers cobbled together from the Coordinating Division of the Cabinet Secretariat and the monitoring divisions of the Planning Commission, it monitors nine infrastructural sectors of the economy—power, coal, steel, railways, shipping, telecommunications, fertilisers, cement and petroleum—and 264 projects in 13 sectors with a combined outlay of Rs 65,000 crore. It also oversees the implementation of the 20-point programme and the annual action plans of various ministries. All its reports are submitted to the Prime Minister's Secretariat.

The problem is that the MPI does little else but monitor. For the infrastructure it prepares a monthly scroll-like capsule report setting out the performance, the problems and the suggested solutions for the prime minister but it does little to solve inter-sectoral problems or delays by state governments which hold up most projects. Basu denies this and cites several instances where the Union Minister for Programme Implementation A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury called meetings to remove inter-ministerial obstacles but one secretary said tartly: "If it is solving inter-sectoral problems I am not aware of it."

Similarly, for projects it renders little help to the project executives because all it does is recycle the data provided by them. Said one secretary: "Seventy-five per cent of the input for the exception reports comes from the undertakings and 25 per cent from the ministry. The MPI's contribution is zero." By the third of every month, the project chiefs have to send the MPI a flash report—listing the milestones crossed or missed—with a copy to their administrative ministry. The MPI then questions the ministries on the slippages and after receiving their reply, prepares an exception report for the prime minister relying on the explanations given by the ministry. Since the MPI adds no fresh insight to the problems of the project, secretaries and heads of public sector undertakings say the MPI's contribution is confined to snazzing up their data. Says M.L. Shishu, chief executive of the National Thermal Power Corporation: "Flash reports which are post mortems are of no help to us. The MPI should help in spotting problems before we do."

Another reason why the MPI's role is seen as infructuous is that after Rajiv Gandhi came to power, the general level of monitoring of the infrastructure sector has improved greatly. Glib answers are followed by sharper questions on what the ministries have done to solve problems. Said an official in the Prime Minister's Secretariat: "Two years ago if any infrastructural ministry reported that they were 90 per cent on target, nobody would get concerned. Today, we'll chew them up if they are 5 per cent short." The Petroleum Ministry, for example, provides some evidence of the new culture. The ministry's Secretary G. Ramakrishna has prepared an exhaustive and detailed eight-stage monitoring chart for the ministry's 45 projects in the seventh plan. And as a senior ministry official bluntly asked: "When we are doing so much, what's the need for the MPI?"

Even with regard to the 20-point programme, the MPI's contribution has been marginal. Since the reviews are done every quarter, the end-of-the-year rush has been eliminated. "Instead," says Wajahat Habibullah, director in the Prime Minister's Secretariat, "we now have an end-of-the-quarter rush but at least that is an improvement."

Not everybody, however, thinks that the MPI's work has been in vain. Railway Board Chairman Prakash Narain admits that the MPI's manner of presentation is

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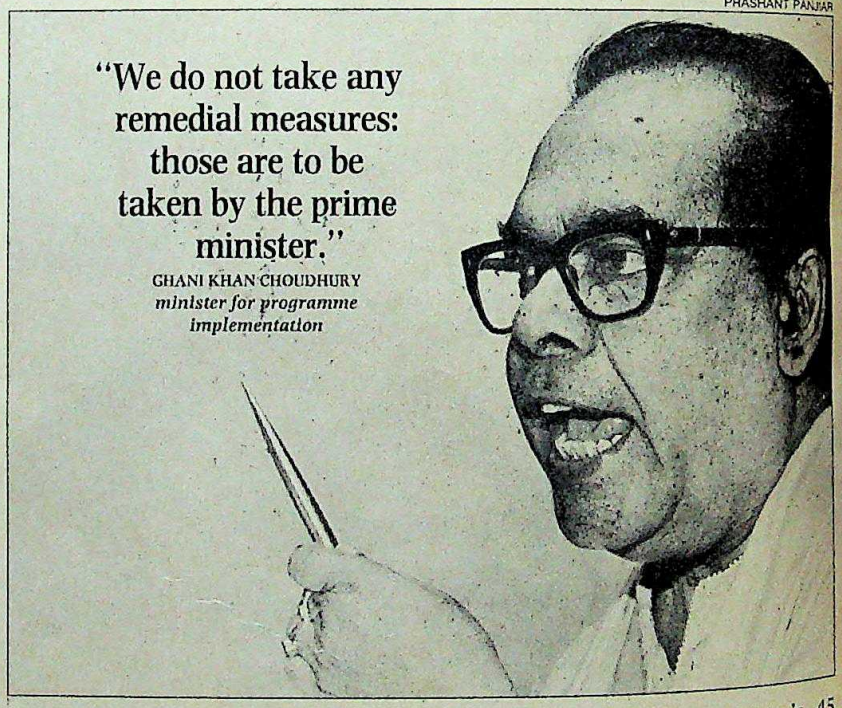

"We do not take any remedial measures: those are to be taken by the prime minister."

GHANI KHAN CHOUDHURY
minister for programme implementation

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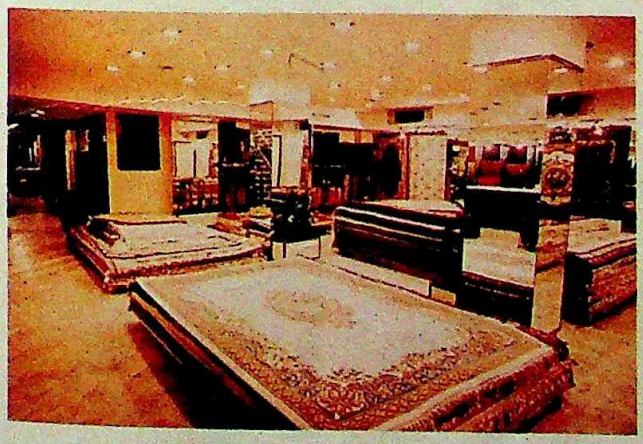

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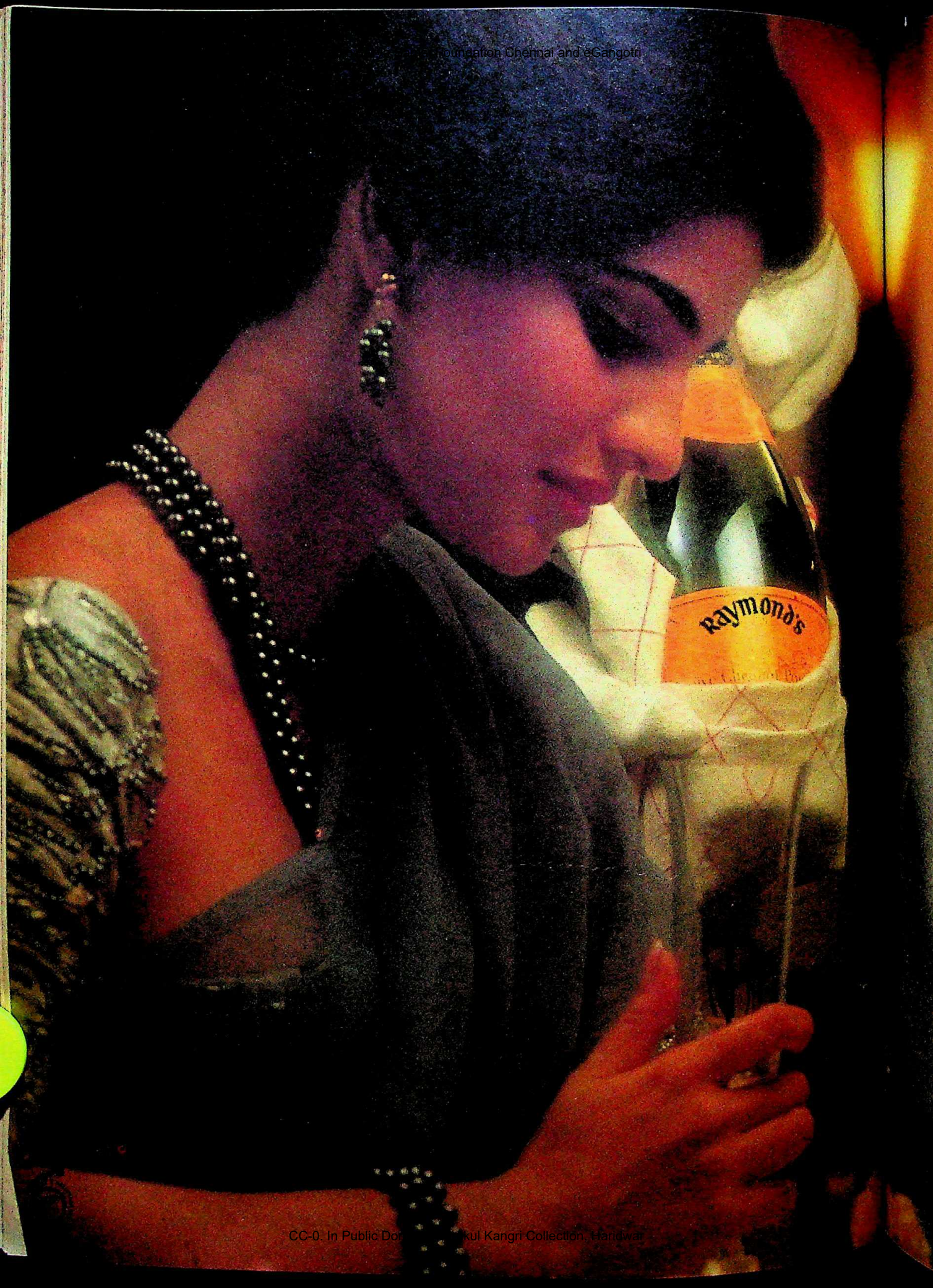

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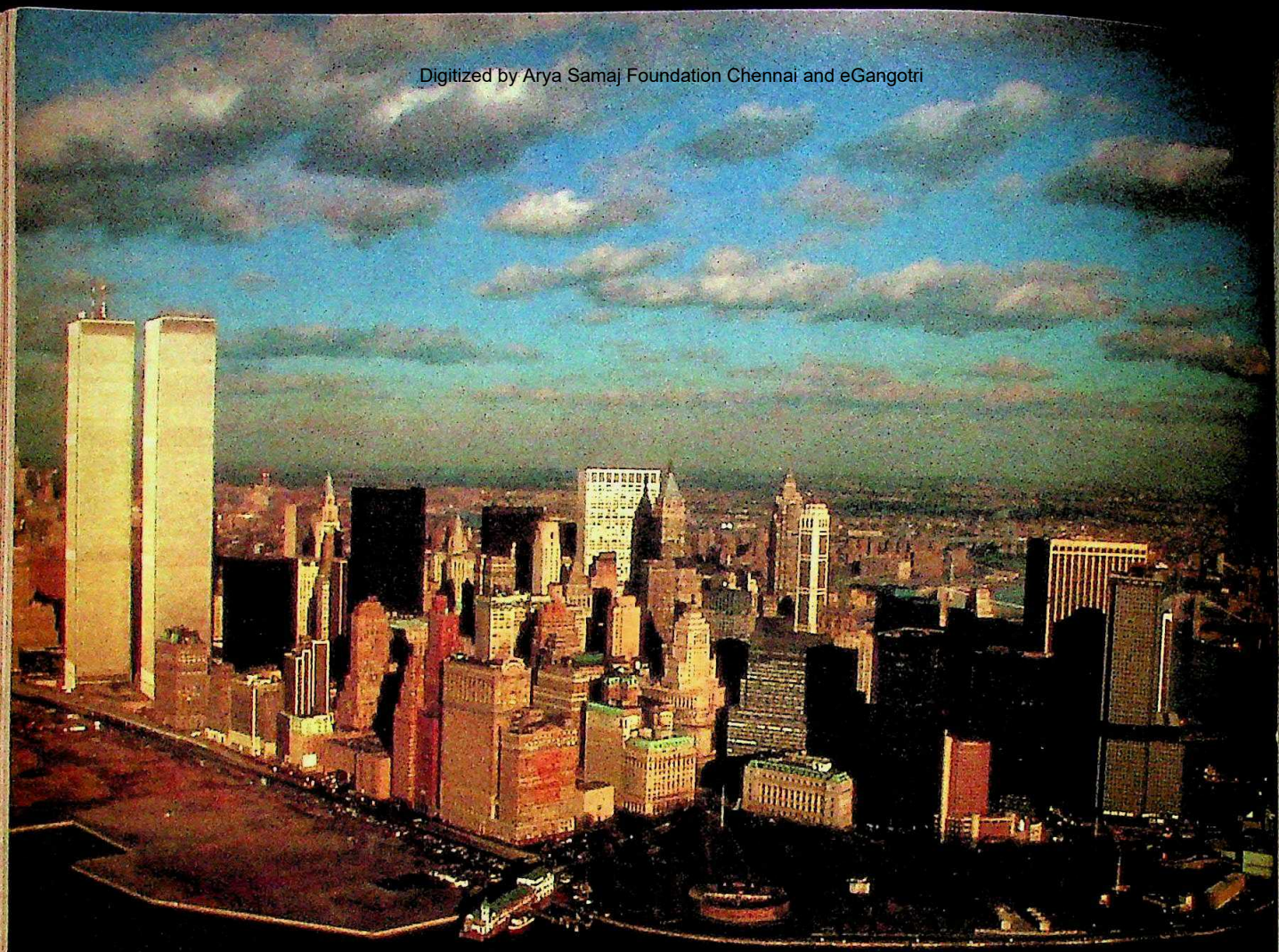

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such that the important indicators are highlighted. Said a chief executive of a public sector undertaking: "There is so much of lethargy in-built in government units that there is definitely need for such a ministry." Others say that the need to evaluate themselves every month focuses on problems which sometimes tend to get overlooked in the normal rush of things. Admits a public sector undertaking chief: "People are afraid of the computers in the Prime Minister's Secretariat."

Khan Choudhury and Basu aver that the ministry has made a great impact. The prime minister gets a monthly run-down on the infrastructural sectors and projects whereas this used to be done every quarter or every year. Flash reports and milestones monitoring are absolutely new concepts which light up warning signals early. The Planning Commission was only monitoring growth whereas they place equal emphasis on productivity. From scratch—and with no addition of staff—the MPI has created a system which prepares first-class analyses. Says Basu: "The data is all admittedly from other ministries but the system of monitoring is entirely our contribution." Officials in the Prime Minister's Secretariat also touch that on an average, the MPI is sending the right signals and more important, at the right time. As Khan Choudhury puts it: "We do not take any remedial measures: those are to be taken by the prime minister and concerned ministries and units."

But this is where the secretaries and project executives justifiably find the MPI wanting. There is little point in monitoring if the MPI cannot come up with solutions. The ministries and the project chiefs do not need to be told of their problems. "Who knows this better than the man on the spot?" asks Steel Secretary R.P. Khosla. Areas in which the secretaries need help, they agree, include dealing with the state governments to speed up the time-consuming land acquisition process, cutting down on delays in supplies by public sector units and improving the often cumbersome tendering procedures.

Undeniably, the MPI's role needs to be defined more sharply so that the current accent on monitoring is replaced by a more practical role—that of problem-solving and coordinating. Till the Government does that, the MPI will continue to be seen as a ministry which does little else than poke its nose into others' affairs.

AVIATION

A New Order

OUT go the bureaucrats, in come the businessmen. That is the new order as far as two of the most prestigious public sector companies are concerned. When the boards of Air-India and Indian Airlines were belatedly reconstituted last fortnight, senior civil servants accustomed to dominating these boards had to make way for the manufacturers of two-wheelers, light commercial vehicles, kitchen stoves and steel, and for hoteliers, health care managers, image- builders and bankers. Their collective wisdom, the Government clearly feels, will improve the performance of two companies that earned a gross profit of Rs 130 crore last year on a turnover of Rs 1,600-crore.

Said Jagdish Tytler, minister of state for civil aviation: "This is the first time that we have selected people with a professional background and expertise to handle large government corporations." It is also the first time that private businessmen have been represented in such strength on public sector boards. Since the prime minister wants to loosen the bureaucratic hold on the public sector, this could be the shape of things to come.

The new directors of the airline companies also indicate who is 'in' and who is 'out'. Thus, Rahul Bajaj is the chairman of Indian Airlines even though he faced a tax raid on which the case is still pending. And Rattan Tata—who already heads a committee going into the reasons for the delays afflicting some public sector projects—will head Air-India.

Among the others are Ritu Nanda, daughter of Raj Kapoor, managing director of Niky-Tasha and wife of Rajan Nanda, the Doon School-educated president of Escorts. Also included is the Doon School-educated Vivek Bharat Ram, executive director of DCM-Toyota, and Arun Nanda of the high-flying Rediffusion, which has handled the Congress(I)'s election advertising campaigns. And if the Tatas helped put India on the civil aviation map, they find more than adequate representation on the new boards. Apart from Rattan Tata, there is Russi Mody of Tata Iron and Steel (which continues to be on the Finance Ministry's black list of tax defaulters) and Francis Menzes of the Tata Institute of Management Training.

But those left out are equally significant. Among the names sent up to the prime minister by Tytler were Mukesh Ambani, executive director of Reliance Industries, and Aditya Birla. Both were struck off the list after the prime minister cleared Tytler's proposal to induct professionals but asked him to prune his initial list. Tytler's immediate boss, Transport Minister Mohsina Kidwai, cleared the names Tytler suggested. It now remains to be seen whether the new experiment in public sector management will take off.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

Rattan Tata

Jagdish Tytler

Rahul Bajaj

Tytler proposed that bureaucrats make way on the airlines' boards for people with a professional background, and the prime minister agreed. The new boards could indicate the shape of things to come for the public sector as a whole.

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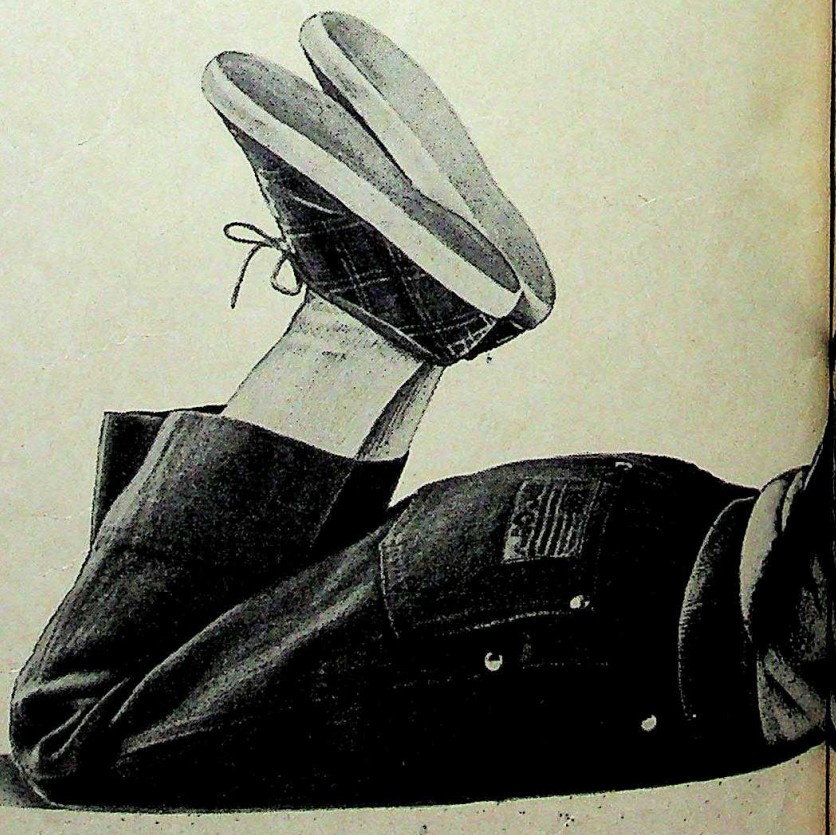

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DUBAI HIJACK TRIAL

Fresh Delay

PRIME Minister Rajiv Gandhi's fiery denunciations of Pakistan for delaying the trials of Indian Airlines (IA) hijackers in Pakistani jails may yet come back to haunt him. For though India's handling of aircraft hijackers is in a different league from Pakistan's, there were more than a few red faces in North Block last month when the disappointing news came from Ajmer that the trial of the seven Sikh hijackers responsible for the August 1984 hijack of an IA Boeing 737 to Dubai had ground to a standstill.

Nearly two years after the proceedings began at a special court set up at the Central Jail in Ajmer—and just when the prosecution was close to concluding their evidence—the hijackers brought the proceedings to a screeching halt by claiming that they had "lost faith" in the trial judge. The hijackers have moved the Supreme Court for a transfer of the case to Chandigarh or anywhere within Punjab. The case is now expected to come up for hearing in the court of Chief Justice P.N. Bhagwati this week.

In their petition the hijackers have levelled grave charges against the judge and the CBI—who are supposed to have nothing to do with the case once they have submitted their investigation reports to the prosecution. They claim that the trial judge had joined CBI officials in trying to "seduce" them to plead guilty in return for a promised leniency in his judgement regarding provisions for their studies and frequent leave from jail to visit parents. The hijackers further claim that prosecution witnesses were threatened by the CBI and even after some witnesses testified as much in court, no action was taken by the trial judge. Although the court proceedings were to be in-camera, CBI officials, they say, were allowed inside the courtroom to assist the prosecution even though the parents of the accused were disallowed from entering the room.

Finally, they claim "it has been the practice of the trial judge to see all important witnesses (like ambassadors, foreign secretary, cockpit and cabin crew) in his chamber in the presence of the DIG CBI, SP CBI and other investigating officers" before and after the day's hearing to discuss matters concerning the progress of the case. As such, allege hijackers Kamaljit Singh Sandhu, Amrinder Singh, Devinder Singh, Tejinder Singh, Avtar Singh, Surinder Singh and Man Singh, "justice is neither being done nor seen to be done."

In its affidavit, however, the CBI has categorically rejected all the hijackers' contentions. Denying that they colluded with the judge to make them plead guilty, the CBI adds that since the maximum as well as the minimum punishment under the Anti-hijacking Act is life imprisonment, there is no question of a "lenient" judgement. Describing as "wholly incorrect" the charge of instructing, pressurising or influencing witnesses, the CBI maintains that no "CBI official (was) present in the courtroom during the examination of witnesses during trial of the case". Similarly, rejecting the charge of prior meetings with key witnesses together with the judge, they say, "Had it been so, the petitioners would have certainly objected to it during the proceedings of this case. The silence on their part till date is clear proof that the said assertions are not only after thoughts but false."

The transfer petition it maintains is "only an attempt to delay and protract the trial" at the fag-end of the case. The prosecution had already run through 53 of the 70-odd witnesses it was going to produce—including almost all its material witnesses—when the hijackers first expressed their desire to approach the Supreme Court.

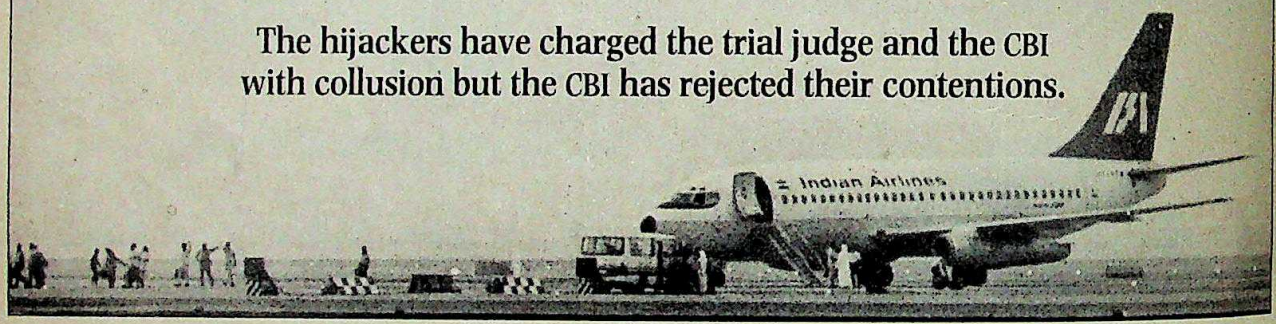
In fact, says the CBI, the judge has been more than "indulgent and accommodating" towards the defence counsel. The CBI had wanted proceedings to be conducted on a day-to-day basis but this had been turned down on the defence counsel's plea that it was difficult for the Chandigarh-based defence counsel or even for the parents of the accused also based in Punjab to stay in Ajmer for a long stretch of time.

The hijackers have also attempted to take advantage of what they see as a legal loophole in favour of their plea for transferring the case from the special court. Their case was first registered in Chandigarh and later transferred to Ajmer under the provisions of the Terrorists Affected Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1985. But since all special courts in Punjab were abolished after the Rajiv-Longowal accord and further since Chandigarh is no longer considered a terrorist-affected area, they argue in their petition that their case should be transferred to any ordinary court. But the CBI has contested this also, maintaining that even in the revised schedule after the accord, hijacking cases still remain to be tried only by special courts set up under the act. Moreover, the Anti-hijacking Act also provides that such cases be tried only in special courts.

This is the first case of hijacking being tried in India—all previous hijackers were never returned to India. The Supreme Court's attitude towards them is bound to be of wide interest, even though the points raised by the hijackers have little to do with the crime itself. As the hijackers continue to get away with repeated delay tactics, the Indian authorities are getting increasingly uncomfortable as India not only wants Pakistan to punish the hijackers of IA planes but is also pressing for a quick trial of the recent Pan Am hijacking.

—TANIA MIDHA

The hijackers have charged the trial judge and the CBI with collusion but the CBI has rejected their contentions.



Indian Airlines Boeing at Dubai airport

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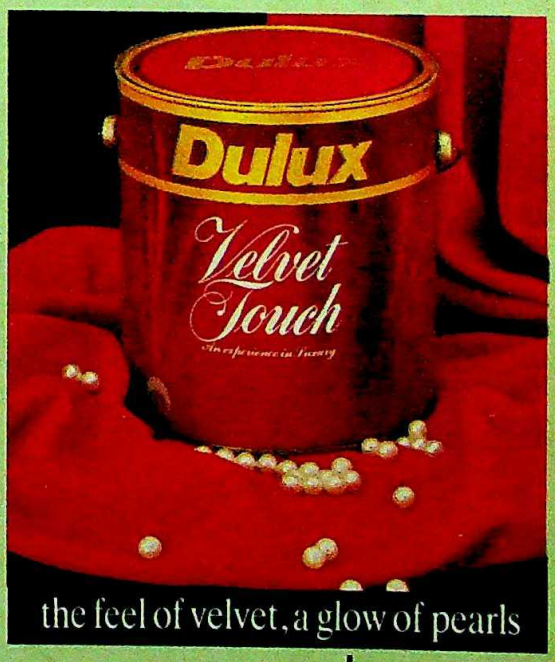

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KARNATAKA

Harried Hegde

IN the office of Karnataka Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde stands a five-foot statue of goddess Porlu, a manifestation of Parvati. The superstitious in the Janata Party believe that the goddess, whose statue was installed by Hegde, wards off the evil designs of party opponents. But last month even Porlu seemed powerless as Hegde tried hard to wriggle out of a double-edged crisis created largely by his own partymen.

Hegde was already under pressure from an August memorandum signed by 90 of the party's 136 MLA's asking him to expand the ministry. Even as Hegde summoned a mid-September meeting of the legislature party to discuss the memorandum, the party was overtaken by the crisis created by the publication of the Venkataswamy Commission's recommendations to reduce reservations for the backward classes. Health Minister H.T. Krishnappa attacked the report openly: "The report is most unscientific and ridiculous." Hegde later said that Krishnappa had committed a *faux paus* by giving vent to his feelings when the Government was yet to take a decision on the report. But Krishnappa maintained that it was the Government which had committed the gaffe by releasing the report when polls to local bodies were round the corner.

To put more pressure on the chief minister, three MLA's—E. Nanjegowda, B.V. Karigowda and M. Varadegowda—sent their resignations from the state Assembly. Wrote Nanjegowda: "You could treat this as my resignation letter if the Government does not reject the report." Karigowda, part of the 24-member official team scheduled to attend the Asian Games, stayed back in protest.

All four belong to the powerful Vokkaliga community, which is angry at its exclusion from the list. A senior minister dismissed their resignation as insignificant. Said he: "If the MLA's were really serious about their resignation they would have sent their letters to the speaker instead of the chief minister." But clearly, Hegde cannot afford to antagonise the Vokkaligas, who comprise 11.6 per cent of the state's population and have 56 MLA's in a house of 225, of which 35 are in the Janata Party itself.

Showing that caste loyalties can override party labels, Vokkaligas across the political spectrum have been in the forefront of the agitation against the report. The agitation—led by the Congress(I)—has been marked by bandhs, processions and blockades in protest against the recommendations reducing reservations from 49 to 27 per cent and de-recognising several of the castes as backwards (INDIA TODAY, September 30). Last fortnight, the stir spread to new parts of the state, turning violent at places.

To confound the confusion, the Lingayats—who form 17 per cent of the state's population—started their own agitation late last fortnight by calling for a state-wide bandh against the report. Lingayats, who are not a backward caste even under the existing formula based on the Havanur Commission report, want to be declared backward so as to avail the benefits. Said I.M. Magdum, president of the All-India Veerasaiva Mahasabha: "It is intolerable that Lingayats have been consistently hammered by the Government."

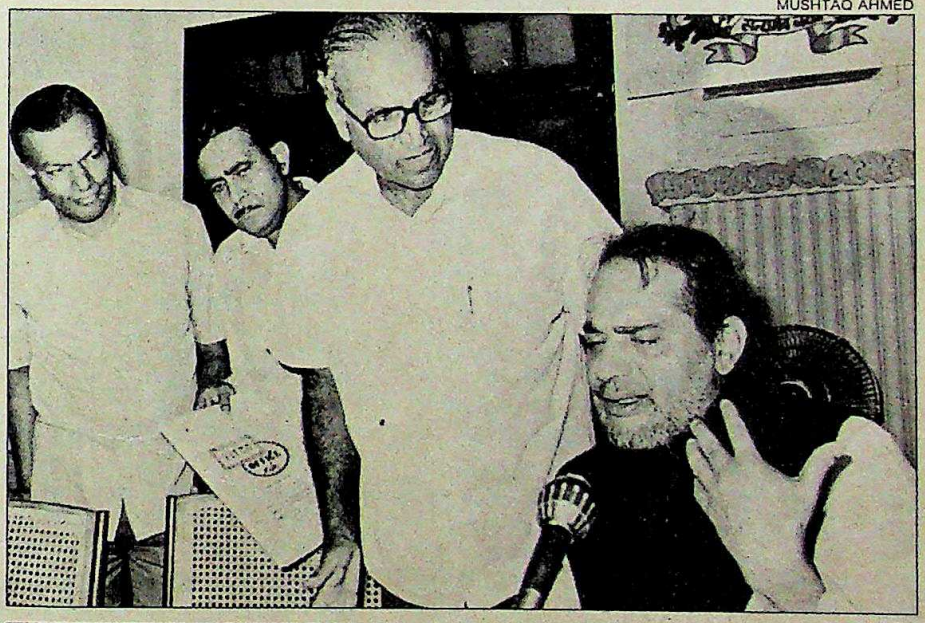
Meanwhile, Hegde was being pressurised by his party MLA's to expand his team immediately so that more ministers can do party work for the impending polls to the Zilla Parishads and Mandal Panchayats. This rationale has put Hegde in a fix. Three months ago, he had dropped 17 ministers ostensibly so that they could do election work. But if he now takes a few of them back, he would become a laughing stock and, as a senior minister admitted, "Hegde's credibility will suffer another setback." However, Hegde earned himself a temporary reprieve by assuring the MLA's that he would "keep in mind" their views when he did expand his ministry. Said Hegde, somewhat facetiously: "They (the MLA's) first thought the ministry was too big and they now think it is too small. How can I ignore their feelings?"

But driven to the wall on the Venkataswamy Commission report, Hegde committed himself to retaining the existing level of reservations at the end of an 11-hour meeting with leaders of various parties and communities, legislators, academicians and ministers. Later, he also criticised the report, saying: "The methodology adopted by the commission was proper but decisions based on statistics cannot be considered flawless." A series of cabinet meetings were being called to take a final decision—clear indications that the Government was yielding to pressure. There seemed little doubt that not only would the Vokkaligas remain in the backward fold, some sections of the Lingayats would also be taken in. But with the backward castes identified by the Venkataswamy Commission threatening to launch their own stir if the commission's report is rejected, any quick-fix solutions could land Hegde with even greater problems.

—SRINIVASA PRASAD

Hegde at caste leaders' meeting

MUSHTAQ AHMED



It is clear that Hegde cannot afford to antagonise the powerful Vokkaligas.

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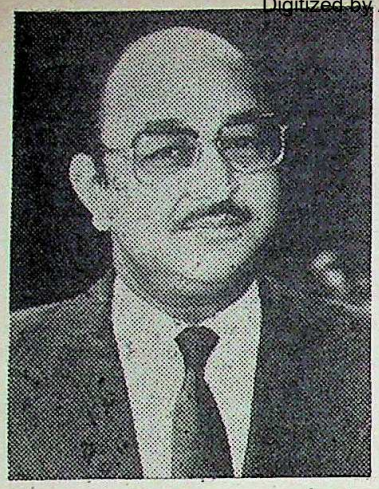

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Speech of the Chairman, Dr. Gaur Hari Singhania delivered at the Annual General Meeting on 29th Aug. 1986.

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Thank you for coming to Annual General Meeting of J.K. Synthetics Ltd. The Report of the Directors and the Accounts of your Company for the year 1985-86 have been with you and with your permission I take them as read.

PERFORMANCE 1985-86 : GROSS REVENUE CROSSES RS. 500 CRORE MARK

We have had a record year with a gross profit of Rs. 61.53 crores, an increase of 80.6%. The gross income improved by 27% from Rs. 413.79 crores in the previous year to Rs. 526.08 crores. The good performance of the year has made it possible for your Directors to recommend a higher equity dividend of 20%. I am sure you will join me to thank all the employees for their dedication and hard work which enabled the company to achieve this good performance. I look forward to their continued cooperation for a steady progress of your company.

CURRENT OUTLOOK

During the first quarter of the current year volumetric production and sales of synthetic fibres and yarns increased by 7.7% and 8.4% and of white cement by 36.2% and 67.3% respectively as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. However, in case of portland cement on account of go-slow tactics and illegal strike resorted to by a section of the workmen during April-June, 1986 period, the production and sales were lower by 74.6% and 69.7% as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. While the margins so far have been under pressure, we hope that the Government, based on BICP reports, would soon remedy situation. The damages caused by the sudden and flash floods in Kota will also have some impact on the profitability. We, therefore, view the current year's performance with cautious optimism. No doubt the implementation of the projects in hand, referred to in the Directors' Report, would have a positive impact on the turnover and profitability of your Company.

NATIONAL SCENE

Since no company can operate in isolation from the overall economic and political environment in the country, I would like to say a few words about the same.

As you are aware, fissiparous and separatist tendencies are plagueing the national scene. At a time when our efforts should be directed towards economic and political regeneration and improving the standards of living of the masses, it is unfortunate that most of our energies have to be spent in a direction which may well prove injurious to the integrity of our Country.

CRUSHING INCIDENCE OF EXCISE, CUSTOM DUTY ETC. ON COMPANY'S PRODUCTS

You might have seen from the Annual Report that during 1985-86 your Company had contributed Rs. 232.44 crores by way of excise duty, sales tax and custom duty alone. This accounted-for for 33.2% of the gross revenue. The following table will give an indication of the high incidence of excise duty on finished goods and custom duties on imported raw materials with reference to net ex-works realisation of various products:

PRODUCT	APPROX. INCIDENCE OF DUTIES.
Polyester POY Yarn	75%
Nylon Yarn	70%
Polyester Staple Fibre	60%
Cement	51%

Any rational in-depth study at the totality of the synthetic fibre and cement industries would highlight the need for immediate moderation of duties as the same would result in wide ranging benefits which would flow from the growth and expansion of the Industry. The Finance Minister has already admitted that his strategy of increasing revenue yields through a combination of reasonable rates and simpler procedures has proved its effectiveness and yielded encouraging results. Looking to the massive increase in production capacities of various synthetic fibres and cement, I am hopeful, the Government will adopt a pragmatic and rational taxation policy.

The Bureau of Industrial Cost & Price (BICP) is already engaged in the cost study of Nylon Yarn, Polyester Yarn, Polyester Staple Fibre and Nylon Tyre Cord. I hope it will make such recommendation to the Government in respect of these products as would ensure a minimum 12% post-tax return on the net worth to the Industry, as adequate returns and incentives are necessary for accelerated industrial growth and to achieve the targets fixed in the 7th Five Year Plan.

CEMENT INDUSTRY

On account of uncompensated increase in input costs, the average return of the industry has come down to about 4% in 1985-86 as against 12% post tax return assured by the Government.

With a substantial reduction in the price of non-levy cement and the unreasonably low levy cement prices, unless immediately the levy prices are suitably revised, the industry is bound to become sick. The present unremunerative prices would discourage the new investments and be an impediment in achieving the 7th Plan targets of 49 million tonnes by 1989-90. Looking to the present situation of the Industry, All India Financial Institutions have already stopped financing the new grass root cement plants. I am sure the Government would soon remedy the situation.

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES

From the following lines, you will observe that we are running the industries not only for earning profits but also as an instrument for improvement in the quality of life in the society.

Last year I had given you a brief idea of the manner in which we are discharging our socio-economic responsibilities. Now I would like to say a little as to how you our shareholders, our employees, the customers, the community and the Government have benefitted from the growth of our business in recent years.

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a) Shareholders : Fair share in the growing prosperity

The dividends paid to equity shareholders have increased from Rs. 135 lacs in 1976 to Rs. 505 lacs in 1985-86 an increase of 374%. Moreover during this period, your investment in the company has also yielded significant capital appreciation by virtue of two bonus issues. An investment of Rs.37.50 in one equity share of the company in March, 1976 was worth Rs.244.20 in March, 1986; i.e. an appreciation of over 650%. You will agree with me that our shareholders have had a fair share in the growing prosperity of the company.

b) Employees' Welfare and Training : An expanding social effort

J.K. Synthetics cares for its people— and it shows. Our employees have benefitted immensely through long term wage agreements and benefits provided to them. Our concern for workers' welfare has led the company towards creating impressive facilities for them. Townships have been set up alongwith our various manufacturing establishments.

Well equipped medical centres and schools have been functioning at Kota and Nimbahera. Employees are encouraged to play sports — towards this end, Jaykaylon Pavilion and the Gopalkrishna Singhania Badminton Hall have been constructed in Kota. The company has also constructed Open Air Theatres in Kota and Nimbahera where pictures are regularly screened for the benefit of the employees. The company is also running following schools:—

1. Jaykaylon School at Kota with a strength of about 1150 students,
2. Kailash Vidya Vihar, Nimbahera a school affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education with a strength of about 850 students,
3. Jaykaylon School at Jhalawar, started even before the industry had been established, with an enrolment of about 250 students,
4. JK White Cement School at Gotan (Distt. Nagaur) with a strength of about 100 students.

All these Institutions mainly cater to our workmen and the weaker sections of the society. Imparting better education, is enriching knowledge which improves the life standard. JKS does all this because it understands that its employees are its real strength-helping take the company from success to greater success.

To keep our employees aware of the latest fundamentals and techniques of industry, we have comprehensive training programmes. In July 1985, we established a new residential training centre at Amjhar, about 55 km from Kota. In 1986-87 we propose to conduct 103 Training Programmes in various disciplines covering 1600 participants. The company has a regular programme of recruitment of Management Trainees to meet its growing requirement for new projects. We are also conducting a phased education programme for our workers. The novel feature of the programme is that education is being imparted by worker teachers only.

Another major step in education of our workmen has been the momentum, the quality circles concept gained during the year— "THINKING AT WORK PROGRAMME" Each Quality circle is a small group of people who meet voluntarily on a regular basis. The basic objective of these meetings is to identify problems in their work area, analyse causes, devise solutions and wherever possible implement the solutions.

The Company has also launched a Suggestion Scheme in its Kota complex with an objective of rewarding the ideas generated by the workforce. During first six months of introduction of the scheme we received more than 5000 suggestions of which 500 have already been implemented. Thus an effort is made to make our workmen responsible citizens of the Society.

c) Customer-satisfaction our primary concern

We strive hard to give our customers good value for their money in terms of quality product and after-sales-service. Your company was the first to pass on the entire benefit of reduction in excise duty on polyester staple fibre and acrylic staple fibre to its customers from the very day they were announced.

d) Community : Our contribution towards improvement in Quality of Life

It is difficult to exactly quantify our contribution in improvement of economic condition of the people around the areas of our operations through direct and indirect employment. Some of our special contributions can be gauged from the following:

1. 115 bed Jaykaylon Women's Hospital at Kota
2. Sir Padampat Mother & Child Health Institute, Jaipur
3. LSS Paediatric Hospital and Research Centre, Kota
4. Police Line Dispensary, Kota
5. Jaykaylon Cricket Pavilion, Kota
6. Establishment of parks and fountains around traffic circles and providing traffic signals, Kota.

We have also been responsible for organising various sports meets including IXth National Badminton Championship, Ranji Trophy Cricket Championship Semi Finals, All India Hard Court Tennis Championship and Gopal Krishna Singhania All India Invitation Basketball Championship at Kota. We plan to organise many such events in the coming year.

e) Restructured 20 Point Programme : Afforestation and pollution control measures

In line with the recently announced restructured 20 Point Programme, your company has launched a massive afforestation programme to plant about 1,00,000 tree saplings in its Kota complex during next 4/5 years. We have also launched an anti-pollution drive and propose to spend in Kota complex alone about Rs.4 crores to create additional effluent treatment capacity.

You will please thus see that we believe and work as social change agents for alround development of the human society.

f) Government : Our growing contribution to national ex-chequer.

Last but not the least, national and state ex-chequer continue to be the biggest beneficiary of our growth. Contribution by way of excise duty, custom duty and sales tax by your company in the last decade have increased almost five fold from Rs.48.8 crores in 1976 to Rs.232.44 crores in 1985-86.

Thus all the partners in our business are benefitting by the growth of the company, which is contributing to continuous improvement in quality of life.

Before concluding it is with considerable feeling and sense of shared fulfillment that I thank my colleagues on the Board, the Central and the State Governments, Financial Institutions, Banks, our Customers and you the Shareholders for the valuable support in the last year.

Thank you

Note: This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

JAYKAY

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KARNATAKA

Settlers at Bay

FORTY-FOUR years ago, a poor Muslim woman driven by poverty left her home state of Kerala and came to Kodagu (Coorg) looking for a job. With her was her three-month-old son K.M. Ibrahim. Today Ibrahim owns more than 150 acres of coffee plantations. Much later, in 1968, Tony Mathew left the small town of Palai in Kerala to come to Kodagu to manage his uncle's coffee plantations. Today he owns a sizeable coffee estate himself. Ibrahim and Mathew are among the two lakh migrants from Kerala now settled in Karnataka's Kodagu district with similar stories of rags to riches.

Not surprisingly, their success is now beginning to haunt them. Resentful of their stranglehold over the district's economy, the more than two-and-a-half lakh Moolanivasis (original inhabitants of Kodagu) of Karnataka's smallest district are now making it increasingly clear that the Keralites are not wanted. Strikes, bandhs and economic boycotts have erupted in the last few months. Worse, since most of the Keralites are Muslims, attempts are being made to communalise the issue. One person was killed last fortnight when communal violence erupted in Virajpet.

The rush for Kodagu began during the 1940s. Today Kodagu has the highest per capita income among the state's districts: Rs 4,095, against the state's average of Rs 2,036. Migrants control 80 per cent of the district's coffee, orange, cardamom and pepper trade. Says C.B. Kaveriappa, political science reader at the Government College in Madikeri: "The workers have become bosses and the resulting ill-feeling is inevitable."

In the last few months several minor clashes have taken place and last month a district-wide bandh was called by local organisations. Jan Jagrithi, an organisation representing the Moolanivasis, has opened a provision store at Virajpet to undercut the rich migrants by selling cheaper goods. In Siddapur, a nearby town, the Kodagu Yuvajana Sangha is urging local people to buy from their own kin. Said Sangha President A.C. Subbaiah, a cinema owner in Siddapur: "We are feeling threatened and suffocated in our own district." But Ibrahim, who became the general secretary of the state Congress(I) during Gundu Rao's rule, attributes the trouble to "simple jealousy". He says: "I've come from Kerala, worked hard to become rich. So what's wrong?"

With Muslims now comprising nearly 40 per cent of Kodagu's population, communal tension is rising. In Ponnampet the villagers damaged a mosque and in Halgondu unknown persons broke the local temple's door. Some political parties, who want the migrants out, are trying to give a communal turn to a petty murder which took place in Turukurahatti two months ago. Clashes also took place on Bakr-id and Rakhi.

Kodavas with guns: explosive situation

Photographs by N.S. AZEEZ

The BJP and RSS are accused of communalising the issue, but the BJP state President B.B. Shivappa, a coffee estate owner in Kodagu, hotly denies this charge: "It is common to blame the BJP for all problems." But the police has arrested three BJP members for distributing provocative pamphlets. Says Abdul Rehman, an income tax consultant in Madikeri who formed a minorities forum: "Muslims, whether they are outsiders or locals, are feeling unsafe."

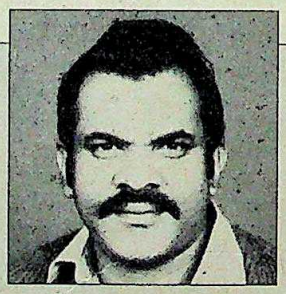
Kodagu has the unique *devarakadus*—God's forests—dedicated to the local village deity. These forests, believed to have been protected by Kodava ancestors to preserve the ecological balance, are considered sacred. The locals accuse the migrants of forcibly building houses in the *devarakadus*. According to the Forest Department's records, about one-third of the 606 *devarakadus* in 319 villages—over 9,000 acres—have been encroached upon. Inquiries, however, reveal that even locals are responsible.

The situation is made ominous by the proliferation of arms in the district. Since locals worship weapons, they have not been required to hold arms licences since British times. And with migrants getting licences liberally, there are 21,408 people in Kodagu who either enjoy exemption or have a gun licence. A police official estimates that there are some 50,000 weapons in the area, many more than what the police possess.

Though district Police Superintendent B.G. Kokatnur feels that "minor clashes have been disproportionately magnified", a tour of Kodagu confirmed that a cross-section of people are worried that the slightest spark could ignite widespread violence. Should that happen, the existence of the private armoury in the district makes the prospect frightening to contemplate.

—SRINIVASA PRASAD in Madikeri

"We are feeling threatened and suffocated in our own district."
A.C. SUBBAIAH
Kodagu Yuvajana Sangha



"I've come from Kerala, worked hard to become rich. So what's wrong?"
K.M. IBRAHIM
coffee planter

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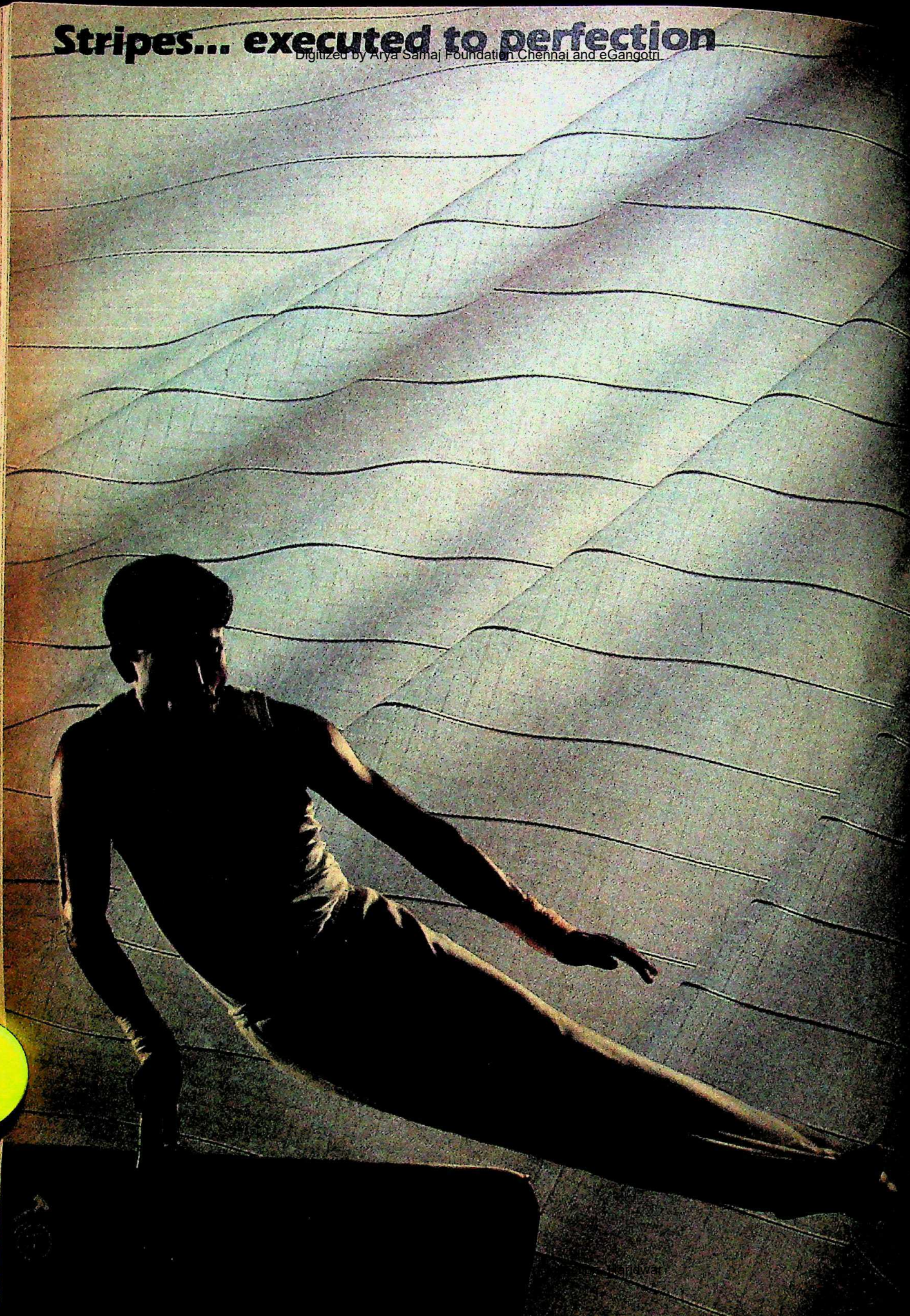

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BERGER PAINTS

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MADHYA PRADESH

House Hunt

FORMER hockey Olympian Aslam Sher Khan has finally scored his goal. Last fortnight, exactly a month after he had forcibly occupied a government bungalow in Bhopal, the Congress(I) MP from Betul was finally allotted the same bungalow following the personal intervention of Chief Minister Motilal Vora. Vora rescinded his earlier order allotting it to somebody else and issued a new order authorising the house for the VIP house-grabber. This incident has again focused attention on the merry-go-round of government house allotments, a problem that has become endemic in the state capital.

Khan, an Indian Airlines employee-turned-politician, is said to be close to another airline employee-turned-politician—Rajiv Gandhi—and this may well have been the factor that forced Vora to overlook what otherwise amounted to a crime under the Indian Penal Code. "What can I do? I've acted under government orders," lamented Bhopal Commissioner A.S. Sathyam, a stickler for rules, who finally signed the allotment order.

Khan, who already owns two houses in Bhopal—his ancestral property and a housing board residence gifted by the state Government in recognition of his contribution to sport—had, on August 10, forcibly moved into a government bungalow that had already been allotted to State Minorities Commission Chairman Shamsuddin, four days earlier. Khan claimed that he did this "at the instance" of the chief minister and the PWD minister who assured him that the allotment order would follow. "My only fault," he said, "was that I entered the house without a proper order."

Khan, who stays mostly in a government bungalow in New Delhi, says he needs a third house in Bhopal for "use as a guest house for my constituents who visit the state capital for their work". "My ancestral house is dilapidated and the housing board place is not spacious enough for my large family," he adds, concluding predictably: "My political adversaries are trying to damage me on this issue." But the state home ministry and the Bhopal commissioner's office are apprehensive that other VIP's may try to emulate him.

Khan's is not a unique instance and neither is the malaise confined to politicians. Last year, five so-called journalists representing publications like *Raktachap* broke open the locks of five new quarters and moved in. Being lesser mortals than the honourable MP, however, one of them was arrested for trespass. But they are yet to be evicted from the government houses. In another instance, an Indian Police Service officer forcibly tried to occupy a house that had been allotted to him and then apparently re-alloted to somebody else at the instance of the then chief minister, Arjun Singh. In the ensuing row, both the allotment orders were cancelled and the house assigned to a third person, but before she could occupy it, the house was suddenly re-allotted to a journalist.

This comic merry-go-round first became common in Singh's time, and Vora has continued the inglorious tradition—taking over the role of the estate officer for allotment of houses in select localities. Officials with the right connections and other influential persons identify houses about to fall vacant and obtain allotment orders directly from the man at the top.

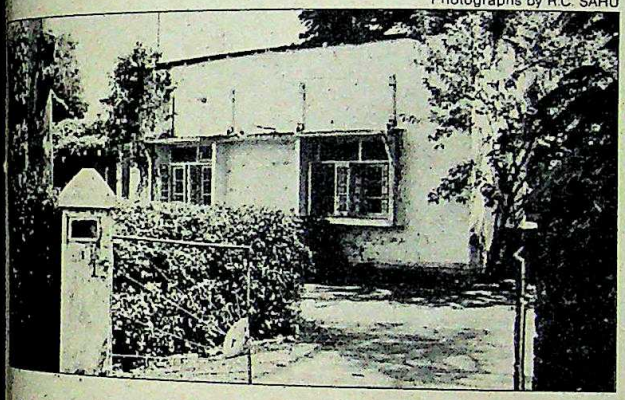
So many houses are allotted in this manner to journalists, politicians and other non-officials that senior government officers have to rough it out in guest houses for several months while they wait for a house.

Worse, most non-officials do not even pay the nominal rent charged. More than 250 luminaries, including ministers, MP's, MLA's and journalists owe the state Government over Rs 14 lakh in rent arrears. In fact, the impunity with which journalists have been occupying government houses without paying rent has been a long-standing scandal in the state. Besides, some 700 houses in the state capital, Bhopal, are under the unauthorised occupation of ex-MP's, ex-MLA's, ex-ministers and retired officials.

The political compulsions of the chief minister apart, the senior officials who are supposed to take corrective action are themselves guilty of the same wrongdoing. Some 40 officers of the Indian Administrative Service—who continue to occupy houses in Bhopal even after they have been transferred out—are themselves defaulters and owe the Government over Rs 2 lakh. Many among those posted in Bhopal occupy cheap government accommodation though they have built their own mansions in the city. These are rented out, in many cases, to government departments and corporations for extraordinarily inflated amounts. State government rules state that officials having their own houses but staying in government houses have to pay a penal rent. But this penal rent is waived if the government house is specifically allotted for an officer of a certain designation. The chief secretary, who has rented out his own house and whose subordinates decide which houses are earmarked, has got a government bungalow in his name to avoid paying the penal rent. Since the malaise starts at the top, Bhopal's government housing problem will continue to be exploited by those with the requisite clout.

—N.K. SINGH

Photographs by R.C. SAHU



Bhopal bungalow that Khan (right) forcibly moved into

The forcible occupation of a bungalow by Aslam Sher Khan has focused attention on the merry-go-round of allotment of government houses.

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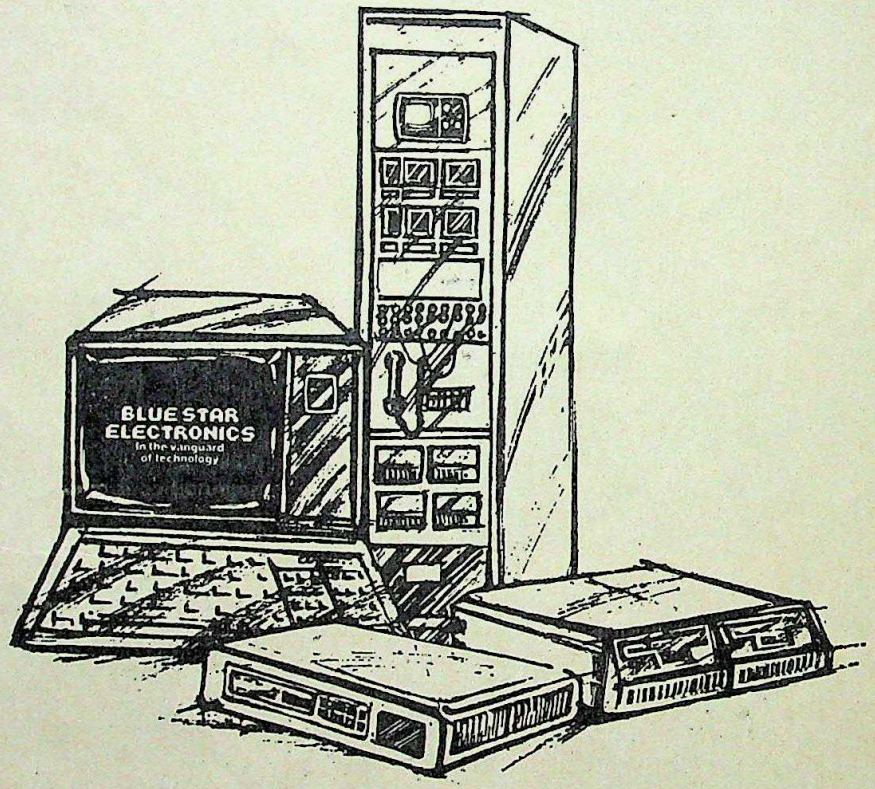

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BHOPAL DISASTER

Finding a 'Saboteur'

CLOSE to two years after the disaster in the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, mystery still surrounds the source of the water which entered the methyl isocyanate (MIC) tank and triggered off the world's worst industrial disaster. Last August the parent Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) in the US dropped the bombshell in the media that the December 1984 accident was caused by a saboteur who had injected water into the MIC plant. The claim found few buyers and was widely seen as an attempt by the powerful multinational to dilute its responsibility in the face of huge compensation suits. But UCC officials persisted with the sabotage theory even though they shied away from revealing the identity of the saboteur.

Investigations have now revealed that the so far unidentified "saboteur" who is likely to be hauled up by UCC before a Bhopal court for causing the deaths of over 2,500 people is a lowly paid former employee of the plant, Mohan Lal Verma. Although UCC has not named him in its high-profile media campaign about the "deliberate act of sabotage", its lawyers are likely to press for Verma's presence when the Bhopal District Court starts hearings on the compensation suits this month. But the evidence against Verma can be questioned, as investigations suggest. Verma, who has been quizzed by UCC investigators, is aware of the multinational's designs but claims to be not worried. Says he: "I have faith in my innocence."

Several pointers indicate that Verma is the person UCC wants to pin down. Carbide had alleged that following a row with his superiors, a "disgruntled employee" who had been demoted a week earlier, had entered the plant without authorisation on the night of December 2, rigged up a water hose to the storage tank containing MIC and quietly injected about 500 kg of water to the highly volatile and toxic chemical, triggering the disaster. Verma is the only person who fits this description.

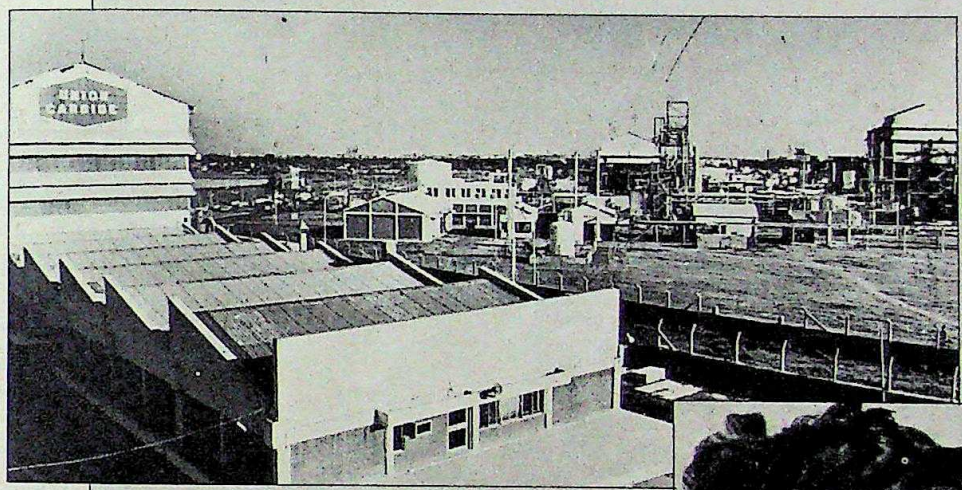
Verma, who took up the job of an industry inspector with the Madhya Pradesh Government's Directorate of Industries after the Carbide plant closed down, had a grudge against his employers because even after working for two years in the MIC unit—earlier he was in another unit of the plant—he had not been confirmed as an operator. He was the only fifth grade operator in the MIC plant; all his colleagues had moved up to the higher grade. Verma had asked the workers' union to take up his case. "Although I was fully trained, I was not given independent charge," he complained in an interview last fortnight.

Verma also confirmed that he had had a row with a superior officer shortly before the disaster. "I had admonished production manager S.P. Choudhury and was expecting my transfer from the MIC unit any time," he said. Although he was not demoted—the company's records show that no employee was demoted a week before the disaster—he was punished by being transferred to the less sophisticated Sevin unit. Verma contends that the transfer order was never served on him, which is why he continued to report to the MIC plant. But the company's records show that the order was indeed issued and it is on the basis of this that Carbide is likely to argue that Verma had entered the MIC unit without the management's authorisation.

But the UCC is overlooking one crucial fact. Verma had punched his card at 10.33 p.m. on the night of December 2, and the leak was first noticed at 11 p.m. "Was it possible for him to go to his locker, change into his uniform, connect the hose pipe to the MIC tank and inject 500 kg of water in 27 minutes?" asked former MIC plant operator T.R. Chouhan. The water pipe, said Chouhan, had a half-inch diameter and the injection of 500 kg of water would have taken at least 45 minutes.

Besides, according to the March 1985 report of the UCC investigating team, the temperature of the MIC in the particular tank (No. 610) before the accident was between 15 and 20 degrees celsius. The company's MIC manual says that at this temperature MIC would take at least 23 hours to react if water was mixed with it.

Carbide has also claimed that the



The Carbide plant and (right) Verma

Investigations reveal that the so far unidentified "saboteur" who is likely to be put forward by UCC is a lowly paid former employee Mohan Lal Verma.

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man who put the water into the MIC was not aware of the disastrous runaway reaction it would cause and had injected the water only to spoil a batch of chemicals. But Verma dismisses this hypothesis, saying: "Am I a fool? I am a science graduate and I know what MIC can do."

Nevertheless, UCC has been working overtime to push the sabotage theory. A team of UCC officials, aided by officials of its Indian subsidiary, have been closely questioning former workers at the company's swank research and development centre in Bhopal. Some workers maintain that the officials tried to persuade them to state in court that they had seen Verma near the MIC tank that night though he was not supposed to be there. Some officials of Union Carbide (India) Limited deny that Verma is their target, but Vice-President K.S. Kamdar said guardedly: "In my long experience, industrial sabotage of this nature takes place mostly during the nights and the story is plausible."

Carbide had earlier tried to pin the responsibility on a Sikh employee, sacked along with several dozen other officers after the leak. But the company forgot that the man had stood surety for the managing director (now chairman) of its Indian subsidiary, V.P. Gokhale, arrested along with several other senior officials after the disaster. When he threatened to withdraw his surety, the company withdrew the sack order and posted him to its Lucknow plant. Now Carbide has zeroed in on Verma.

—N.K.SINGH

ACTION GROUPS

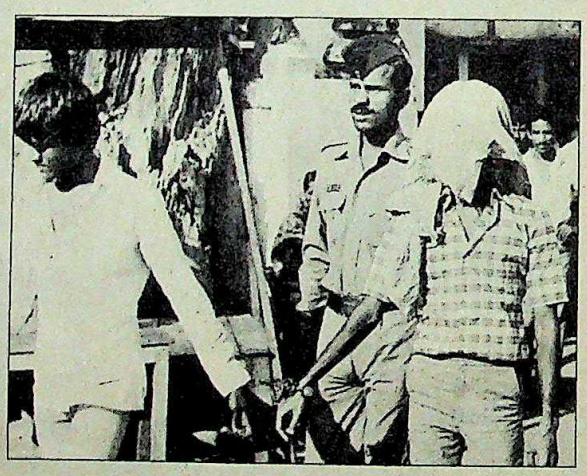
Knocked Out

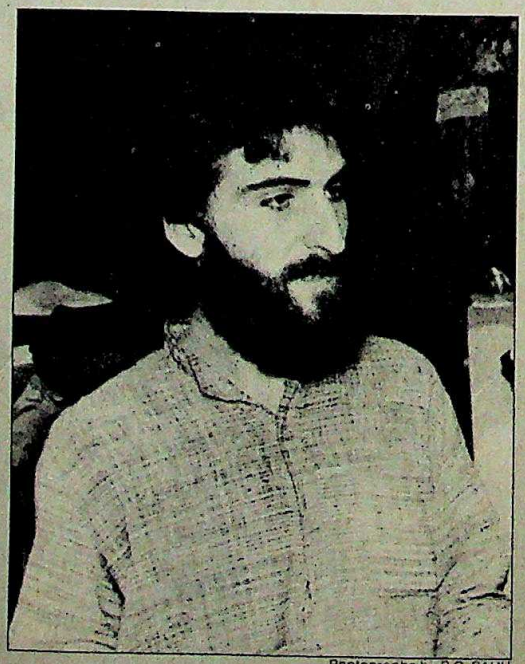
THE arrest of a voluntary worker, Gautam Banerjee, and a British youth, David Bergman, working among the gas-affected children of Bhopal has focused attention on the voluntary groups trying to help the victims of the Carbide disaster. Banerjee was held for allegedly trying to tape a meeting of doctors discussing the problems of the victims, and Bergman was held under the Official Secrets Act after incriminating documents were allegedly recovered from Bergman's house.

There are almost two dozen voluntary action groups in India and abroad which are ostensibly providing relief and organising the victims to fight for their rights. But last month's incidents showed that they are not only a badly fragmented lot but deeply antagonistic to one another. Though most of them swear by Karl Marx, and some belong to the extreme left, at least three of them—Zahreeli Gas Kand Sangharsh Morcha, Citizens' Committee for Relief and the Bhopal Group for Information and Action (BGIA)—have called each other "CIA agents" and "Carbide spies". Their mutual distrust is so widely known that various intelligence agencies have been known to approach them for information on one another.

The Morcha—which is the largest of all the voluntary groups—split earlier this year with social scientist Anil Sadgopal, backed by his Kishore Bharati group, branching off.

Banerjee (with face covered) and Bergman (bottom): under arrest





Photographs by R.C. SAHU

He now lends his support to the BGIA, with whom Gautam Banerjee is associated. Alok Pratap Singh, a political activist of the Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI), which controls the leadership of the Morcha, now doubts the credentials of his former comrades. "The range of the foreign connections they had is unbelievable," he now says.

Singh suspects that most of the information the voluntary agencies collect is finding its way to "undesirable" foreign powers. Soon after Banerjee's arrest, the Morcha issued a statement calling for an official inquiry into how the BGIA had come into possession of "confidential" documents like the Indian Council of Agricultural Research's report on the effects of methyl isocyanate on animal and plant life. But BGIA member Sadhna Saxena hit back by calling the Morcha "agents of Union Carbide" and said they were critical of the BGIA because they wanted to escape the wrath of the police.

As it is, the activities of the voluntary groups, tired after a long fight with the authorities, are at their lowest ebb. The arrests and the alacrity with which the police has proceeded against them have also brought their vulnerability out into the open. The now open in-fighting is bound to affect their strength as an effective pressure group on the Madhya Pradesh Government, which is tragic because the state Government has shown itself incapable of taking any initiative unless the action groups put pressure on them.

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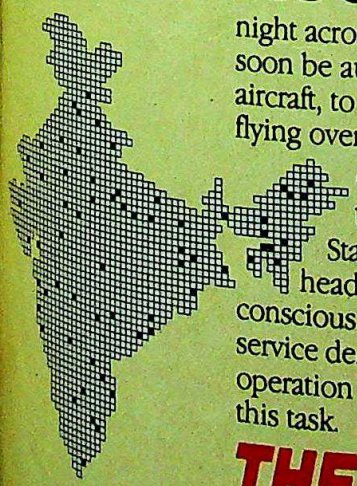

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WEST BENGAL

Battle Begins

The elections in West Bengal are at least five months away, but the battle between the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) and the Congress(I) has already been joined. With Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi going on a three-day swing through the state last fortnight and the ruling Left Front announcing the names of 242 out of 294 candidates, the campaign has practically begun. Clearly the battle for Bengal is going to be won or lost on the strength of a youthful prime minister's charisma and Chief Minister Jyoti Basu's record in office.

Ostensibly, Rajiv's visit was supposed to signal the start of a new style of solving state problems—of landing up with ministers and bureaucrats and taking instant decisions on pending projects. Thus, Rajiv was accompanied by 10 Union ministers, who sat with him in a marathon seven-hour session with Left Front leaders, at the end of which he announced that projects worth Rs 684 crore had been cleared for the state.

But however much Rajiv remonstrated that there was no political motive behind the bonanza, there was little doubt that he had an eye on the coming polls. In announcing that Rs 300 crore would go to the jute industry, he repeatedly stressed that this is what "our party people" had been demanding. And it was soon obvious, that the spot clearances were clearly part of a strategy to show the Centre as magnanimous and the Left Front Government as inefficient.

In two major meetings in Durgapur and Haldia—and in numerous roadside discussions with awed villagers—Rajiv tried to counter the state Government's propaganda about Central discrimination by arguing that the ineptness of the state Government ("Sometimes they even send project reports to wrong ministries"), and its misplaced sense of priorities were responsible for West Bengal's economic slide. Two examples:

► The state could not spend about a third of the Rs 3,500 crore sanctioned for the sixth plan because of poor resource mobilisation on its part.

► While the state's shortfalls in the sixth plan were 34 per cent in agriculture and 44 per cent in industry, it had spent 59 per cent more than the amount budgeted for information and publicity.

While Basu and his aides rebutted the allegations—the poor resource mobilisation had its reasons; the publicity budget had been exceeded because of the creation of fixed assets like a studio and a cinema hall—it did seem that Rajiv had clearly seized the initiative in the propaganda war. But the prime minister blundered badly in his reference to the Gorkhaland issue. Though he clarified there would be no further division of the state, he confounded everyone including his own partymen by saying that he had yet to come across the demand for Gorkhaland and that the movement launched by the Gorkha National Liberation Front was not anti-national.

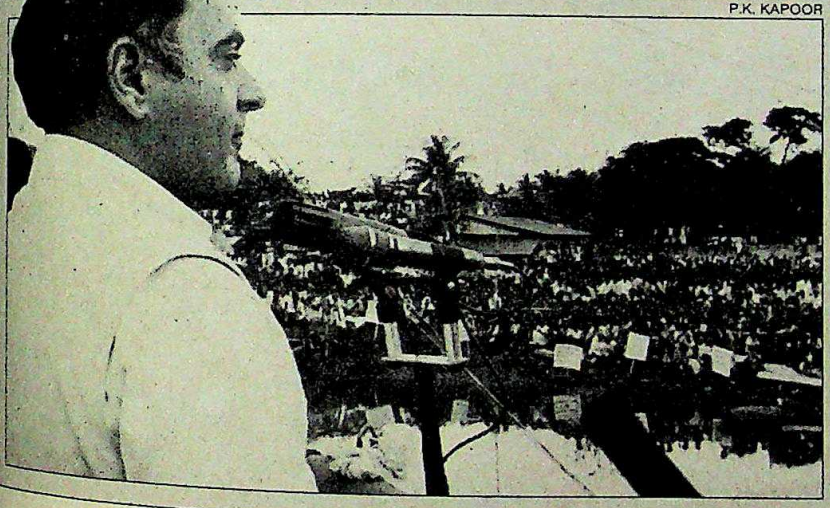
The state Congress(I) committee is a party to a joint resolution calling it anti-national, and seven of its MLA's are listed to speak on a similar resolution in the Assembly. Complained one: "The prime minister should have consulted us, or at least told us his views on the agitation. But now we feel totally foolish." Seizing his opening, Basu lambasted Rajiv's stand on Gorkhaland, declaring: "The prime minister has done incalculable harm to West Bengal." Basu's charge that Rajiv was creating a potential Punjab in Darjeeling by his ill-conceived remarks seemed to touch just the right chord among the state's middle class.

Basu's imprimatur, meanwhile, is evident in the 54 new names which feature in the CPI(M)'s list of nominees. Included are Basu's favourites—economics Professor Asim Dasgupta (expected to be the next state finance minister), Buddadev Bhattacharya (former cultural affairs minister who was defeated in the last assembly polls) and Gopal Bose (candidate for the Naihati seat). Party cadres have welcomed the list as many old and almost incapacitated leaders have been axed, including three ministers. Basu has also kept his Front partners happy by resisting party pressures to cut their quota.

Congress(I) Vice-President Arjun Singh, who accompanied Rajiv, later said that the Congress(I) too would be announcing its state list in advance—probably at the month-end. But this could give disgruntled elements enough time to cross over to Pranab Mukherjee's faction, which could spoil things for the Congress(I). Nevertheless, as Rajiv's visit clearly brought out, the outcome of the next elections will largely be decided by the credibility of the two most visible personalities in the state: Rajiv Gandhi and Jyoti Basu.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

P.K. KAPOOR



But however much Rajiv remonstrated that there was no political motive behind the bonanza, there was little doubt that the prime minister had an eye on the coming polls.

Rajiv addressing a rally at Manishadal: propaganda war

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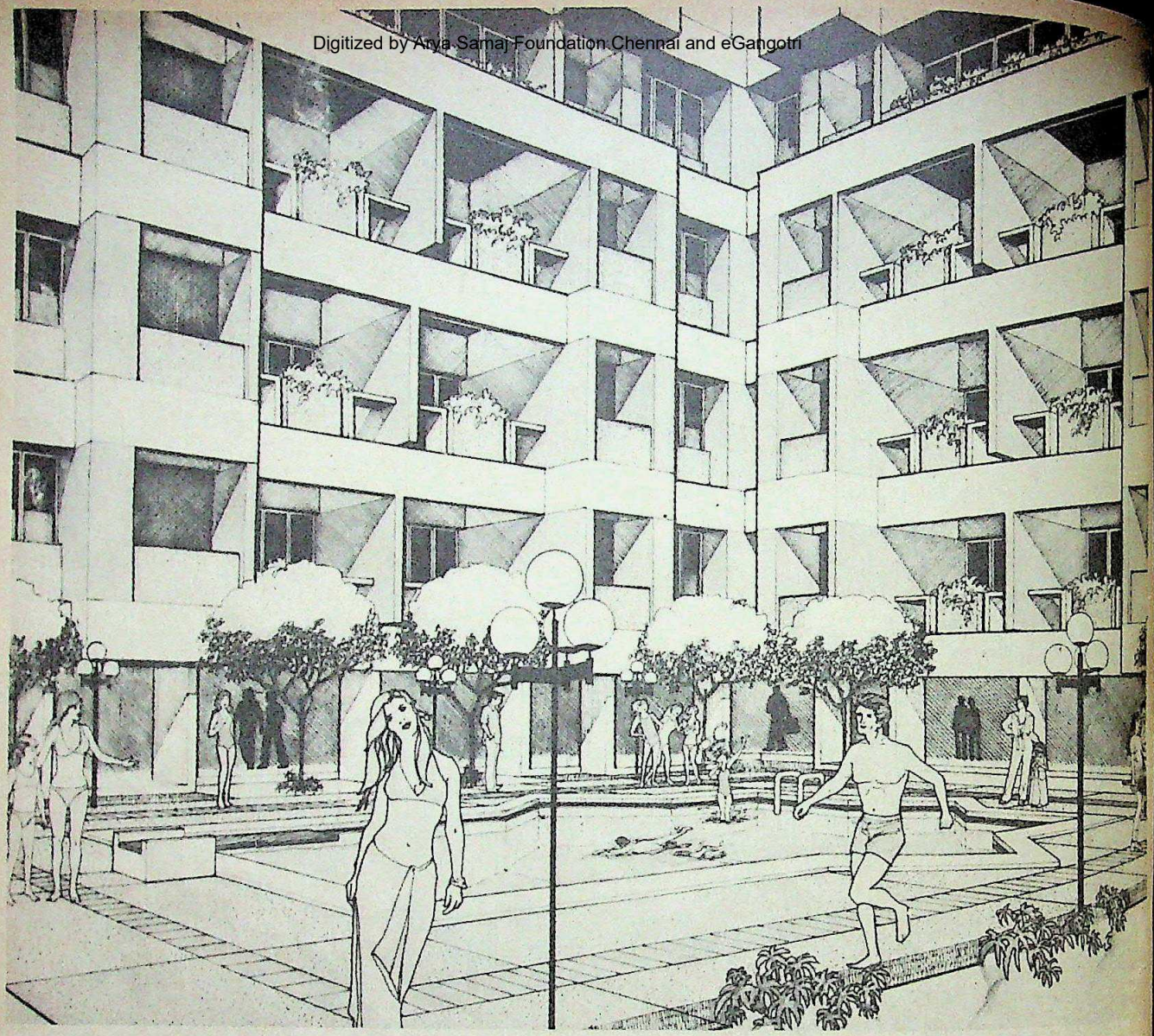

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ANDHRA PRADESH

Star Wars

USE the silver screen to debunk a political hero created by it: that is the dictum that Telugu actor and Congress(I) activist Krishna has used with telling effect in *Naa Pilupe Prabhanjam* (Clarion Call). A devastating piece of political satire, the film lampoons the chicanery, confusion and corruption of the Telugu Desam's 44 months in power with thinly veiled characterisations of Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao and the coterie of family members which surrounds him. The film—in which Rama Rao's parallel is a despotic ruler of an island state—ends with a call to the people to be more careful in choosing their next leader.

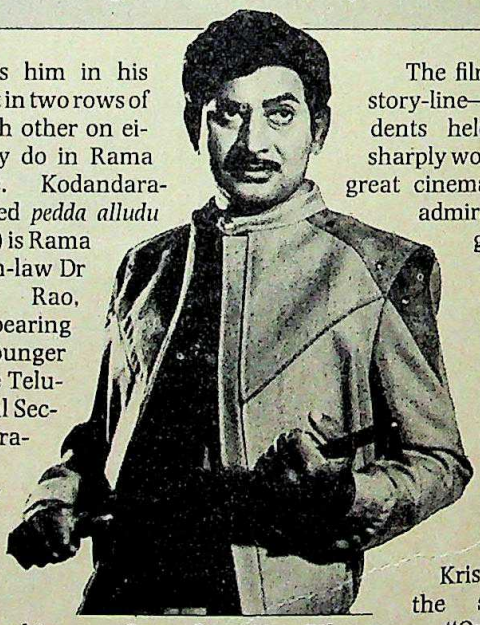
In what might be a commentary on Rama Rao's personal popularity, the film has been drawing packed houses at the 75 theatres in the state where its 54 prints have been exhibited regularly during the fortnight since it was released. Rama Rao himself has not commented on the film but its success has caused considerable apprehension among Telugu Desam legislators and ministers, who have invariably seen it on pirated video tapes. Charged an MLA: "Krishna got it past the censors only because the Censor Board is controlled by the Central Government."

Worried Rama Rao fans, led by their association President Sripat Rajeshwar, MLA, tried to stop the screening of the film in Hyderabad by threatening cinema hall owners. But the move backfired when distributors called a press conference to protest against the harassment. Observed a political commentator: "The fact that Telugu Desam legislators are developing doubts about the popularity of their leader shows that the film is bound to change the minds of the gullible villagers."

The hero of the film is Krishna in the role of a conscientious "deputy general" of the police in the island state of Trilinga Deevi (Trilinga is the land of the Telugus and Deevi is island) who decides to fight the despotic rule of its ruler Kodandaramaiah. Like Rama Rao, Kodandaramaiah has a booming voice, a stately gait, idiosyncrasies like rolling his eyes when angry and talks unceasingly of the Trilinga culture and way of life. Kodandaramaiah decrees that nobody should sit across him in his office—visitors sit in two rows of chairs facing each other on either side, as they do in Rama Rao's presence. Kodandaramaiah's spectacled *pedda alludu* (elder son-in-law) is Rama Rao's elder son-in-law Dr Venkateshwarao Rao, and the overbearing *chinna alludu* (younger son-in-law) is the Telugu Desam General Secretary N. Chandrababu Naidu.

Prodded by the frank but tactless advice of the *pedda alludu* and influenced by the machinating *chinna alludu* (called 'Babu Garu' in the film, as in real life), Kodandaramaiah runs his kingdom very much like Rama Rao has ruled Andhra Pradesh. Rama Rao had lowered the retirement age of government employees from 58 to 55; Kodandaramaiah reduces it from 59 to 56. Rama Rao encourages sycophancy by allowing visitors to fall at his feet; so does Kodandaramaiah. An empty treasury compelled Rama Rao to withdraw some of his populist welfare measures; Kodandaramaiah talks of taxing trees to finance welfare schemes.

Telugu actor—and Congress(I) activist—Krishna's film *Naa Pilupe Prabhanjam* is a political satire on Rama Rao's rule which has got the Telugu Desam worried by the crowds it is drawing.



Scene from *Naa Pilupe Prabhanjam* (top); and Krishna

The film does not have a story-line—it is a string of incidents held together by a sharply worded script. Nor is it great cinema, but it succeeds admirably in becoming a grim reminder of high-handed family rule. Only the denouement—Kodandaramaiah is forced to flee and his younger son-in-law is sent to jail—is fantasy; the rest is mostly true to life. Says S. Krishna Rao, a clerk in the state secretariat: "Only if our women who are sold on Rama Rao's charms see this film, can Andhra Pradesh hope for happier days."

Meanwhile, the Telugu Desam is said to be preparing in celluloid its answer to the challenge. Rama Rao's son, Balakrishna, is likely to star in the proposed film, but the party's ministers cannot decide whether the focus of their attack should be the Congress(I)'s earlier rule in the state or the life of Krishna. Either way, Andhra's star wars are clearly hotting up.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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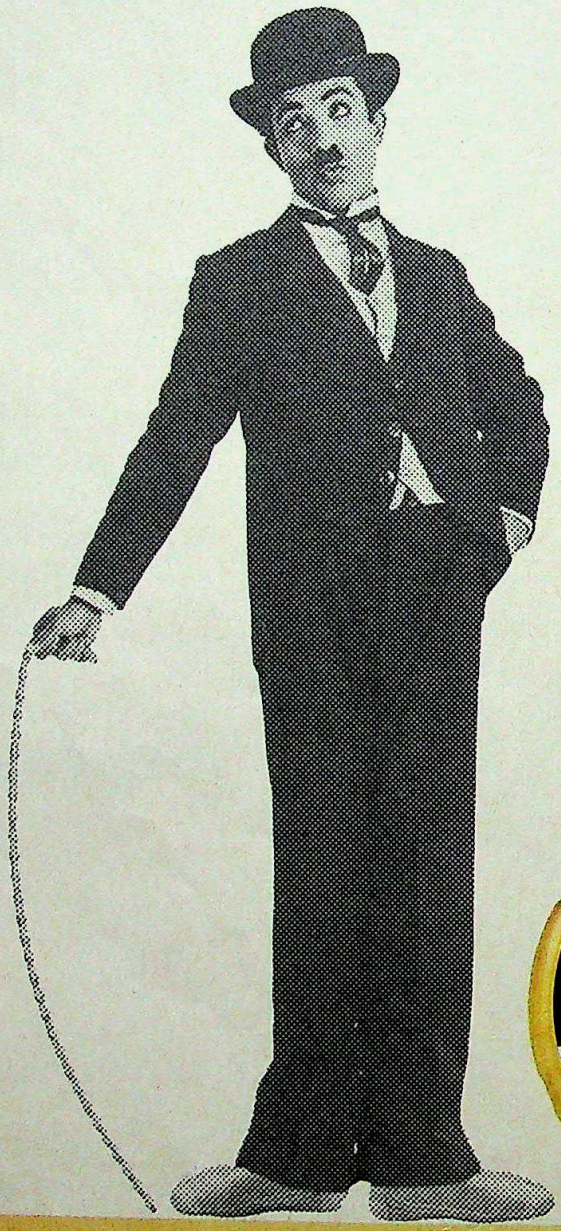

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The Politics of Reservation

THE recent actions of the Andhra Pradesh Government in increasing reservations for the "backward castes" and the consequences that have followed, have brought to the fore once again this vexed question. In spite of many reports of commissions and committees, many judicial pronouncements and much violence, no satisfactory solution to the problem these reservations are intended to meet has yet emerged.

In trying to suggest one, it would be helpful to ask a few fundamental questions. What kind of a society are we trying to build? Do reservations help in the creation of that society? If not, what is the alternative?

The kind of India we aim at is described in the Preamble to the Constitution. Apart from liberty, fraternity and justice, our objective is "equality of status and opportunity". It is this objective the reservations seek to achieve.

Positive discrimination becomes necessary by government when certain groups have been "disadvantaged" or made "backward" by the present or past behaviour of society. If backwardness is not due to any action of society at large but to some failing in the individual or group, there is no obligation on society to confer favours on that individual or group; nor can governmental action cure the defects which cause this backwardness. Examples of such failings are lack of intelligence or talent, indiscipline, aversion to hard work or very commonly, a fundamentalist religious belief that rejects logical thought on which modern civilisation is based.

Judged by the test of whether the disabilities have or have not been caused by social action, reservations in favour of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are justified. The former have for centuries been forcibly prevented by Hindu society from educating themselves. The denial of opportunity to the Scheduled Tribes is due principally to reasons of geography and history, but society is responsible for their neglect.

The justification for extension of reservations to the other castes is not at all clear. No castes, other than the scheduled, have been prevented by society from taking advantage of the opportunities available for their betterment. What does often prevent them from doing so is poverty, for which imperfections in the social order can be held responsible. Discrimination based on economic status is thus understandable; that based on heredity is not.

The articles of the Constitution permitting such discrimination refer invariably to backward classes and not castes.

> "The motivation for the ever-increasing reservations is not to the benefit of the ostensible beneficiaries but is purely political. Reservation is of electoral benefit to political parties."

The equation of caste with class is defended on the ground that in India the two are virtually synonymous because castes follow hereditary occupations. This, of course, is demonstrably incorrect. But even if it were not, would it not make sense to make reservations on the basis of occupations rather than caste? There can be justification for preference being given to the children of a cobbler who actually cobbles, but on what ground can a similar preference be justified for the children of someone from the cobbler caste who is a civil servant or a minister? And yet, so great are the vested interests so created that any suggestion to introduce a means test, even within the existing system, is violently opposed.

The assumption underlying reservations is that by favouring the backward castes, the level of the whole community will be raised. Experience since Independence has shown that the advantage of those reservations has been limited to a small group of those already privileged, leaving the rest of the community as backward as before.

The motivation for the ever-increasing reservations (despite the judgement of the Supreme Court that their maximum limit should be 50 per cent) is not to the benefit of the ostensible beneficiaries but is purely political. Increasing the quantum of reservation and including an ever-widening number of castes in the definition of backward is of electoral benefit to the political parties.

While the good that reservations do to the castes in whose favour they are made is best limited, their harmful effect on the country is great. The greatest harm is to national integration and unity. In a country which is not short of bases of division, caste-based discrimination causes intense inter-caste friction and even enmity. Moreover, such reservations give rise to inbuilt interest in the continuation of backwardness. A whole nation seems wanting to become backward rather than to advance. The effect on the efficiency of the public services is marked. In a polity where the state plays an ever-increasing role, the greatest harm results from the incompetence of the public services.

What then, is the alternative to the present system of reservations in a society where there are vast differences between the competence of various sections of the population? The search for one must start from the recognition that there is no instant solution because the key to it is education. My own solution would therefore be to make education of high quality, comparable to that available today only to the rich in the public schools, which should be at the kindergarten stage, should be purely on the basis of talent, talent being tested through recognised tests which eliminate the influence of environment. Full scholarships should be given to all those admitted after a stringent means test. Students coming out of these schools (the vast majority of whom would, because of the means test, belong to the poorest and most backward classes) will be able to compete on equal terms with the most advanced, doing away ultimately with the need for reservations. In one generation the objective would be much nearer achievement without any of the harmful effects of the present policies which, in any case, are not leading anywhere.

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Number Game

RAJASTHAN'S Transport Minister Sheesh Ram Ola has got himself into an amusing tangle—though he may not see the humour in it. Ola faces a writ in the high court for getting the registration number RNV 1 for his new Maruti.

Ola: car tangle

According to Kanta Sharma, the petitioner, she had applied for this number before Ola and, like him, had deposited Rs 500 as required with the transport authorities. She went to court when, on inquiring with the transport secretary about her application, she was told that she couldn't get it because the number had been allotted to someone else.

Funnily, this is not the first time that Ola has been involved in a dispute of this nature. Some time back he had to face legal action when, after selling his jeep—RJP 1—he decided to retain the registration number for himself. Being number one constantly, Ola is beginning to find, is not easy.

Controversial Art

BHOPAL'S Bharat Bhavan and its cultural hierarchy have a knack of attracting controversy. This time, it is art gallery Director J. Swaminathan who is under attack in the local press over the sculpture of a shaheen (a falcon-like bird) that he carved for the town's Iqbal Memorial Park. The bird was put on display last year to depict the Urdu poet's "spirit of fearlessness, uncompromising will to fight the forces of darkness and indomitable thirst for freedom".

R.C. SAHU

Shaheen sculpture and (inset) Swaminathan

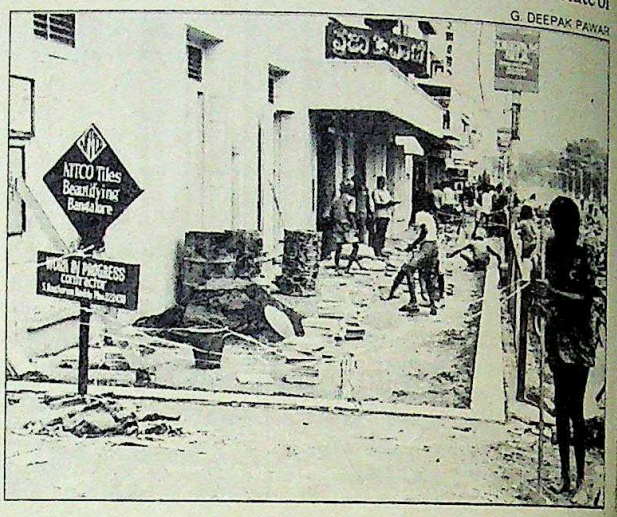
But critics say it isn't a shaheen at all. A citizens' group, the Public Social Welfare Society, has petitioned that the Bhopal Development Authority misused Rs 3.50 lakh of public funds for the statue, acclaimed by M.F. Husain, Syder Haider Raza and Krishan Khanna. The people aren't impressed: they want the "eyesore" removed.

Says Swaminathan: "It is not supposed to be beautiful. It's not one of the big-breasted, big-buttocked statues you see as art in public places. Made in the wake of the gas tragedy, it is a grim thing, a warning to multinationals."

Beautifying Bangalore

BANGALOREANS are happy to host the seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit next month. But their delight is because the city is being done up—well, parts of it. So poor is the state of

G. DEEPAK PAWAR



Bangalore's M.G. Road being spruced up

the "garden city" that an annoyed Hegde wrote to Mayor B.V. Putte Gowda, asking him "to clean up Bangalore in a fortnight," adding: "I do not want a reply. I want action."

The summit means better roads, clean drains, gleaming lamp posts, functional street lights and speedy disposal of piled-up garbage. The bill for the face-lift: Rs 2 crore, which the state is trying to get from the Centre. Also, apart from the swank hotels, the Nandi Hills resort 60 km away, where the delegates will take a break from the summit exercises, is being primmed and polished.

Ready Reddy

CIVIL servants like to keep a low-profile, but not Akepati Vijaya Sagar Reddy, 41, the popular and hardworking IAS officer who is (or was) Andhra Pradesh's commissioner for panchayati raj. In 1982, he was asked to go on short leave for criticising the frequent change of chief ministers in the state. In August, Reddy, a former major in the Madras Regiment, made critical references to NTR while talking to newsmen about the activities of the Federation of Ex-Servicemen's Associations. He was suspended on September 11 for his outspokenness.

Reddy: in limbo

But it is Reddy's suspension—and not his remarks—that is making waves. Cuddapah, his home district town, observed a bandh and students took out protest rallies in several towns in Krishna district, where Reddy was earlier posted. Ex-servicemen are also planning to come out in a major rally in Hyderabad on October 6 to register their disapproval.

Meanwhile, Reddy, unfazed, is appealing against the order to the Department of Personnel Affairs in New Delhi and is busy organising relief and rehabilitation work as a "volunteer" in the state's flood ravaged areas.

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A great looking home within their reach.
The paint on the walls is Tractor !

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Tractor. India's favourite wall paint. Smooth, durable, washable. And very very affordable.

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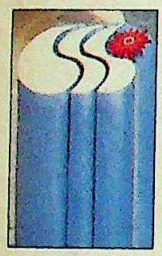
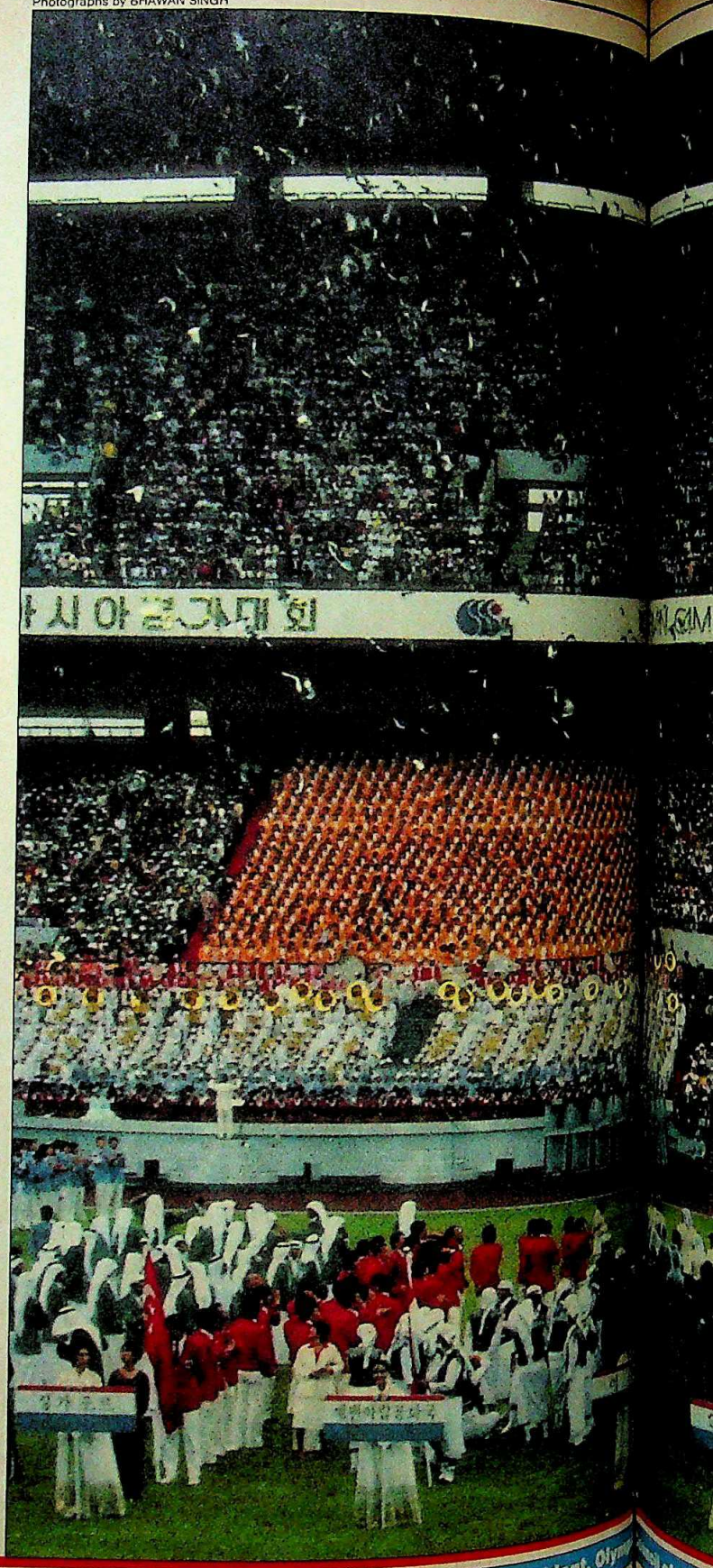
10TH ASIAD

Record Breaking Games



IT seems a travesty that there exists no monument to a man called G.D. Sondhi who, at the 1948 London Olympics, proposed the formation of the Asian Games Federation to organise the Asian Games every four years, midway between the Olympics. Sondhi, the then Indian representative on the International Olympic Committee, now lies buried in the storage system of the computers spewing out Asiad-related information at the main press centre in Seoul, but



Delhi Lt-Governor H.L. Kapoor handing over Asiad torch to Sheikh Fahd Al Sabah, president, Olym

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of Asia; (above) doves being released during the course of the spectacular opening ceremony

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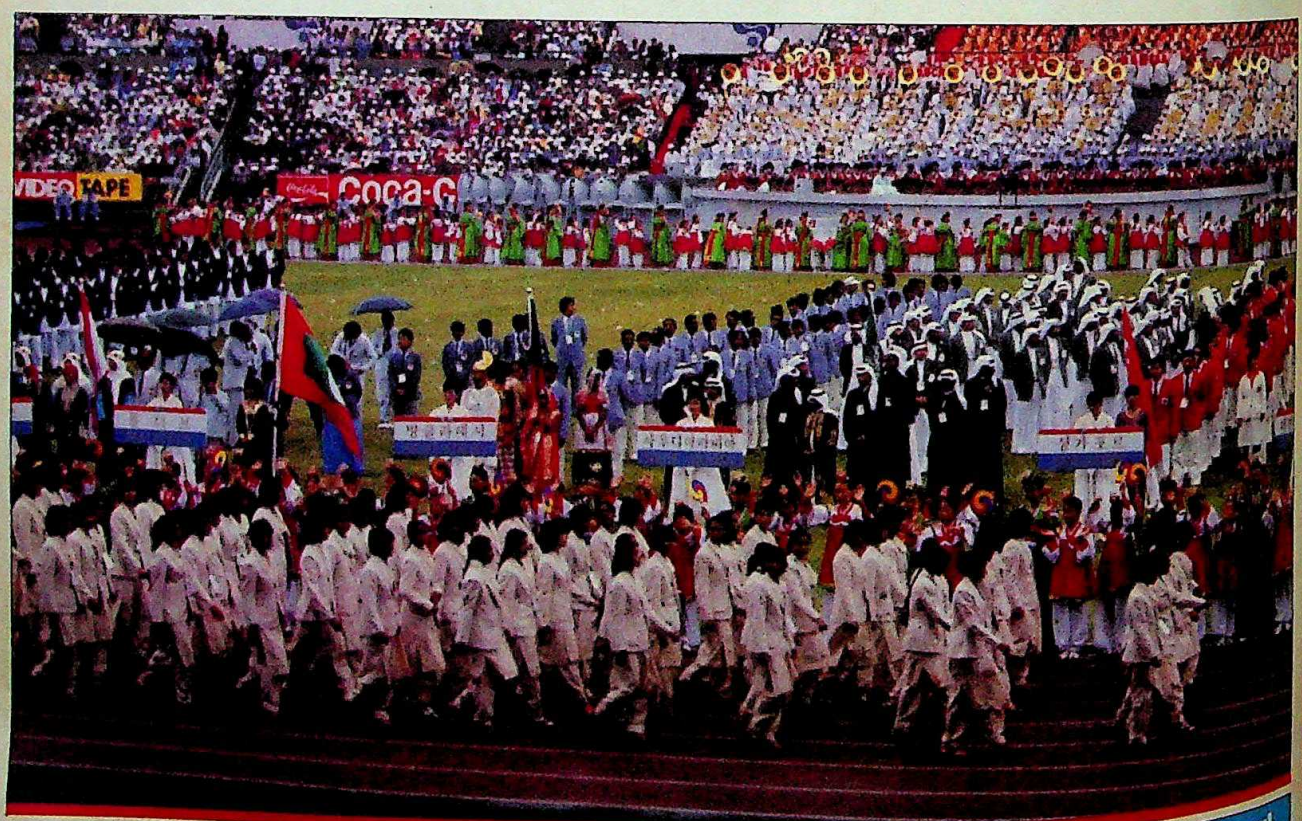
his brain-child has blossomed into a bejewelled sporting extravaganza that, perhaps even more than the boycott-burdened Olympics, symbolises the true spirit of international sport.

DESPITE the predictable absence of neighbouring North Korea, and the seemingly related bomb explosion at Seoul's Kimpo International Airport while the 4,000-odd athletes were arriving for the Games, the 10th Asiad seems destined to be the most memorable ever, if the first week of competition is any indication. The setting itself is near-perfect. Against the backdrop of the gently rolling mountains that ring Seoul's skyscrapers like benign Buddhas, the city shivers with Asiad fever. Huge welcome arches and artfully constructed flower-beds add splashes of bright colour to the broad, bustling avenues and spotless sidewalks. In the stadia jammed with hysterically excitable locals, the major Korean companies have organised paid "support groups" for countries they have business dealings with in the ultimate Korean-style public relations exercise. In Seoul's hustling markets, the Asiad symbol is stamped on everything from underwear to after-shave.

But stripped of the commercial hype that envelopes the Games like gift wrapping, Seoul, at least for the 16-day duration of the Asiad, belongs to the sportsmen and women. Never before in the history of the Asian Games have records looked so vulnerable. In just six days of competition, an incredible 111 athletes have broken the existing Asian Games records, 93 in swimming alone. At the Chamshil swimming pool, records seemed to sink without a trace in virtually every event. In at least 15 events for men and women, all six finalists finished with timings far better than the existing Asian Games marks. The record-smashers included Indian policeman Khazan Singh Tokas, who gave the Indian medal tally its first semblance of respectability by winning a silver medal in the 200 metres butterfly, in a timing of 2:02:38, and Ranjoy Punja, the California-based engineering student who also shattered the Asian Games mark while posting his best ever timing, though he



(Top) Screen showing Milkha Singh in Tokyo in 1958; (above) Indian team at the march-past in Seoul

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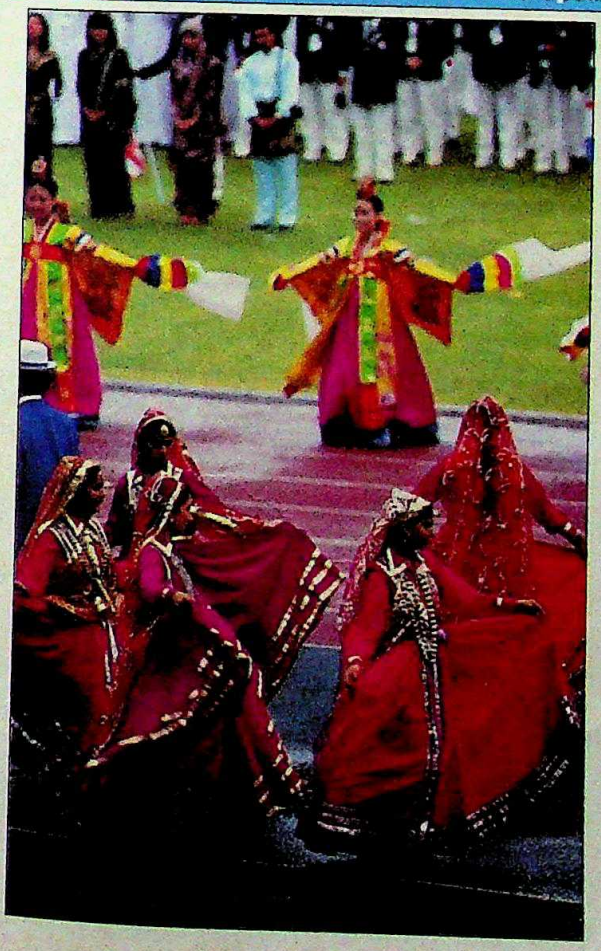
Parachutists (above); and Indian folk dancers at the opening ceremony

failed to win a medal in the face of the onslaught by Japanese swimmers who dominated the event.

But if Japan ruled the waves at Chamshil, the Chinese seemed almost invincible everywhere else. At the end of the ninth day, China had established a handsome lead with a tally of 143 medals, including 66 gold, compared to second-placed Japan with 128 medals (42 gold) and Korea with 110 medals (34 gold).

THE Chinese charge was led by gymnastic superstar Li Ning, who towered over the first week of the Games like the proverbial colossus. Li, a triple gold medalist at the Los Angeles Olympics two years ago, seemed to suffer no ill-effects from his evenings spent at the Games Village discotheque. The 23-year-old post-graduate student from Beijing captivated the huge crowds at the gymnasium with his effortless grace and supreme confidence. The muscular machine had predicted that he would leave Seoul with five gold medals; and though he finally ended up with four gold and two silver, he was clearly the star of the Games and spearheaded



China's near-total domination of the gymnastics stadium. In the process, he firmly re-established his credentials as the world's best all-round gymnast.

Li's performance, the best so far in terms of individual medals, was only matched by that of the elf-like Chen Cuiting, who at 130 cm is the tiniest competitor at the Games. Cuiting, 15, labelled 'Asia's Nadia Comaneci', won the hearts of the capacity crowds with her daringly dazzling acrobatics that gave her a perfect 10 in the floor exercises, the first such score in Asiad gymnastic history. The aptly-named Cuiting waltzed away with three gold in leading her team to victory in the team competition and, along with Li Ning, gave notice that this was to be China's Games.

Despite a major setback in the men's and women's table tennis competition, where the world champions were shocked into submission by host country South Korea—their first loss in an international tournament in a decade—China dominated the Games like never before. At the start of the Games, Chinese officials had conser-

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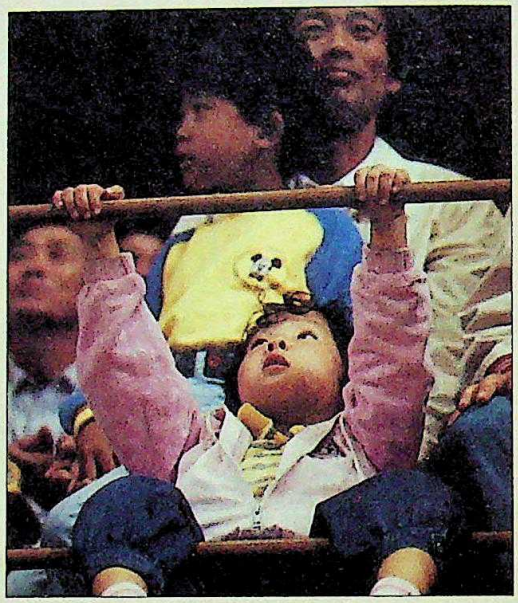
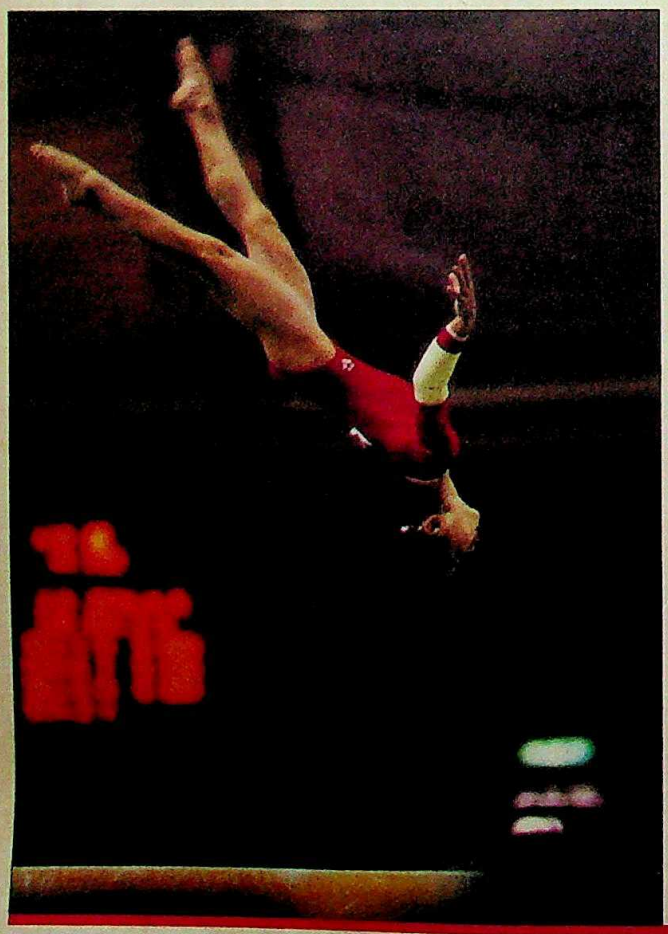
vatively predicted that they would return with 75 gold. But unexpected victories in the swimming events and a clean sweep of the rowing and fencing events indicate that they will far surpass even their own estimates.

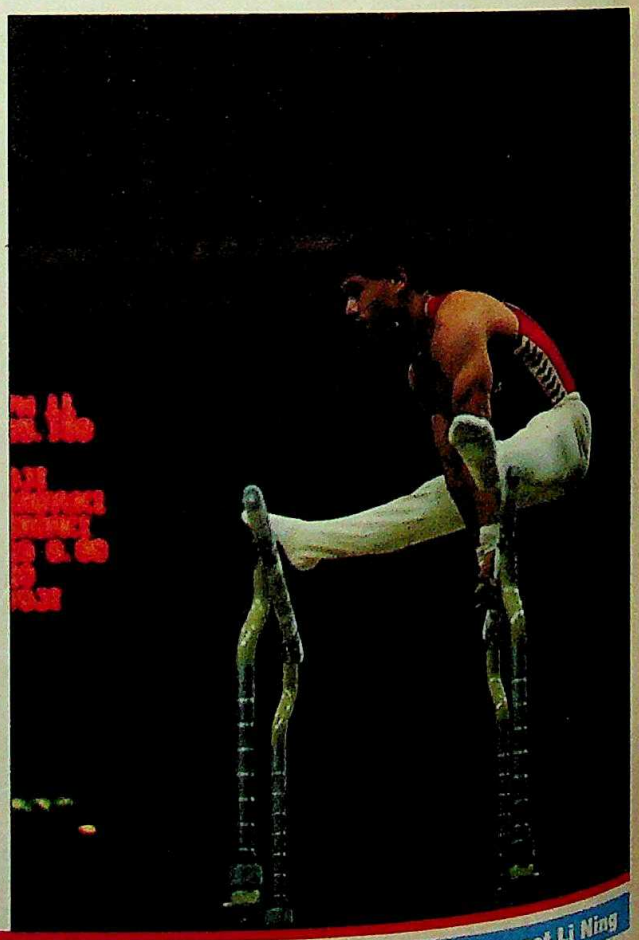
FOR China, the Seoul Asiad offers a unique opportunity to establish its claim as the leading sports power in Asia. In the 35-year history of the Asian Games, that honour had consistently been held by Japan until the New Delhi Games. China stayed away from the first six Asian Games and finished third in its debut at the Teheran Games in 1974. It improved its standing to second place in the eighth Asiad in Bangkok, finishing behind Japan, and only narrowly beat Japan to first place at the New Delhi Games in 1982 with 61 gold, 51 silver and 41 bronze, compared to Japan's 57 gold, 52 silver and 44 bronze medals. Clearly, at Seoul, the Chinese are determined to establish a commanding lead over their closest rivals, the Japanese.

Certainly, the big three—China, Japan, and South Korea—will finish way ahead of the other 24 countries taking part in the Games. At the end of the first week, the indications were that South Korea and Japan would be engaged in a see-saw battle for the second spot. The South Korean team, spurred on by frenzied supporters in the stands and by lucrative inducements—local sports fans have donated money towards an intriguing scheme whereby every South Korean medal winner at the Games and the concerned coaches will receive an extra medal made of pure gold worth 50,000 wong (Rs 700)—has made a superhuman effort to beat arch rivals Japan to the second place at the Games. Already, their table tennis, swimming, shooting and gymnastic gold medalists have become national heroes overnight, with South Korean television showing repeated sequences of their victories. The host country's coaches say that their athletes have been training for 700 days before the Games on the high-tech equipment and surfaces set up for the Asiad which is, for South Korea, essentially a show-window for the 1988 Olympics.



In contrast, the performance by the Indian contingent in the initial stages of the Games was an abject





Young spectator (top); gold medallist Chinese woman gymnast (above left); star Chinese gymnast Li Ning

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disappointment, despite the cheering by the Indian "support groups" in the stands. On arrival, the Indian chef de mission, the genial and over-worked Ashok Kumar Mattoo, and Minister of State for Sports Margaret Alva, who is here along with her businessman husband as head of the Indian delegation, had been overly optimistic about India's chances, rated especially good because of North Korea staying away from Seoul. But by the ninth day of the competitive events, India was placed low down in the medals table, even behind unfancied Iran, and without a gold medal yet to its credit. The embarrassing tally of three silver and seven bronze medals (the former won by yachtsmen Farooq Tarapore and Dhruv Bhandari, double-medal shooter Soma Dutta and swimmer Khazan Singh) presented no hope of bettering India's performance at the New Delhi Games four years ago.

Clearly, Alva's effort in prodding the Finance Ministry into releasing the extra foreign exchange needed to bring the Indian contingent to Seoul a week before the Games started has paid little dividends so far. India's main hope in the men's shooting competition, Randhir Singh, started off literally with a bang on the first day with a score that put him in second place. But he, like the rest of his team-mates, faded out subsequently to finish way down the ladder. "I can't explain it," shrugged the burly Sikh. "Nothing seemed to go right." Tragically, that seemed a refrain sung with embarrassing regularity as far as the Indians were concerned.

THE hockey team did the most damage to India's gold medal hopes with an ignominious defeat against Pakistan in the semi-finals, the premature clash between the two giants of Asian hockey resulting from Pakistan's shock defeat at the hands of Malaysia in a group match. As in their first match against the eventual gold medallists South Korea, India's semi-final performance was clearly a case of lack of strategy and pre-match planning. Both India and Pakistan muffed chances, but Pakistan played with greater understanding and coordination, they were quicker on the ball and closely marked the mercurial Mohammed Shahid. The Indian skipper at his best is the most exciting and

Poor third: Chand Ram (top); Indian hockey team in action against surprise gold medallists South Korea

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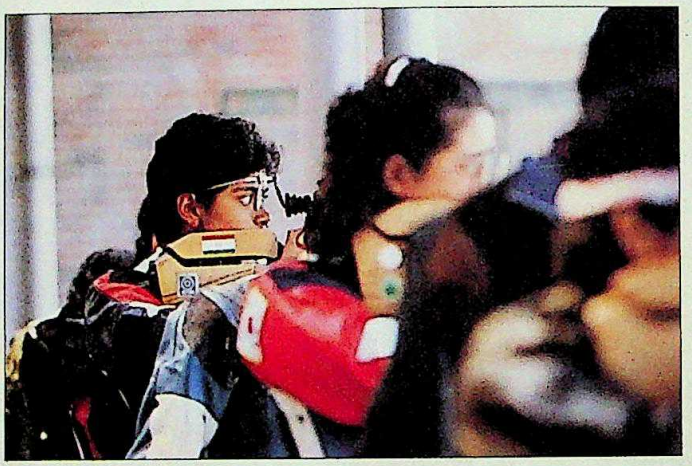
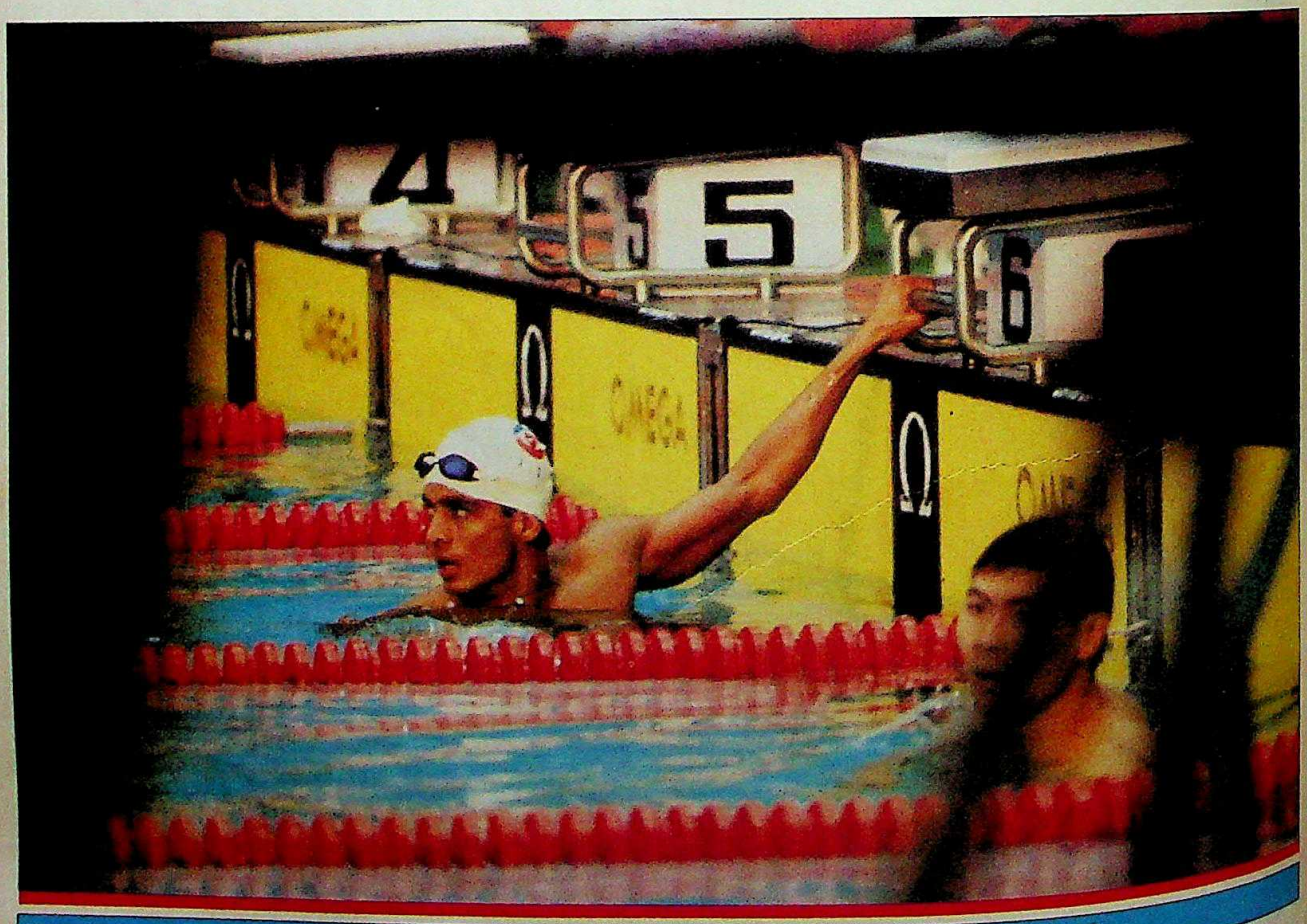
talented forward in the game. But his over-confidence bordered all too often on selfishness when he got control of the ball, and the lack of proper support from the other forwards meant that the Indian attack often lacked bite. India might have won despite these faults if two easy chances had not been missed, one of them by none other than Shahid himself. The team finally faced the humiliating fate of battling it out for the bronze for the first time in Asiad history, and the fact that they did eventually get the bronze was poor consolation.

IT was the same story of so near and yet so far in the yachting events held at the beautiful port of Pusan, Korea's second largest city, 400 km from Seoul. Farooq Tarapore and his crew member Dhruv Bhandari established an early lead in the 470 Class and looked set for the gold till as late as the end of the sixth day of the seven-race event when they were still in the lead. But the last day was a disaster for the duo from Bombay. They finished fourth and got eight penalty points while the Chinese team, behind by one point at the start, sailed beautifully to get no penalty points. Tarapore and Bhandari had to be satisfied with a silver—seven penalty points behind the Chinese. Still, Tarapore and Bhandari deserve kudos because yachting is a neglected sport in India. As a disappointed Tarapore points out, Japan has 2,000 sailors in this particular class while India has just one team.



Meanwhile, the most embarrassing performance for Indian supporters was that of the gymnasts, who lacked the confidence needed for a major international competition. The Indian support groups looked almost ashamed when Indian gymnasts repeatedly fell on their backsides, even on the pommel horse, or stumbled and slipped on the other apparatus. But as gymnast Ratan Debnath said after the competition: "Our performance was not a disappointment. It was, in fact, pre-ordained. In India we are not provided rubber safety mats, so we are forced to practise on grass. Unless we improve and update our equipment Indian gymnasts will continue to do badly in such competitions."

But no such excuse could hold good for the golfing team, who were strong challengers after their two golds in the New Delhi Games even with the absence of Laxman Singh, who has turned pro. But at the perfectly mani-



Silver medallists both : Soma Dutta in action (top); and Khazan Singh

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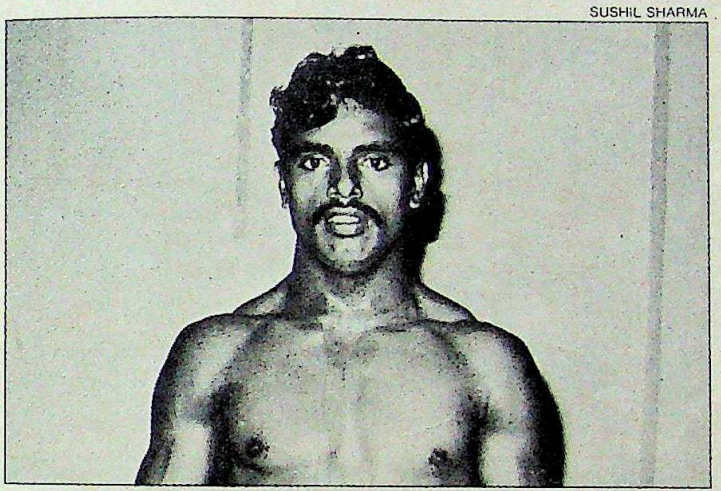
ured Hanyang Country Club. Rajeev Mehta and his team-mates figured way down in the final placings, being upstaged by a 16-year-old Philippine schoolboy who created something of a sensation by winning the individual gold. The football team was another disaster, losing all their group matches and ending up at the bottom of the table, while Chand Ram broke his Asian Games record but got a disappointing bronze in the 20-km walk, for which he had won the gold in New Delhi four years ago. The badminton team assured itself of a bronze, as did boxer Gopal Dewang. But the overall Indian performance was disappointing. In fact, early on it appeared that the only authentic Indian victory was by Bombay judoist Cawas Billimoria, 24, who won the grand prix award at the Games Village talent contest with his imitation of Elvis Presley.

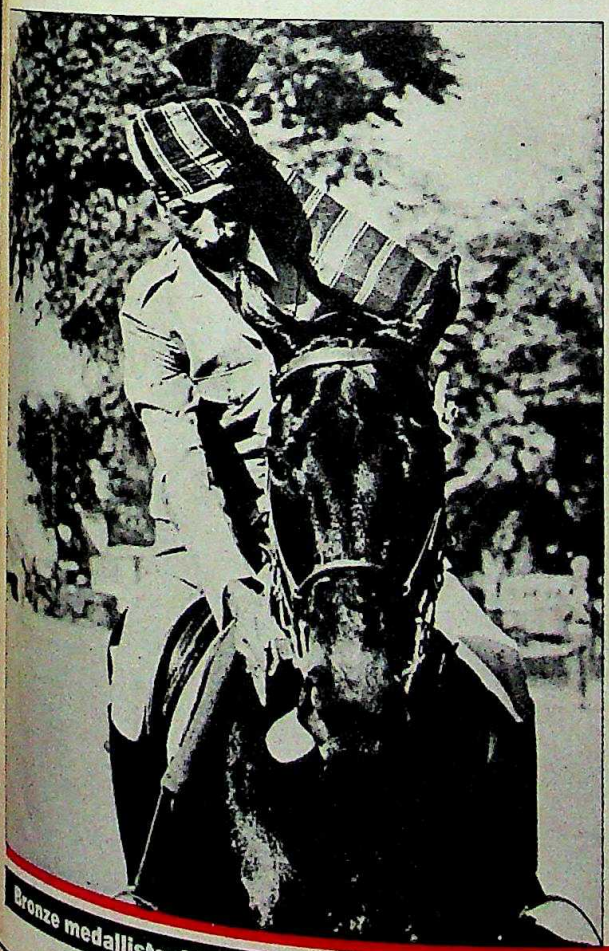
Mattoo and other Indian officials and coaches defended the Indian performance by pointing out that India was not expected to do well in any of the events scheduled for the initial stages of the Games. "We will get our medals in boxing, wrestling and track and field," said Mattoo. That is certainly true. But even so, Indian officials had obviously been hoping for medals in the equestrian events, where in the words of Major-General Narindra Singh, a former member of the Indian equestrian team, "we performed damned poorly, well below our expectations." The equestrian team had given India two gold medals at the New Delhi Asiad.

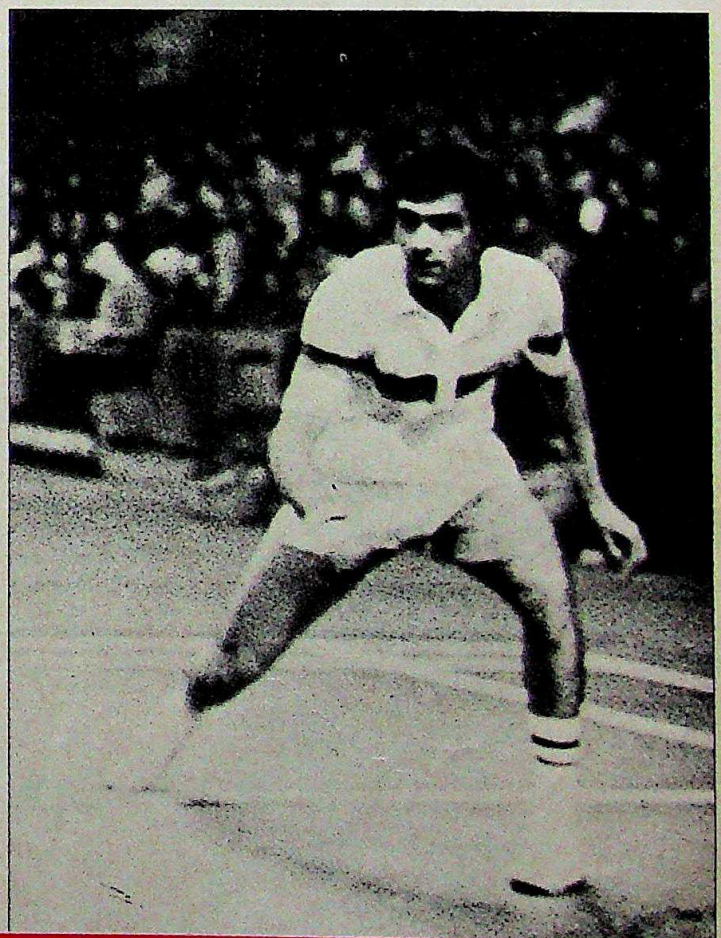
SUSHIL SHARMA



CONSOLATION, if any, lies in the fact that India seems to have a special place in South Korean hearts, not the least because it was the New Delhi Asiad that gave South Korea the confidence to stage the Olympics in 1988, a fact gratefully acknowledged by most officials.

South Korean youth, who have packed the stadia, give genuinely warm greetings to people from "Indo", and officials in charge of the Games were quick to respond to an Indian protest about the map of India displayed at the opening ceremony which inadvertently left out Jammu & Kashmir. A counter-protest from Pakistan finally ended in a compromise decision to avoid showing the map again. Meanwhile Alva, who has done a remarkable job as the leader of the Indian delegation with her grace and





Bronze medallists: Muthuswamy, weights (top); Raghubir, showjumping team; Padukone, badminton team

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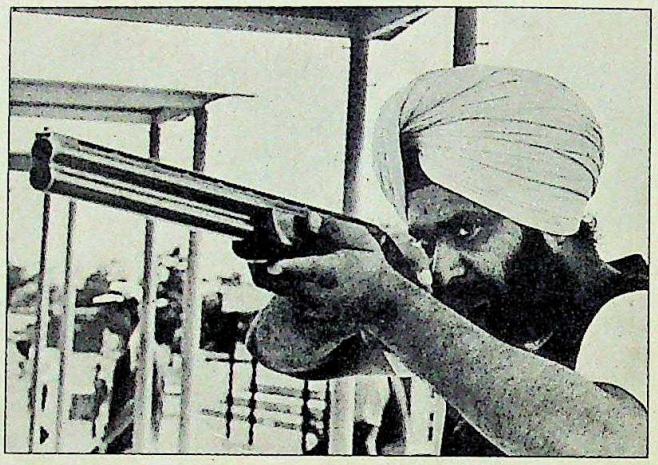
charm and even wit, has accepted the apology without blowing up the issue into a major diplomatic tangle.

Alva's success has, however, been diluted to some extent by the less qualified members of the Indian delegation, like Aslam Sher Khan, the former Indian hockey captain who is now a member of Parliament. Khan strolls in for official and formal dinners when everyone else has finished eating—a major sin in a country that worships politeness and punctuality—wearing open-necked sports shirts and then proceeds to wolf down his food while the final speeches are being delivered.

MEANWHILE, the Indian support group in Seoul is sponsored by the big three of South Korean industry—Hyundai, Daewoo and Samsung. The three firms, like other South Korean corporations, have recruited students and employees to form cheering squads for Indian participants in the belief that this gesture will strengthen commercial ties. In some cases, this has led to the incongruous sight of Korean students wearing traditional Arab costumes complete with headgear, cheering for countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq.

If there is anything that has marred the smooth and efficient functioning of the Games, it is the excessive security, considerably tightened after the bomb blast at Kimpo airport. Journalists, spectators and even VIP guests are screened at all Games sites with metal detectors, body searches and even mirrors on trolleys that are pushed under arriving cars to check on the undercarriage. Even the engine bonnets are opened to check for potential explosives. Armed guards patrol every street corner and the stadia are like fortresses. The Koreans believe that North Korea will do anything to disrupt the Games, and consequently their Olympic prospects, and tourists have had a harried time with the constant checking of bags and baggage at hotel lobbies where the delegations or even journalists are staying. There are even guards on 24-hour duty on every hotel floor. The security measures have proved irksome for many officials and media personnel, not to speak of travellers who have to report



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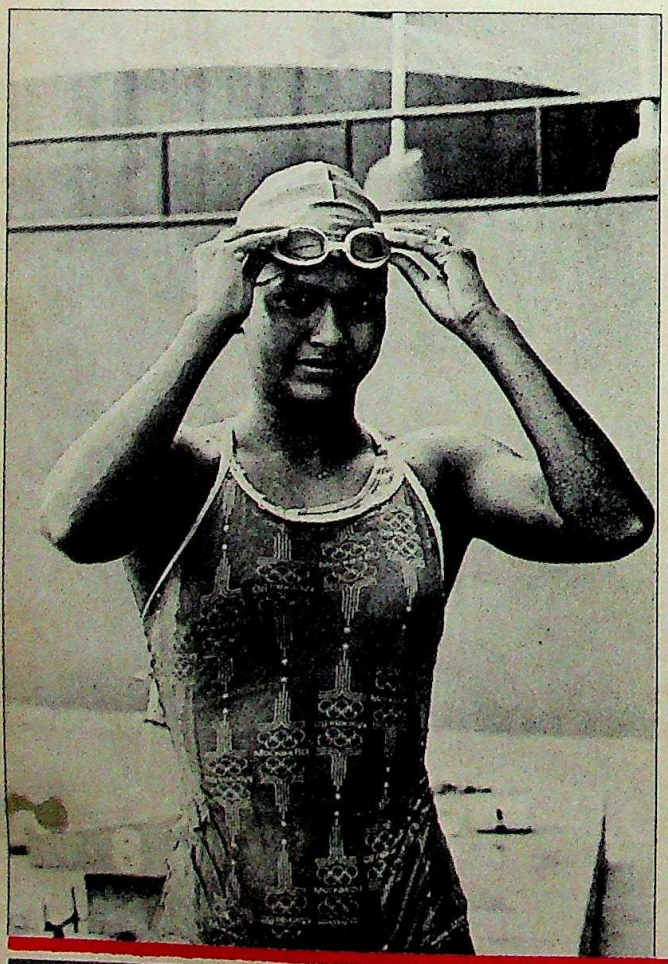

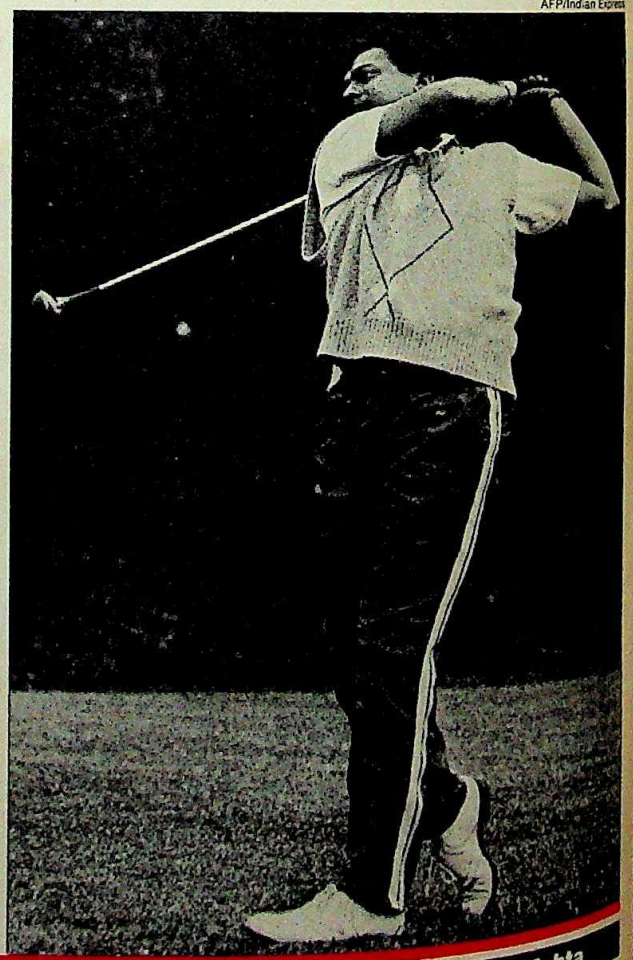

Disappointments: shooter Randhir Singh (top); swimmer Bula Chowdhury and golfer Rajiv Mohta

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two hours before every domestic flight at the airport where long queues have led to constant delays and rescheduling. The South Koreans, however, are determined that the Games should proceed without any major mishap and the security guards have been specially instructed to be extra polite while conducting their checks.

In any event, Seoul has its sights set much higher. Everything and everybody is geared to making the Games a showpiece with an eye on the 1988 Olympics. Thousands of volunteers have come forward to offer their services for the efficient running of the Games, and Seoul's world class sports facilities and stadia often have more volunteers than spectators.

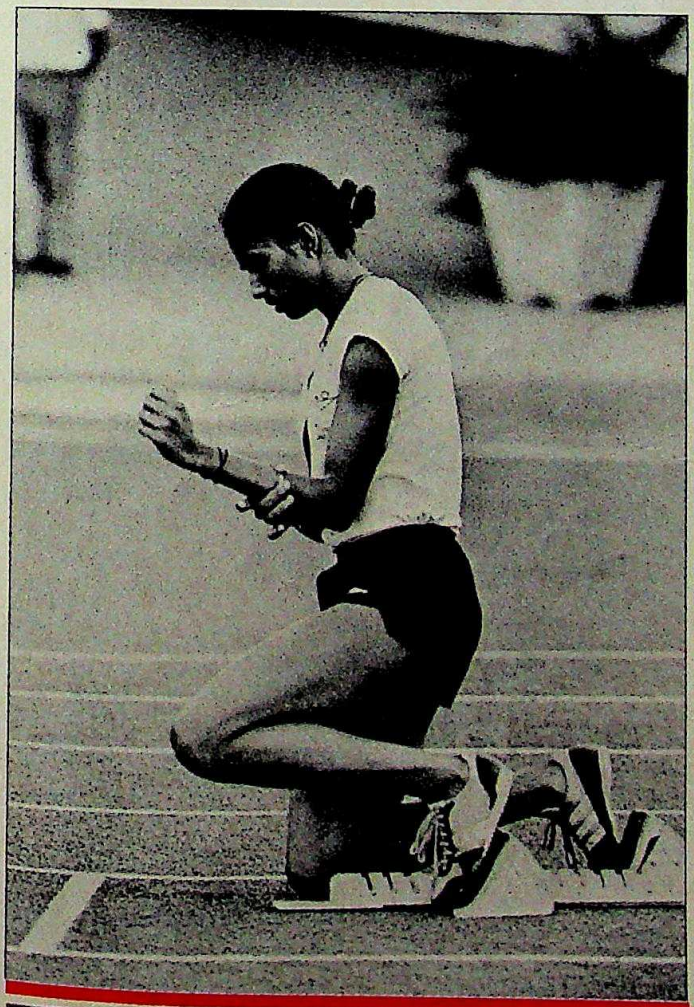
Seoul has also shrugged aside the dampening effect of the rain that drenched the opening ceremony, with its heavy emphasis on traditional folk dancing and Taekwondo, the Korean martial art, and emerged with flying colours. If there is one major problem it is the lack of South Korean officials and volunteers with an adequate knowledge of English, causing major communication problems. But officials say they already have an army of student volunteers taking courses in English to help them cope with the massive influx of foreigners expected during the Olympics.

That aberration is, however, a window to South Korea. Seoul itself is a bustling and modern city (pop: 9 million) which is at the same time steeped heavily in tradition. The Korean people are ever eager to please, excessively helpful and polite and almost over-enthusiastic in their desire to make foreigners feel at home. The youth, apart from the more radical breed of students who have voluntarily stopped their protest battles with the police for the duration of the Games, are respectful to their elders and show an amazing amount of discipline and industry in everything they do. Unlike other nearby countries like the Philippines and Thailand, South Korean youth have also stayed uncorrupted by the heavy American military presence in their country, except in pockets like the city of Taewan with its cluster of discos, night-clubs, bars and gambling halls. The Americans have their own television channel, which keeps them well supplied with football and baseball games back home.

BUT the Games have produced their own external influences. At the Games Village where, unlike in New Delhi, the tastefully laid out apartments have already been sold to customers prepared to wait till 1988 for possession, Saudi Prince Turki Al Saud has shocked the South Korean volunteers helping out at the Games by insisting on doling out $50 tips to all and sundry. In a country where tipping anywhere is frowned upon, Turki's generosity has not been received as well as in the Lotte department store where, accompanied by four armed bodyguards carrying pouches of dollar notes, he ran up a bill totalling a staggering $8,000 in one outing. Turki is a participant in the bowling competition, which also features the oldest participant in the Games, the 56-year-old Rosario De Leon from the Philippines.

As for the Indian athletes at the village, already they are showing signs of home sickness, not the least because of the lack of Indian-type food. Korean food is essentially meat and fish, but far too bland for Indian palates; the only option is American-style hamburgers. The lack of Indian residents in Seoul also means that there is a shortage of Indian restaurants serving typical Indian *khana* in the city to break the dietary monotony.

Most Indian participants, however, were pinning their hopes on the track and field competition to improve their medal showing. P.T. Usha, India's main hope in the athletic stadium, began confidently setting a new Games record in the 200 M heats and still looked in line for five golds—with a little help from her teammates in the relays. On current form, Usha's closest challenger in the sprints is Lydia De Vega of the Philippines, who had predicted that she will win the 100 metres gold. But the Philippine star has been on the injury list in recent months and Usha's coach Nambiar dismisses her as a serious challenger. "Usha is 100 per cent fit right now and in peak form. She should have no problems at all in her events," he says while watching Usha pedal around the village on a cycle to improve her leg muscles. Similarly, Valsamma, Suman Rawat, Vandana Rao and Asha Aggarwal exuded confidence and looked in top condition as the geometrically-designed main stadium came alive with the start of the glamorous track and field events.



Saving grace: sprint star P.T. Usha

Indian coaches were also quite hopeful of grabbing a brace of medals in the boxing ring, and at least another two more in the wrestling arena though, even as Mattoo admits: "The lack of experience of the Indian wrestling squad in the recently-introduced Greco-Roman style could prove a major handicap."

Despite the initially disappointing start, the 300-strong Indian contingent still looks capable of coming in fourth, finishing behind China, Japan and Korea. But it is highly unlikely that they will be able to repeat their medal performance of the New Delhi Games. And, despite Alva's repeated insistence that medals are not everything, when the curtain finally comes down in Seoul, it will be the medals that eventually matter.

—DILIP BOBB in Seoul

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We have tied up with Ericsson, the world leader in telecommunications, to tap the multi-crore telephone market.

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You can tie up with us for a profitable distribution opportunity.

Swede (India) Teltronics Limited, in technical collaboration with the international telecommunication giant, Ericsson Information Systems AB of Sweden, brings hi-tech push button telephones to India. To tap a market of over 28 million users. Swede (India) invites top-bracket distribution organisations to share this opportunity, with powerful logistics and after-sales service inputs.

A MULTI-CRORE MARKET... WAITING TO BE TAPPED

India today, has only 4 million telephones — with only 4 telephones to 1000 people. The barest minimum required in comparison with world standards is a phenomenal 28 million. What's more, the use of two instruments per connection has been legalised. The estimated replacement market is as high as 4 million instruments. In addition, private telecom networks, institutions, the Railways, Defence and public sector undertakings represent a vast potential.

Swede (India)'s competitive price — a result of sophisticated operations and rapid indigenisation — will provide a crucial purchase incentive. As the first and the largest manufacturer of electronic push button telephones, Swede (India) is poised for leadership.

THE COMPANY ... AND ITS WORLD CLASS CONNECTION

Swede (India) Teltronics Limited is a joint venture with the Karnataka State Electronics Development Corporation (KEONICS) and is the biggest among the select few organisations licensed to manufacture telephone instruments. And the century-old Ericsson Information Systems AB of Sweden is one of the world's largest telecommunication equipment manufacturers, with a turnover of Rs. 4406 crores and a network of 32 offices worldwide. The result? 5 lakh hi-tech telephones per annum by 1989... for a vast, hungry market. Starting with 20,000 SKDs right now. The prototypes have passed the stringent standards of the Department of Telecommunications and the Department of Electronics; they will adapt easily to Indian conditions.

SWEDE (INDIA) TELTRONICS... THE HERALD OF A HI-TECH GROUP

Swede (India) Teltronics is just the beginning. Headed by doyens in Indian telecommunications, the Swede (India) Group will soon expand to cover not just telephone instruments but the marketing of EPABX systems (with C-DOT technology) and other new and advanced products in related fields. With the result that the Group's planned diversifications will amount to a turnover of Rs. 100 crores within a short span of just 5 years.

SWEDE (INDIA)'S RANGE... MODELS OF EXCELLENCE

Swede (India) will manufacture the sleek, world renowned DIAVOX range of push button telephones: standard desk telephones, loud-speaking telephones, two-line telephones, hotel telephones, telephones with abbreviated dialling and last number redialling, executive/secretary systems and office communication systems. The advantages? Greater efficiency and convenience. With a contemporary addition to user-lifestyle.

INVADING THE MARKET ... PHASE BY PHASE

Swede (India)'s marketing strategy envisages two phases. Phase 1 covers the metros; Phase 2, the other important towns.

Phase 1	Phase 2
1. Ahmedabad/Baroda	1. Bhopal
2. Bangalore	2. Bhubaneshwar
3. Bombay	3. Chandigarh
4. Calcutta	4. Coimbatore
5. Delhi	5. Dehradun
6. Ernakulam	6. Goa
7. Hyderabad	7. Guwahati
8. Madras	8. Indore
9. Pune	9. Jaipur
10. Trivandrum	10. Lucknow
	11. Madurai
	12. Nagpur
	13. Patna
	14. Raipur

Distribution to other towns will begin soon after Phase 1 and Phase 2 operations are under way.

Careful analysis of market potential and effective marketing and advertising strategies will ensure that Swede (India) gains a substantial edge.

PRESTIGE, PROFITS ... AND PHENOMENAL GROWTH

Swede (India) offers you a chance to associate with the world leader in telecommunications. To share in the prestige and profitability of its venture.

If you are an established distributor/manufacturer of consumer durables or office automation products and are looking for a profitable diversification project; if you are financially sound and have the capacity to stock, service and invest; if you are confident of developing and handling Swede (India)'s marketing operations in your zone or state; if your offices are in key areas and can provide faultless after-sales service ... send in a comprehensive profile, within 10 days, to:

The General Manager (Sales & Marketing)
Swede (India) Teltronics Limited
Almas Centre, IV Floor, 87, Mahatma Gandhi Road,
Bangalore 560 001.

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Swede (India) Teltronics Limited

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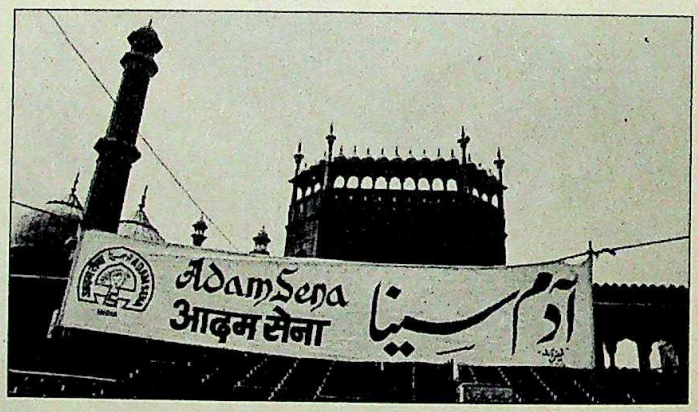
THE SENAS

Militancy on the Move

PERHAPS nothing symbolises the worsening communal situation in the country more than the emergence of private armies—senas—among Hindus and Muslims. The senas not only reflect the ugly mood among the communalists in both communities, they are a sign of desperation and loss of faith in the administration. Principal Correspondent FARZAND AHMED visited the communally-sensitive spots of Uttar Pradesh and met Muslim leaders in Delhi to file this report on the growth of the Muslim senas.

THE seemingly endless summer of communal disharmony between Hindus and Muslims is threatening to unfold into a new season of militancy with the formation of centralised private armies—senas—which are becoming the self-appointed guardians of each religion. Ironically, the trident or trishul has become the symbol for both sides, representing Om as well as Allah.

Just how ominous this development is became evident last fortnight when a group of young men brandishing trishuls invaded a historic mosque in Delhi's Ferozeshah Kotla, and Muslim youths, also carrying trishuls, burnt down Hindu shops around Jama Masjid. Over the last several months, the trishul has become the symbol of militant neo-Hindu groups such as the Hindu Shiv Shakti Dal, the Shiv Sena, and the Bajrang Dal. But last month's incidents in Delhi, though minor, revealed for the first time the growing strength of the relatively new Muslim senas. In this clash of the trishuls, the Muslim senas have staked their own claim on the trident because, their leaders say, the word Allah when written in Arabic, forms an identical shape. It also represents for them *Ali ka Panja*, the symbolic palm—with three fingers held aloft—of Hazrat Ali, the fourth caliph of Islam.

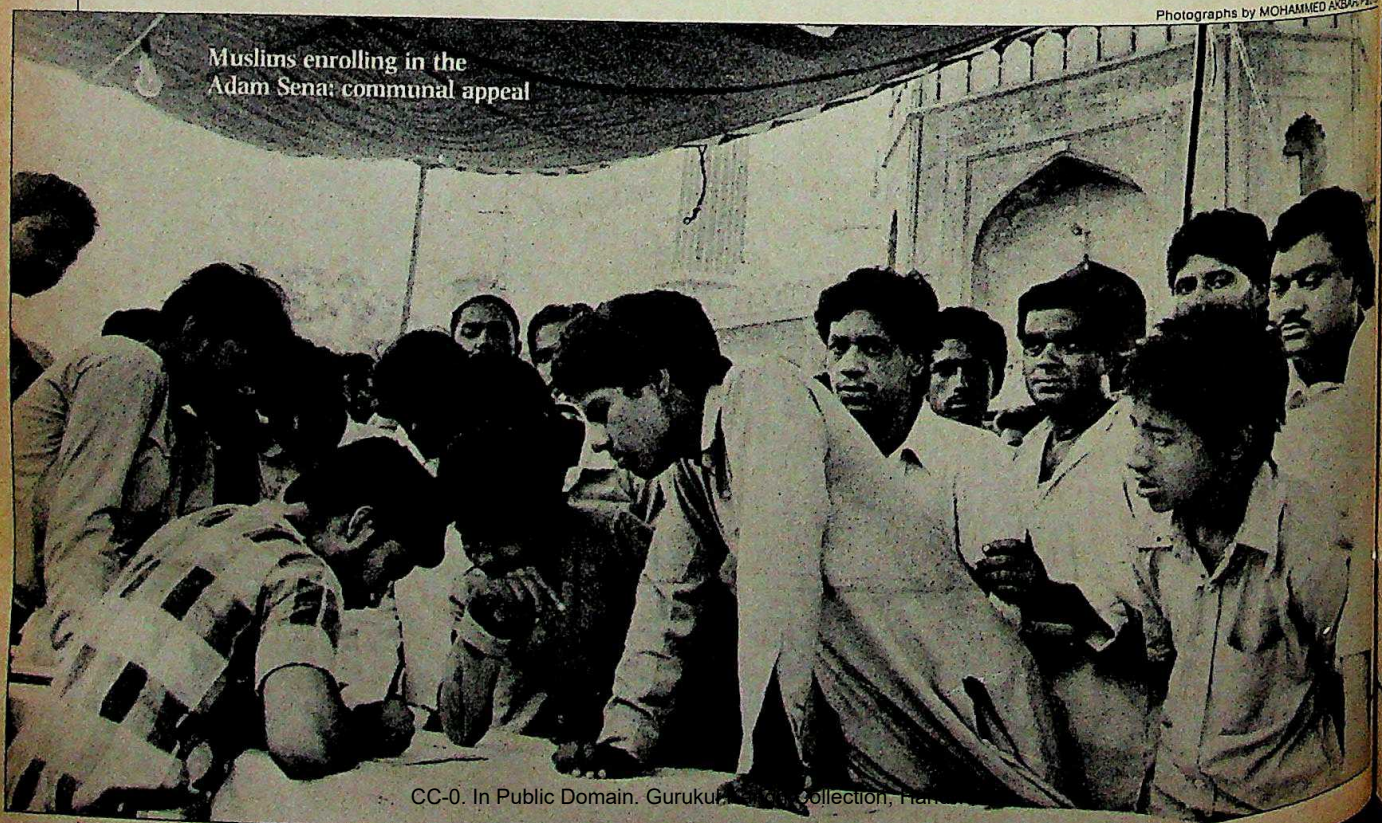


Banner at Jama Masjid: well-organised

And so there have emerged within the Muslim community the Adam Sena, Ali Sena, Al-Jehad (in Delhi and Meerut), and Hyderabad's Jehadi Lashkar. Their adherents are still small in number but their organisers are men of experience and standing, and adept in attracting fresh recruits. Already, the organisers have begun to distribute trishuls which are only six inches long so that they are not covered under the category of lethal weapons.

These senas mushroomed almost simultaneously, but the Adam Sena is by far

Photographs by MOHAMMED AKBAR/Pioneer


Muslims enrolling in the Adam Sena: communal appeal

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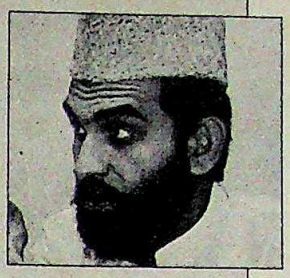
the best organised. Headquartered in Delhi's Jama Masjid, it is led by Syed Ahmed Bokhari, the firebrand naib imam of Jama Masjid and son of Shahi Imam Abdullah Bokhari. During the month of Ramazan this year, posters appeared almost overnight on the walls of buildings surrounding the Jama Masjid and other parts of old Delhi, announcing the sena's formation and inviting Muslims to join. An estimated 5,000 Muslims it is believed had become Adam Senaites by the time communal riots broke out last month. Many of the members had travelled to the recruitment centre from far-away places in western Uttar Pradesh. Their uniform of green shirts, shorts and cap resembles the saffron ones of the Shiv Sena. And like in the RSS shakas, the Adam Sena trains its "volunteers" in judo and karate for "self-defence".

Muslim politicians and other community leaders view the formation of the senas with distaste. "This is a really very bad trend," warns Kalimuddin Shams, deputy speaker of the West Bengal Assembly. "People with no following are creating these stunts for cheap publicity without realising what impact it would have on our suspicion-ridden society." Shams's sentiments are echoed by several prominent Muslim leaders, including Syed Akhtar, the Jamait-e-Islami Hind's Lucknow-based secretary, who dismissed the idea of Muslim senas as "a gimmick".

But religious fanatics hardly need the sanction of wiser counsel. Their drive is single-minded. Just before the communal flare-up in Delhi, Rafi-ullah Khan, 25, a small cloth merchant in the old town's Chitli Qabar Bazar who runs two weeklies, the *Milli Masail* and *Mazloom Morcha*, had declared in an article: "*Trishul ka muqabla Ali ke panje se hoga.*" (The hand of Ali will take on the trishul.) "The purpose of our senas," he says in his capacity as the leader of the Ali Sena, "is to unite Muslims wherever they are and check the 'trishul-*gardi*' (menace of the trishuls)."

"My father counsels restraint but I was compelled to come out in the open after the trishuls started appearing."

SYED AHMED BOKHARI
naib imam, Jama Masjid



"The purpose of our senas is to unite Muslims wherever they are and check the menace of the trishuls."

RAFI-ULLAH KHAN
cloth merchant

AHMED Bokhari told INDIA TODAY that he had not entered the fray earlier because his father, the Imam, had counselled restraint. "But the situation finally compelled me to come into the open." The compelling factors, he said, included a case filed in the Calcutta High Court seeking a ban on the Holy Quran, "interference in the Shariat (Muslim Personal Law) and the Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi controversy". Muslims had yet to recover from the "shocks of these rapid events when Hindu trishuls started appearing". Even though Ahmed denies having advocated the arming of his supporters with the *hilal* (a dagger shaped like a new moon), his supporters confirm that in a speech he had angrily asked the Government to clarify its stand on the carrying of trishuls by Hindu senas. Ahmed claims that he has always been a moderating influence on the Muslims but admits having "lost (his) grip" last month when some of his followers went on a rampage in the Jama Masjid area and burnt Hindu shops. "It reflected," he said, "the pent-up anger of these people against continuous provocation from the trishul-*dharis*."

Similarly, adherents of the Muslim Senas say that Hindu-motivated trishul attacks in Uttar Pradesh prompted the formation of the Ali Sena in Meerut and Delhi. According to police sources, the Ali Sena was created to challenge the Bajrang Dal, which draws its symbolic strength from the power of Hanuman. In the Ali Sena, Hazrat Ali—a symbol of courage and strength for Muslims—counters Hanuman. In answer to the Bajrang Dal's cry of *Jai Bajrang Bali*, the Ali-Senaites chant, "*Ya Ali*."

"People with no following are creating these stunts for cheap publicity without realising their impact on our society."

KALIMUDDIN SHAMS
deputy speaker, West Bengal Assembly

Interestingly, the organisers of the Adam Sena first approached Syed Shahabuddin to take over the leadership of the organisation, but he refused. The formation of these senas, says Shahabuddin "indicates the collapse of the administration". And there is little doubt that suspicions on both sides have grown progressively and show no signs of abating *(see box)*. If the Muslim senas claim that they are directly the result of the growth of the earlier Hindu senas, the Hindu senas now claim that the rise of the Muslim groups simply reinforces the need for even more Hindu vigilance and militancy. *Panchajanya*, the Hindi mouthpiece of the RSS, recently ran a frontpage story alleging that Muslim militants

"These Muslim senas will invite more brutal reaction and provide a handle to the forces of Muslim terrorism and fundamentalism."

SHAHID SIDDIQUE
editor, Nai Dunia

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and orthodox leaders, in league with Punjab terrorists and dissident Akali leaders, were forming a morcha "to teach a lesson to the enemies of Muslims and Sikhs" The tragedy is, in an atmosphere so riddled with religious suspicions, ordinary people could easily react with paranoia and take seriously any conspiracy theory advocated by a communal group.

There is no doubt that many Muslim leaders, instead of attempting to calm the communal situation, have taken advantage of it and tried to create a psychological atmosphere in which religious crusaders will claim to be the representatives in India of the Islamic resurgence now sweeping other Muslim countries. "This is a dangerous game," warns Rizwan Ahmed, editor of Patna's *Azimabad Express*, an Urdu daily, who fears that these senas might create "Islamic guerrillas"—a development which would be "disastrous to the country's secular fabric". Shahid Siddique, editor of Delhi's Urdu weekly, *Nai Duniya*, is even blunter: "These Muslim senas will invite more brutal reaction and provide a handle to all those forces which have been talking about Muslim terrorism and fundamentalism."

The formation of such senas is not entirely without tragic historic precedent. During the period before partition, Muslim senas such as the Majlis-e-Ahrar led by Ataullah Shah Bokhari, the Khaksar movement of Allama Mashrauqi and the Muslim National Guard of the Muslim League, played a sordid and ultimately counter-productive role which resulted in bloody rioting and the killing of thousands of innocent people on both sides of the religious divide. The latest developments have clearly alarmed the Muslim leadership in the Congress(I). Said Congress(I) MP and Seva Dal chief Tariq Anwar: "We condemn all such organisations and the Government should take stern action against such outfits." The Seva Dal has already asked the Government to ban all organisations, including the senas, whose membership was not open to all communities. This may be a short-term measure which could send the senas underground, but at least it would be a demonstration of the Government's desire to take action—any kind of action—to stem the dangerous communal drift now sweeping the land.

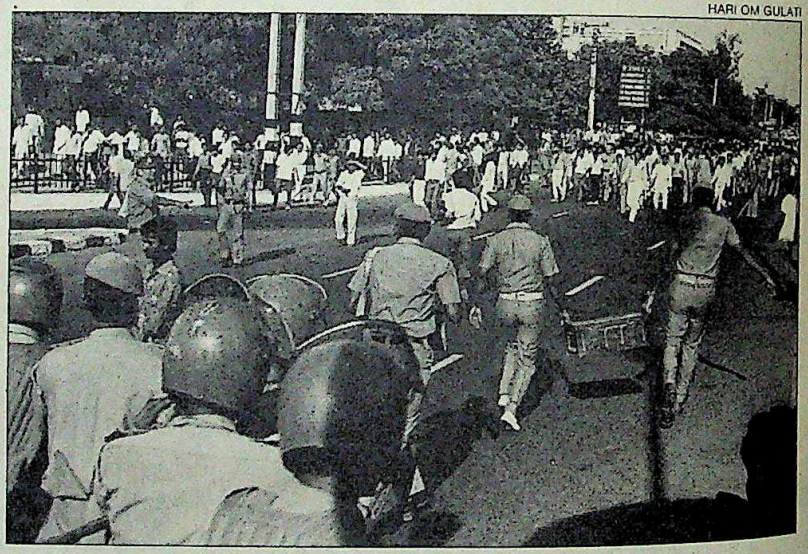
HINDU SENAS

Battle Cry

THE new wave of senas have their origin in save-the-religion battle-cries raised by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)—the intellectual arm of the RSS—in 1980 following the mass conversion of Harijans of Meenakshipuram to Islam. More fuel was added to the Hindu fire after terrorist attacks on Hindus in Punjab and anti-Hindu disturbances in Jammu and Kashmir. Disparate Hindu sects held several joint convocations in several cities and formed a loosely-knit Hindu Manch to save the "dharma".

One outcome of this was the formation of the Bajrang Dal, the militant youth arm of the VHP, which took up the cause of liberating holy shrines at Ayodhya, Mathura, and Kashi which, they averred, had been converted into Muslim shrines by Mughal rulers. In rapid developments marked by the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid feud, the Shah Bano case and the Muslim Women's Bill, and the continuing killing of Hindus in Punjab, Hindus began to band together in self-defence groups. The trishul—hitherto kept by sadhus and devotees of Shiva—became their unifying symbol. And new militant slogans emerged—Jai Bharat Jai Hinduvir, and *Jo Hum se Takrayega Choor Choor Ho Jayega* (those who oppose us will be completely crushed)—as evidence of the rising Hindu anger.

HARI OM GULATI



Bajrang Dal protest: rising militancy

There followed the mass production of trishuls in Delhi, Meerut, Moradabad, Saharanpur, and Ghaziabad. Hindu youths began to be baptised in their thousands into the Bajrang Dal, the Shiv Shakti Sena, and the Akhil Bharatiya Shiv Shakti Dal. Hindu Manch chief K. Narendra, proprietor-editor of the Urdu daily *Pratap*, says that the Hindu organisations have mushroomed only in the last 10 months. One prominent trishul-bearing organisation—claiming a following of 15,000 members in Delhi alone—is headed by 43-year-old Veerendra Sharma who runs a lottery business in the Tis Hazari Courts area. This sena, formed after the assassination of Mrs Gandhi, has as its symbol a portrait of the slain leader with a trishul in the background. Its headquarters is in the lower-middle class Hindu-dominated area in Delhi's trans-Jamuna locality where many Hindu refugees from Punjab are being resettled—and recruited into the Hindu sena.

Evidence of Hindu militancy was starkly obvious in the Ferozeshah Kotla incident. Hindu Manch youths carrying trishuls walked into the crumbling mosque, a protected monument, and clashed with another group of youths. In another incident earlier, one person was pierced to death by a trishul inside a place of worship in old Delhi. The trishul is no longer just a symbol—it has now become an instrument of violence.

—FARZAND AHMED

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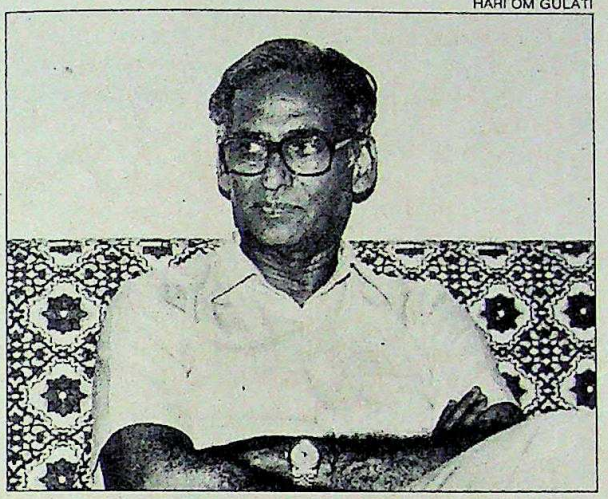
Dashing Diplomats

AFTER months of speculation it now appears certain that the Indian High Commission will get a spanking new look at the top. Both the High Commissioner P.C. Alexander and his deputy Ramesh Arora are to leave their posts shortly. Alexander, who has been in his post for barely over a year, has been conjectured for a variety of posts in India including that of a state governor, with the Prime Minister's Secretariat or a Rajya Sabha membership. Amongst the gaggle of names skirting the London diplomatic grape-vine as his successor are Planning Commission Member Abid Hussain, former foreign secretaries Romesh Bhandari and M.K. Rasgotra, and even Lok Sabha Speaker Balram Jakhar, who is currently in London for the Commonwealth parliamentary conference. For his part, Alexander, who in his brief spell has impressed many with his astuteness and savvy, smiles cryptically, refusing to offer any clues. The front-runner to replace Arora, tipped for ambassadorship in Teheran, is former foreign office spokesman and currently Chief of Protocol, Salman Haider. The rapid turnover of high commissioners—Prakash Mehrotra who preceded Alexander also zipped in and out of London like a bat out of hell—reflected the whimsicality of South Block in making key MEA postings. Its prestige and trappings apart, the London high commissioner's post is a sensitive assignment especially when Indo-British relations are tottering precipitously. As for the hapless staff at India House, one more new high commissioner means yet another round of profligate introductory meetings with government officials, party stalwarts, Indian lobbies, the media and what-have-you. Informed of impending changes, a local wag demanded: "Since there is so much mindless to-ing and fro-ing, why not post a local man who will stay put? Why not someone like Swraj Paul?"

HARI OM GULATI



Alexander: on the move

Indiscreet Paul

In a recent television programme, industrialist Swraj Paul had claimed that soon after her triumph in the 1980 general elections, the late Indira Gandhi had offered him any assignment, including that of the high commissioner in London or as ambassador in Washington. Paul did not, however, say why he didn't take up the offer. While his indiscreetness might be considered "undiplomatic" at Aldwych or Whitehall, Paul has been making news on the industrial front. The United Merchant Bar—a joint venture of Paul's Caparo Industries and the British Steel Corporation—was opened at Scunthorpe last fortnight by Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson. The most modern mill of its kind in Europe, its competitiveness is expected to enable it to corner more of the UK market. During 1986 so far, Caparo Industries pre-tax profits are up to £615,000 from £91,000.

Paul (wearing hat) at UMB opening

Unity Catalyst

THIS fortnight a one-day "Unity of India" conference is being held at Wembley by a cluster of Indian outfits. Punjab again is the catalyst that brings some highly disparate organisations together. The Punjab Unity Forum's literature states that a "handful of misguided extremists have resorted to violence and terrorism and many moderates and innocent people, amongst them Hindus and Sikhs, have lost their lives". To meet the challenge the Unity of India conference was being organised. The participating organisations include the India Association, Institute of Sikh Studies, Indian Overseas Congress, Sikh Forum, International Punjabi Society, Indian Workers Association and Foundation for Critical Choices for India. The conference is being inaugurated by Sardar Swaran Singh and among the speakers are I.K. Gujral. The chief organiser P.S. Raina says the Punjab Unity Forum will also launch on the same day a magazine titled *Unity*.

Bebop Granma

BRITAIN'S Channel-4 often sets high standards in its effort to give the country's ethnic minority a voice. Its weekly "Bandung File", strewn with banana skins and pitfalls, last fortnight featured a special report on Khalistan. An opinion poll suggested that the Sikh majority was not in favour of a separate state and if it did evolve, they would not budge from Britain. However, those who held forth in the programme were the Khalistan protagonists voicing the familiar litany of grouses with Jagjit Singh Chauhan stating that Sikhs did not wish to join the "economic muddle" that was India. Happily, Channel-4 last fortnight also beamed an hour-long prime-time profile of playback singer Asha Bhosle. Described as the "granma of bebop" who had outsold Sinatra, Crosby and the Beatles, there was many an off-beat moment of the singer. One Engish critic confessed she found *Eena Mena Dika* irresistible.

Asha Bhosle

—RAMESH CHANDRAN

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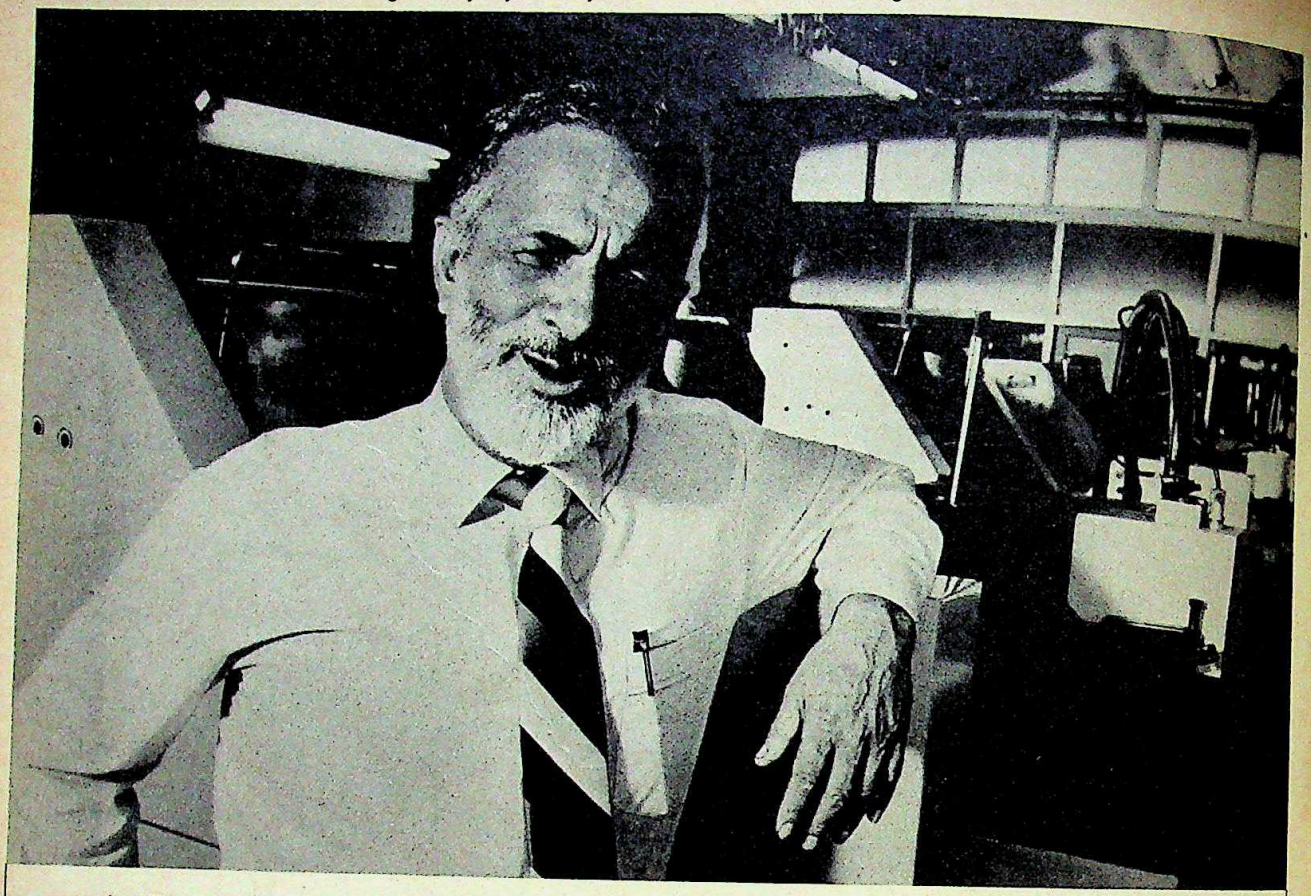

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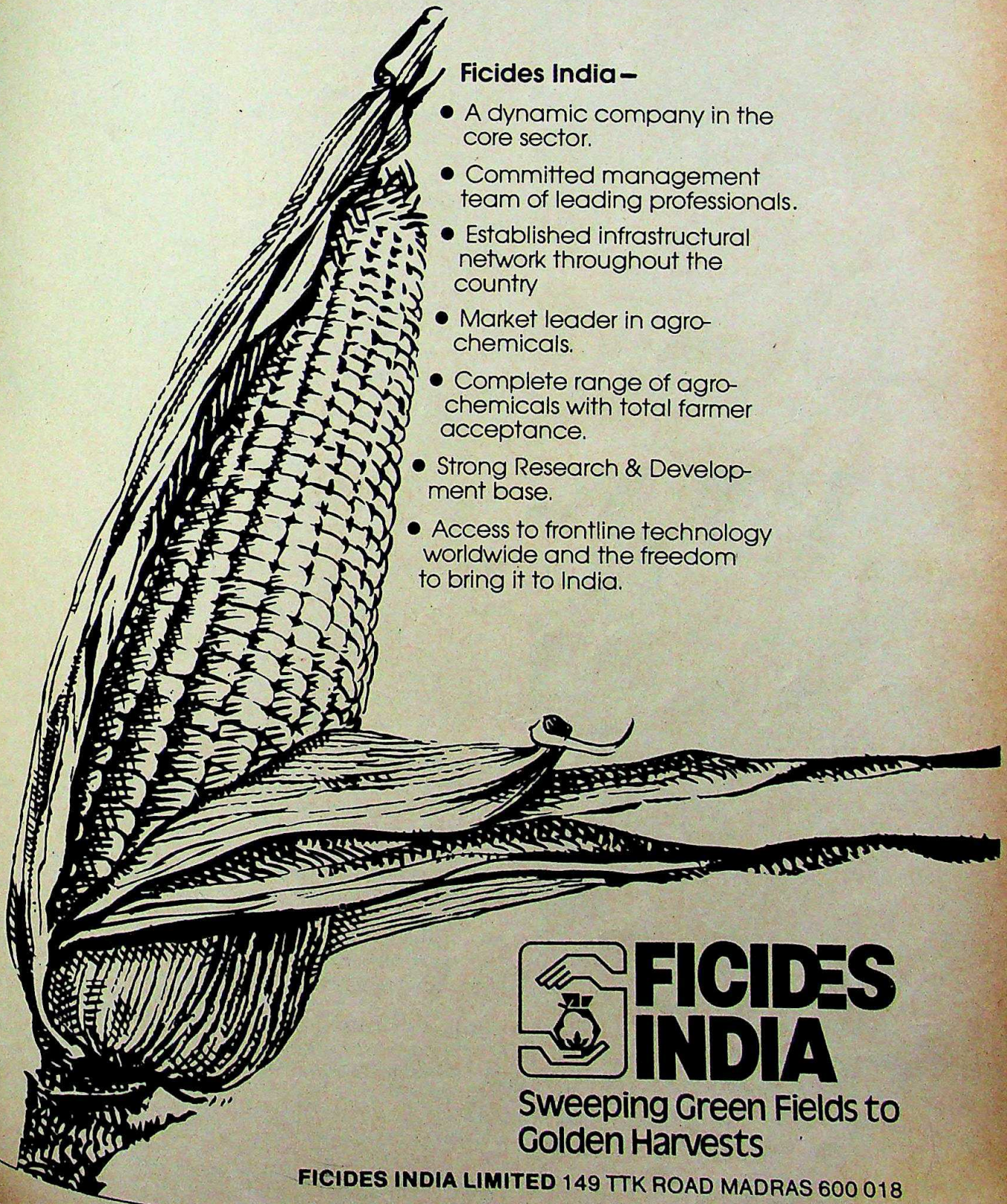

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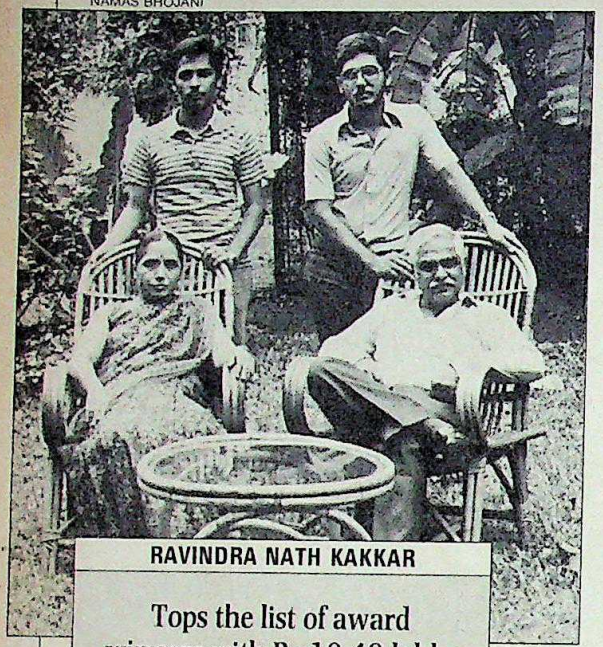
TAX OFFICIALS The Reward

THE new reward scheme introduced last year by the Finance Ministry for the employees in the Central revenue collecting agencies has proved to be a windfall for some of them. Not only has the amount

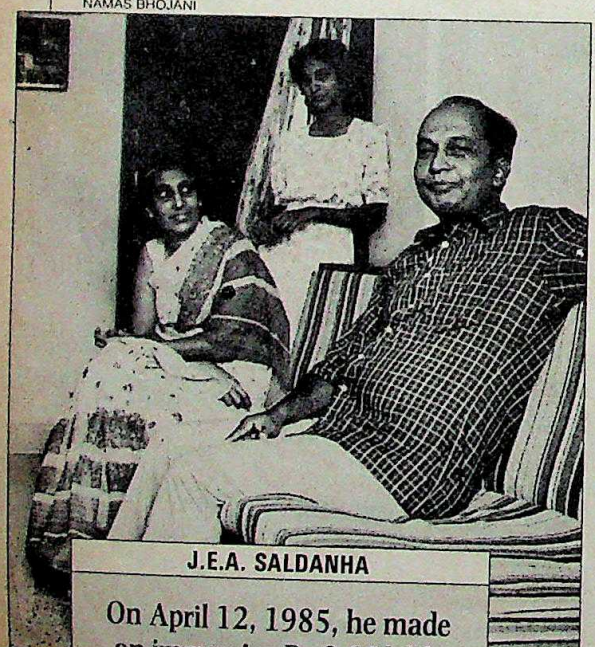
NAMAS BHOJANI



RAVINDRA NATH KAKKAR

Tops the list of award winners with Rs 10.48 lakh. In November 1985, he seized 602 kg of heroin and 4,565 kg of hashish worth Rs 8.77 crore from a heavily guarded farmhouse near Bombay.

NAMAS BHOJANI



J.E.A. SALDANHA

On April 12, 1985, he made an impressive Rs 8.66 lakh in rewards. His career-best effort was recovering gold worth over Rs 3 crore concealed in an Ambassador car in Bombay.

THEY are luckier than most other government servants in at least one respect—reward money. In the last 15 months, over 700 officers of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) and Central Customs and Excise Department have raked in about Rs 2 crore over and above their pay for nabbing economic offenders or smugglers of contraband gold, textiles, electronics, hashish and heroin worth over Rs 300 crore in the open market. In some cases, the reward money earned has exceeded their total salaries drawn over the last 10 years, and in a majority of cases the interest earned on the reward money is four to five times higher than their take-home salaries.

The handsome rewards can largely be attributed to the drive launched by the Finance Ministry to make smuggling a high-risk low-profit venture. Officers are now entitled to a tax-free 20 per cent of the total value of seized contraband—which in one stroke has eliminated the chance of their being tempted by the 1 per cent offered by smugglers (operating on a 200-300 per cent profit margin) to look the other way.

That the move has paid rich dividends is evident in the phenomenal spurt in seizures of contraband goods since April last when the new guidelines went into effect. From a meagre Rs 66-crore worth of goods seized in 1982, the figure shot up to Rs 191-crore in 1985 and is likely to cross Rs 250 crore in 1986. Monetary rewards have similarly zoomed from Rs 60-lakh in 1982 to Rs 5.52 crore in 1985 and are likely to touch Rs 7 crore in 1986. Not surprisingly, the reward-takers have included officers from the rank of assistant director downwards to humble peons and drivers. Some examples:

► Ravindra Nath Kakkar, 50, an assistant director with the DRI in Bombay, tops

the list of award winners with Rs 10.48 lakh. Fortune smiled on him in November 1985 when he, at considerable risk to his life, seized 602 kg of heroin and 4,565 kg of hashish worth Rs 8.77 crore from a heavily guarded farmhouse in Talasari near Bombay. The reward of Rs 5 lakh was followed by another of Rs 2 lakh some months later when he, as a member of a raiding party, recovered gold worth over Rs 4.77 crore in suburban Jogeshwari. With that, his income pattern improved considerably and, despite a salary of Rs 3,200, he now owns a second-hand air-conditioned Premier Padmini car.

A father of two, Kakkar lives in a modestly furnished 1,500 sq ft government flat in Matunga and has invested a major part of the reward money in national savings certificates and fixed deposits in nationalised banks and expects his investments to double in the next five years. He plans to invest the rest in a flat in Bombay. Says the former army officer who joined the Customs Department as an appraiser in 1959: "I have done nothing I should not have done as an official of the DRI. But we are grateful to the Government for this scheme which insulates us

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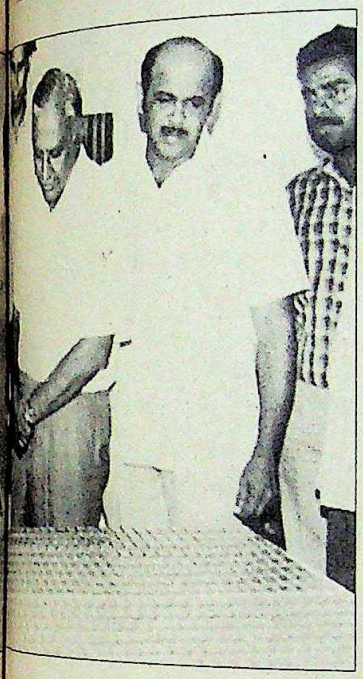
Bonanza

of seized goods risen substantially, the scheme has proved to be a financial boom. Assistant Editor PRABHU CHAWLA visited Bombay and Madras to profile some top reward-winners. His report:



DRI officials with seized gold: rich vein

against any other allurements. Even if I die now my family will not be starved of money. What else does a government employee want?"

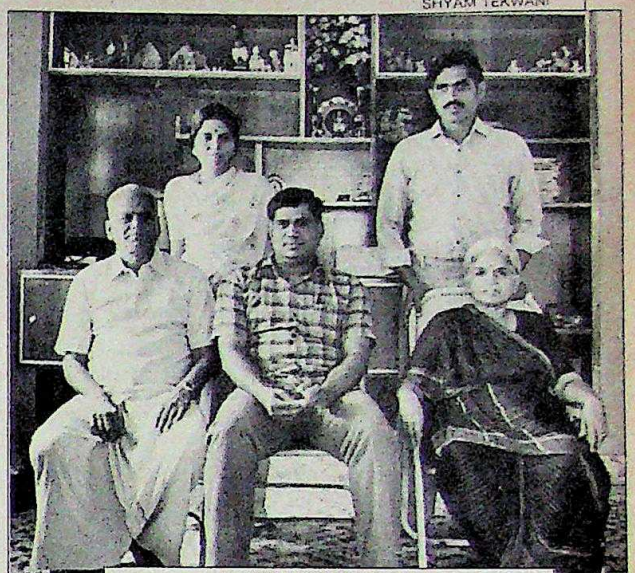
► J.E.A. Saldanha, 53, a stoutly built assistant director in the DRI, had a fairly eventful career till April 12, 1985 when he notched up an impressive Rs 8.66 lakh in rewards for the recovery of smuggled goods. Acting on a tip-off that an Ambassador car laden with contraband would pass through Bombay, Saldanha, aided by a small posse, intercepted the car. A preliminary search drew a blank but a closer inspection revealed a curious forging under the rear seat. It turned out to be a cavity filled with 12,000 tolas of gold worth over Rs 3 crore. For this career-best effort, Saldanha was sanctioned an advance award of Rs 5 lakh which was later raised to Rs 8 lakh—an unprecedented sum when his career till date had brought him only a piffling Rs 19,500 as reward.

Unlike most of his colleagues, Saldanha lives in a 425 sq ft flat in Mayfair Apartments which he bought for Rs 14,000 in 1965. His major concern is ensuring a secure future for his family. He has invested his money in fixed deposits, national savings certificates, Unit Trust of India and in private firms. He earns about Rs 8,000 per month from these investments which is more than twice his monthly salary of Rs 3,200. Says Saldanha: "The Government has recognised that those working in sensitive departments have to be given extra encouragement for an additional risk involved in their job. It is not a commission but a premium on risk which helps us in taking more initiative and risk." Parsimonious by nature, Saldanha has no intentions of moving out of his modest flat and still has no car, preferring to save money.

► B.G.N. Iyengar, 55, an assistant director heading the DRI's intelligence cell in Bombay, has over the last 18 months, been associated with 14 major cases in which contraband worth over Rs 7.82 crore was seized. His share of the 20 per cent reward worked out to Rs 7.15 lakh. This soft-spoken Brahmin from Karnataka has been awarded the President's Medal twice for distinguished service. He came within a hair's breadth of losing his life in 1982 when fleeing contraband runners fired at him, injuring him in the mouth. For his bravery he was sanctioned Rs 10,000. Earlier, in 1977, he nabbed a Swiss-German at Bombay airport and recovered from him diamonds worth Rs 60 lakh for which he received an award of Rs 6,000.

But under the new rules he has received much bigger amounts. His largest reward, Rs 3 lakh, was for the seizure of a textile and video cassette recorder consignment worth over Rs 1.98 crore last year in Bombay. And in May this year, he netted Rs 1.50 lakh for his role in the seizure of a gold consignment worth Rs 1.20 crore also in

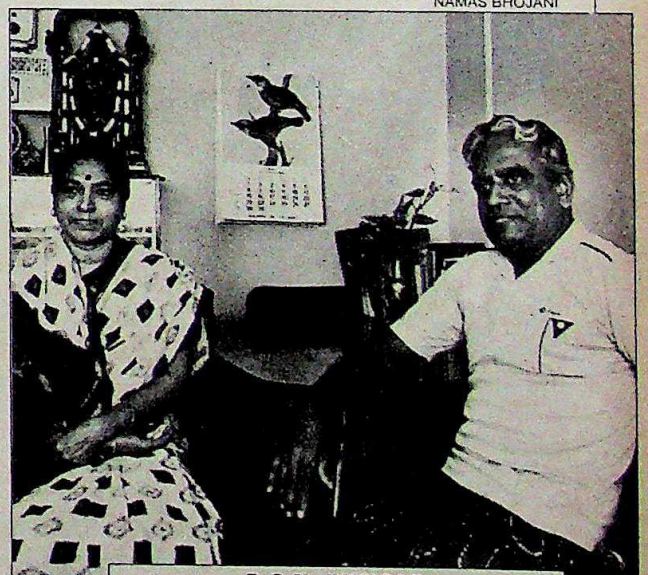
SHYAM TEKWANI



S. VISHWANATHAN

Posted at Madras airport, he heads the list among the junior officers with Rs 5.50 lakh as reward. In February this year, he recovered gold worth Rs 36 lakh concealed in a Suzuki generator.

NAMAS BHOJANI



B.G.N. IYENGAR

Awarded the President's Medal twice for distinguished service, Iyengar helped break open 14 major cases over the last 18 months, in which contraband worth over Rs 7.82 crore was seized.

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Dr. A Desikachari, Medical Practitioner, Bombay.

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Bombay. Iyengar lives in a 500 sq ft apartment in Versova, and commutes by train. He too has invested his award money in government bonds and securities and plans to return to his home state upon retirement. Says Iyengar: "This is a temporary arrangement. I want to settle in Mysore and would like to buy property there. Till then I think I will have to keep money in places from where I can draw immediately. Nothing better could have happened to an officer at the fag-end of his career."

▶ S. Vishwanathan, 34, is a customs intelligence officer posted at Madras airport, who, with Rs 5.50 lakh in reward money, tops the list among the junior officers. During the last 15 months, he seized gold consignments worth Rs 2 crore from air passengers. He struck gold, literally, when his observant eye chanced upon a passenger from Sharjah smoking cigarettes as though they were going out of style. Suspicions aroused, Vishwanathan asked him to open a large box. The box contained steel stools whose wooden tops seemed rather heavy. When broken, they were found to contain gold worth Rs 15 lakh. Two days later, he intercepted a Singaporean national with a plaster on both legs. He seemed innocent enough until a baggage search revealed a plaster roll. Vishwanathan promptly had the plaster on his legs taken apart, recovering 1 kg of gold. For these seizures, Vishwanathan got an advance award of Rs 1.50 lakh.

VISHWANATHAN, who has built up exhaustive dossiers on contraband runners, was one of the customs officers seriously injured in the bomb blast at Madras airport last year. Hospitalised for over 40 days, he went back to work with a vengeance and in February this year recovered gold worth Rs 36 lakh concealed in a Suzuki generator. But his newly-acquired affluence has not changed his life-style. He still lives in a small house in the Tambaran area with his mother and sister and goes to office on a moped. Says Vishwanathan: "I have invested the money in government securities and national savings certificates. I had started the construction of a house but could not complete it. Now I have completed it with the money I have received." Vishwanathan's salary of Rs 2,000 is just enough for his needs.

▶ Syed Mohammed Nisar, 55, is the only officer of the rank of superintendent in the DRI to receive Rs 5 lakh for a single seizure. Posted at Trichy, Nisar succeeded in breaking a gold smuggling network operating in Coimbatore. Putting his extensive underworld contacts to good use, Nisar ordered the impounding of a Thai ship and the detention of its crew. Their interrogation and a week-long surveillance of suspected gold smugglers in Coimbatore and Madras led to the recovery of 87 kg of gold from an Ambassador parked in a hotel. With 30 years of service behind him, Nisar's total reward before the new rules came in hardly exceeded Rs 20,000 but the latest seizure alone brought him over Rs 5 lakh.

With two daughters to marry off, Nisar intends to use part of the money for that purpose. He is also planning to take his mother and wife for the Haj. And of what is left, says Nisar: "I will improve my ancestral property in Coimbatore."

▶ S. Jayant, 34, received Rs 4.75 lakh as reward for the role he played in the Coimbatore gold smuggling case. His wife Uma has already bought gold jewellery worth Rs 10,000. He also plans to move out of his one-room flat in a poor section of Madras. "I want to move out of this area and have given some advance for a flat which will cost me about four lakh," he says.

AWARDS

Big Boost

THE new rates of monetary rewards for customs, excise and other economic intelligence agency employees and informants were introduced in March 1985. The incentive scheme, finalised after three years of file pushing, replaced the earlier provisions in which officials were entitled to a paltry award ranging from Rs 80 for every haul of gold worth Rs 2,000. No awards were given for the recovery of contraband like hashish, electronics, textiles or heroin.

The new guidelines not only raised the amount of reward to 20 per cent of the market value of the goods recovered, but also extended the eligibility for the bonanza to all employees working in the Income Tax Department, Enforcement Directorate and Excise Department. The new rules also provide that all those who haul in illegal arms and ammunition, foreign exchange, or seize goods on which government duties were evaded, will also be rewarded.

To boost morale further, the finance minister has decreed that revenue collectors should be paid at least 50 per cent of the estimated reward money within two weeks of recovery and the rest soon after cases are settled in court or within concerned departments.

Under the guidelines for the actual disbursement of the reward money, the authorities are asked to keep in mind the "specificity and accuracy of the information, the risk and trouble undertaken, the extent and nature of the help rendered by the informers, the risk involved for government servants in working out a case, the difficulty in securing information", among other factors. The idea behind this directive is to distribute the total reward money in such a way that all those who worked as a team in a case are suitably rewarded while those who played a major role receive more than the others. Says Jyotirmoy Dutta, chairman, Central Board of Excise and Customs: "We are conscious of the fact that some officials do deserve more than the others and they should be paid more so that others can compete with them."

—PRABHU CHAWLA

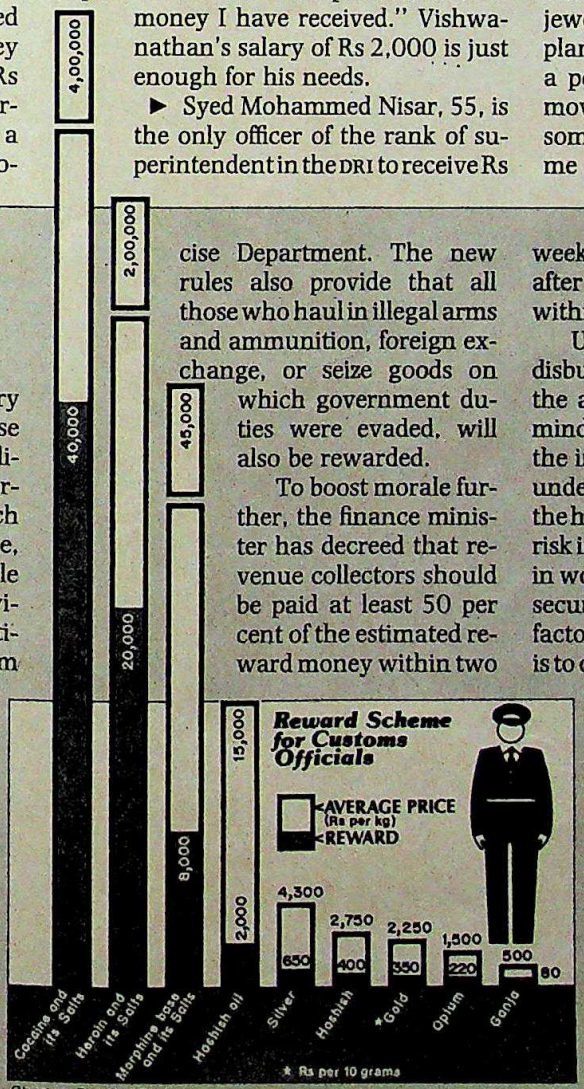

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

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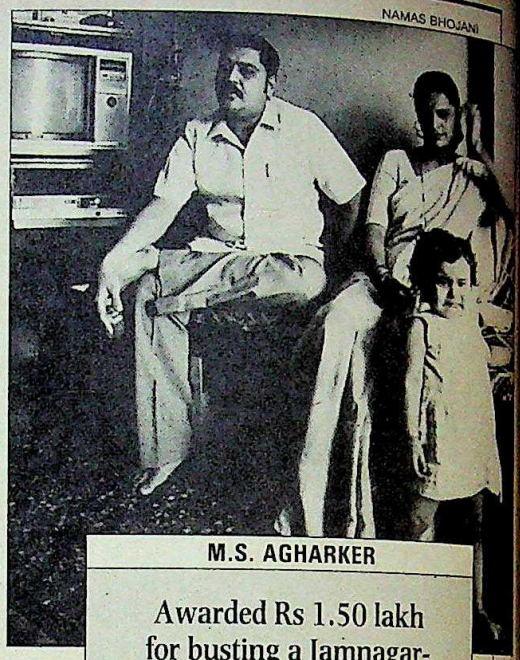
The big rewards at stake have brought in their wake a very human problem—professional jealousy. To keep it in check senior officers make it a point to associate as many officers as possible when a big seizure is in the offing. Thus M.S. Agharker, C.L. Mathew and K. Raghavan—all of the Bombay DRI—split the reward for busting a Jamnagar-based smugglers' gang. Earlier, only Agharker and Mathew were involved but later, when the time for breaking up the operation came, Raghavan was brought in for his skill at handling such a raid.

While the reward scheme applies to all officials working for the Finance Ministry, officers of the DRI have netted the most. Against an average seizure of Rs 7 crore during 1983-1984, DRI investigators seized contraband worth over Rs 48 crore out of the total recovery of Rs 188 crore in 1985. And they repeated their performance in 1986, seizing half the value of the total smuggled goods worth over Rs 75 crore during the first quarter of the year itself. The money winners include inspectors, constables and peons. At the DRI office in Madras, all 14 intelligence officers, two assistant directors, two superintendents, two drivers and four sepoys have benefited. Says Deputy Director S. Venkatdri: "In all major cases each one of us has a role to play. While the case is followed and finally solved by one or two officials, they alone cannot handle all the paper work and the post-operation investigations. Others have to be suitably rewarded so that it encourages team spirit and avoids heartburning."

NAMAS BHOJANI



M.S. AGHARKER

Awarded Rs 1.50 lakh for busting a Jamnagar-based gang of smugglers, Agharker was involved in unearthing contraband worth Rs 98 lakh in a flawless operation.

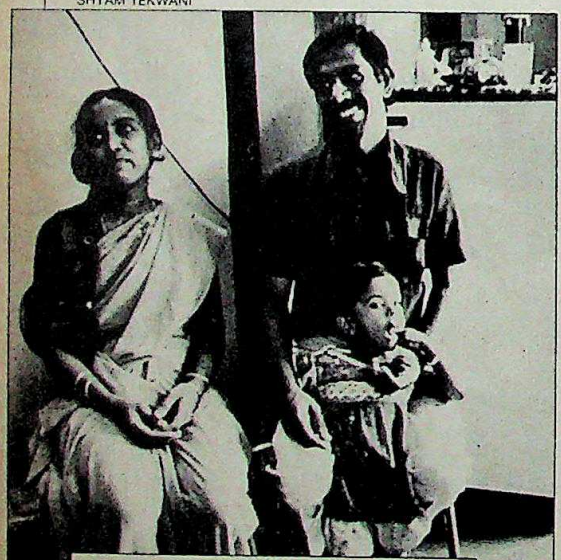
WHAT is cause for concern, however, is the complaints of harassment pouring in from air and sea passengers and business houses. Opinion in industry and the foreign travel trade feels that customs officers are shooting in the dark to earn rewards. But Jyotirmoy Dutta, chairman, Central Board of Excise and Customs says emphatically: "We simply can't call a scheme a bad one because it has caused avoidable problem for a very small number of people. We always take strong action if the complaint is genuine and each officer is responsible for his action. He can be a faulter once but not twice."

Finance Minister V.P. Singh, the architect of the scheme, is also its strongest votary. As he puts it: "So what if some officials who play an active role in curbing anti-national activities and recover more revenue get rewarded in the process? Let them feel that the Government can also ensure their affluent growth and they need not depend on shady arrangements." Says DRI Director-General B.B. Kumar: "The finance minister has created an environment in which smuggling has become uneconomical. If officers are sure of getting enough financial incentives they will plug and choke the sources generating black money."

But the fact is that the new arrangements are a mixed blessing. The hunt for rewards has bred unhealthy competition among officials working in the Customs and Excise Department and also created deep jealousies among senior officers excluded from the rewards scheme. Officers above the rank of assistant director or assistant collector who actually supervise the investigations, are sore over being kept out. In fact, the finance minister, while approving the scheme, had not excluded any officer from it but some last minute bureaucratic jugglery ruled them out of the entire scheme. Amusingly, North Block has been flooded with requests from income tax and excise officials seeking postings in the DRI or customs because their normal run of work does not necessarily lead to such rewards.

What many of the hopefuls fail to realise is that very often a big seizure may elude their grasp by the proverbial whisker. In fact, last year a team of DRI officers in Goa intercepted and impounded a boat carrying contraband gold and other goods. Kakkar and another officer, Patanker, were escorting the boat and its Pakistani crew back to Bombay in rough seas. Suddenly, the boat with the confiscated goods collided with a fisherman's boat and sank. The DRI officers also got lost and after a seven-hour ordeal, managed to land in Gujarat—thanks ironically to the navigation skills of one of the Pakistani smugglers they had arrested. In the old days a loss of life in such circumstances would have spelt financial ruin for an officer's family. But in the wake of the new policy, officers are willing to take greater risks not only because of greater rewards but also because they have less reason to worry that their families will fall into penury in case they are killed or injured.

SHYAM TEKWANI



S. JAYANT

Received Rs 4.75 lakh as his share in the Coimbatore gold smuggling case where 87 kg of gold was recovered from a car parked in a hotel. Jayant plans to move out of his one-room flat in Madras.

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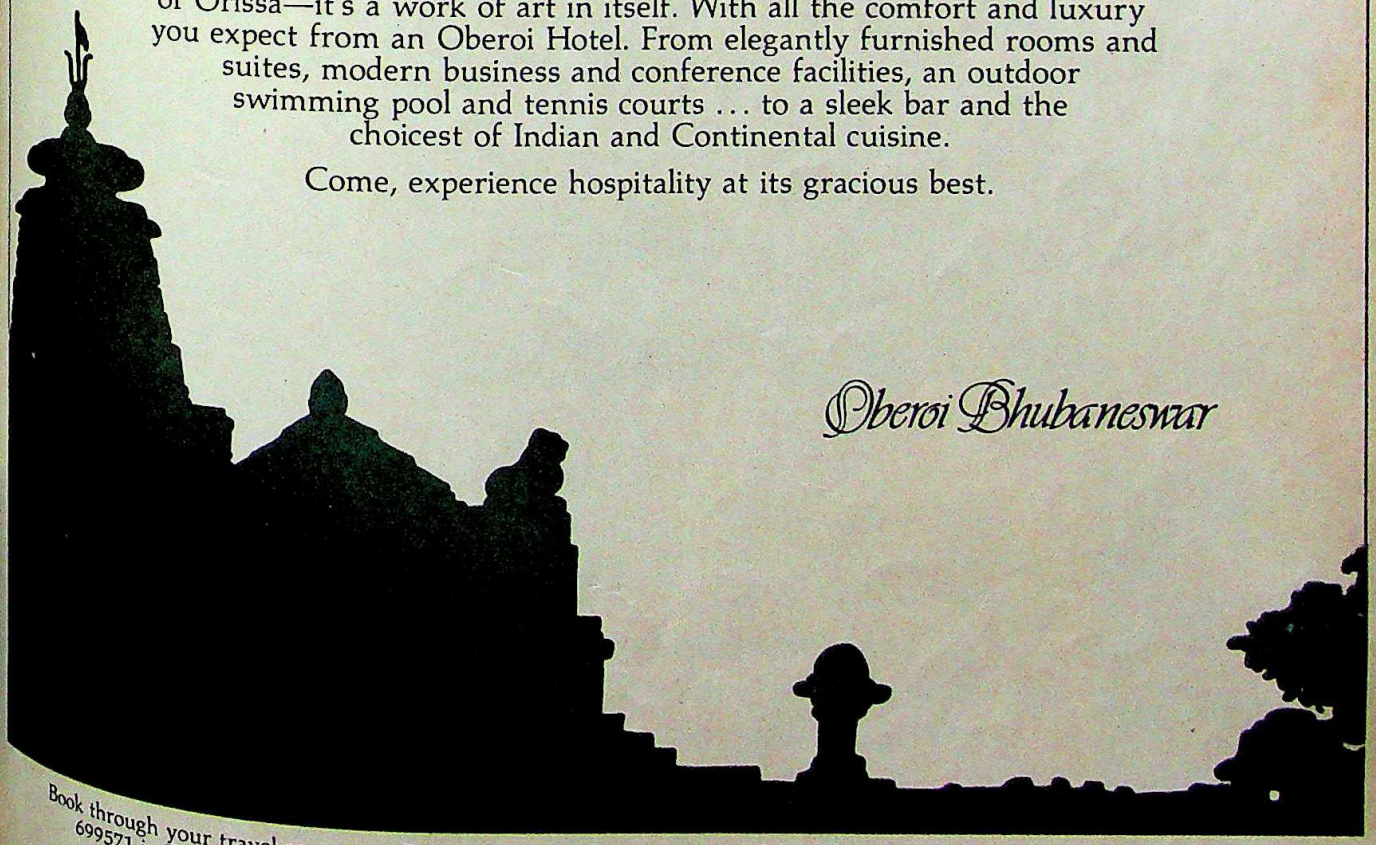

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VAISHNO DEVI

Transforming the Temple

THE action—swift, decisive, surgical—bore all the hallmarks of a Jagmohan initiative. In one fell swoop, with barely a week remaining for Governor's rule to come to an end in Jammu and Kashmir, Jagmohan signed and executed a proclamation under which one of the most revered Hindu shrines in north India, Vaishno Devi, was taken over by an independent board. Thus at 2.40 a.m. on August 31 ended the complete control that some 4,000 baridar families (who shared the offerings showered on the deity) and the Dharmarth Trust—run under the sole trusteeship of former maharaja Dr Karan Singh—had exercised over the shrine for more than 100 years. The governor's order, signed in total secrecy at 6.30 p.m. the previous evening, was executed eight hours later when a handful of state bureaucrats accompanied by 300 armed policemen made a six-hour trek to the shrine and announced the take-over of the shrine on the public address system.

An outraged Karan Singh vowed legal action to challenge the legitimacy of the take-over "of the only Hindu trust in a state in which the Hindus are in a minority and a trust which runs over 100 Hindu temples in the state". Governor

Armed police at the shrine (left); and workers paving the roads (below): organised

Dr Karan Singh has condemned the take-over as an assault on Hindu sensibilities, but Governor Jagmohan sees it as a reform long overdue.

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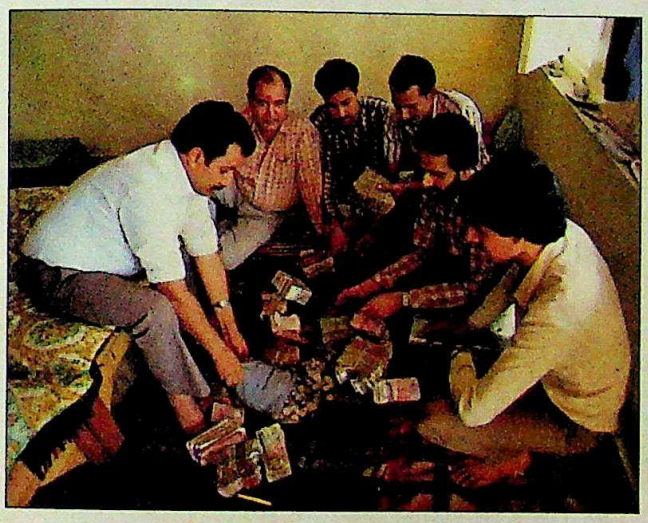
Jagmohan, he said in an interview, "is like a bulldozer out of control. He suffers from uncontrollable megalomania. He thinks that he can pull a Turkman Gate in Jammu and get away with it". (The reference was obviously to Jagmohan's controversial eviction of Muslim slum dwellers from an area in Delhi during the Emergency.)

Jagmohan however, simply viewed the take-over as a matter in the public interest, a reform long overdue. His office has been deluged with congratulatory letters and telegrams since August 31 when the management and control of Vaishno Devi changed hands.

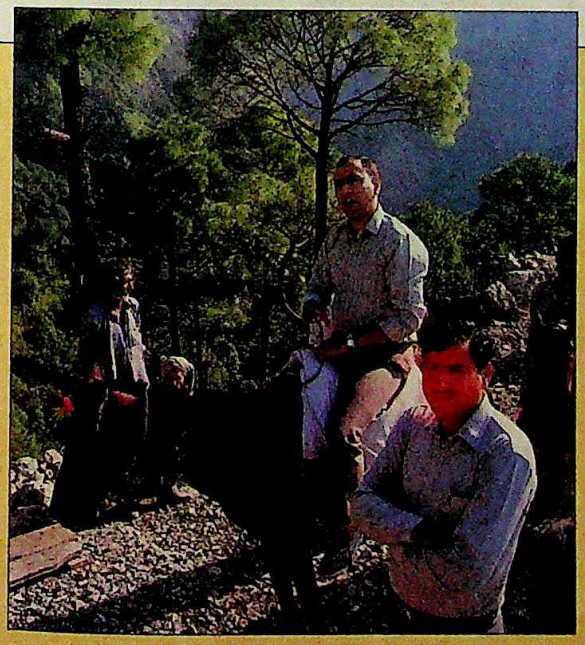
"We hail the action," wrote the *satsang* of the Morning Walkers Association of Delhi. "The *mata* has justly punished the pandits who controlled Vaishno Devi." The head of Punjab's Sanatan Dharma Pratinidhi Sabha, Goswami Girdharilal wrote: "I congratulate you. *Mata* has finally obtained *mukti* (deliverance)". Wrote S. Aggarwal from Haryana: "The shrine was a pathetic site without even toilet facilities. You have performed a great service."

Far from having produced a Hindu backlash therefore, Jagmohan's precipitous and at first glance, risky move, has resulted in an eruption of sympathy from the numerous pilgrims and worshippers who regularly make the arduous, 14-km uphill trek to Vaishno Devi, located 6,000 feet high in the Trikuta hills from Katra, which is a two-hour drive away from Jammu. This is largely because the shrine as well as the area surrounding it had become a cesspool of human refuse. Drinking water, toilet and accommodation facilities at the shrine visited by about 15 lakh people every year were abysmal.

Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR



Officials count the day's offerings



Collector Anil Goswami, on horseback, supervises the frenetic work underway to improve facilities for pilgrims. His deadline is October 3.

After having trekked the 14-km climb along a dangerously rutted and crater-marked track, pilgrims were often forced to sleep out in the open near foul-smelling garbage heaps once they reached the top. Because of its size and the small opening in a cave through which pilgrims have to crawl in order to reach the sanctum sanctorum of the Devi, no more than 8,000 pilgrims can worship in one day. Thus devotees often have to wait for days on end before getting their turn to worship. And the system had deteriorated into a racket run by godmen and influential pandits who, for hefty sums of money, would arrange for pilgrims to jump their turns or give them more or less time for worship depending on the amount of money that changed hands.

The main object of the take-over—improvement of facilities for the pilgrims—is dramatically obvious from Katra, where the pilgrimage starts, right up to the shrine. Jagmohan has given strict instructions that nothing must stop the *yatra*. So even as pilgrims wind their way up the tortuous mountain-track, some 2,000 workers toil around the clock, paving and grouting the *kutcha* road, sweeping, painting the railings, constructing dharamsalas and dispensaries.

Some 600 lighting poles are being repaired; three new water storage tanks with a capacity of one-and-a-half lakh gallons are nearing completion; two new water pumping stations are under construction; three generators have been ordered to ensure continuous power supply and 100 new toilet facilities are being built. All this under the watchful eye of Udhampur District Collector Anil Goswami, 31, who has been appointed executive officer of the new board. Goswami visits the shrine every day on horseback to personally supervise the work. His deadline: October 3, the day that the Navaratra festival begins. "The take-over has been a popular move," he says, "but this popularity will only last as long as the Government can deliver."

Dr Karan Singh, however, strongly feels that Jagmohan could have worked with the Dharmarth Trust in ameliorating the facilities instead of

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"nationalising" the property. "I was discussing these ideas with Jagmohan several months ago. But I had no further communication with him until the sudden take-over. They blame the trust for not making improvements but we did what we could with the resources available to us." He notes, for example, that he had made financial arrangements for the construction of a ropeway to the shrine, "but it was held up by the state Government. Why? Why didn't the Government do anything? Instead they sneak in with armed guards and take over a holy place of worship. I am shocked".

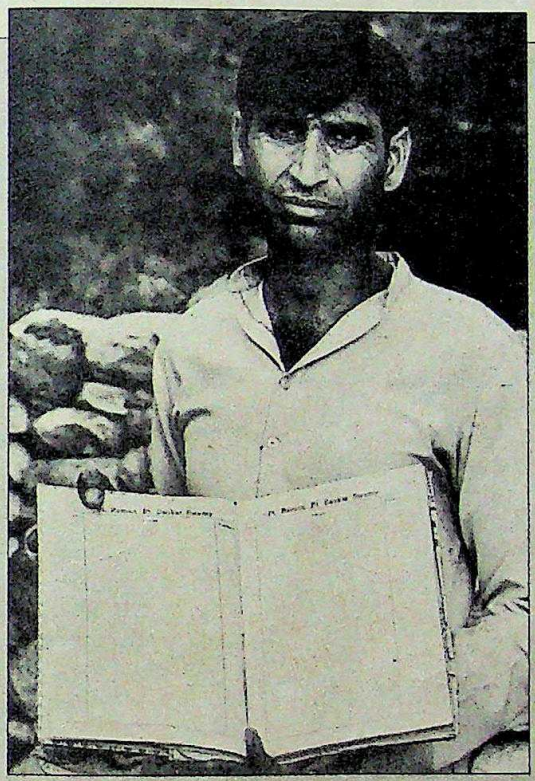
"My question," says Jagmohan, "is that the shrine and the people who were responsible for its management were a vast empire earning crores of rupees. Where did the money go? Why was it not ploughed back into improving the facility? In doing what we have done we are not slighting the Hindu religion but keeping up its best tradition which has always been reformist." According to the governor's office, the ropeway idea was not feasible because it would be dangerous to keep people suspended on a bridge awaiting their turn to enter the shrine.

Jagmohan, say sources, had put the shrine take-over as one of the first items on his reform agenda after Governor's rule was declared. He had personally visited the shrine during that period and was, according to one insider, "horrified at the state of affairs". But he could not afford to make fully known the plans for the take-over because the Dharmarth Trust and the baridars would have obtained an anticipatory stay order from the courts or appealed to communal feelings. "This could never be a half-way measure," says Goswami, "and I doubt whether a popularly-elected government in Kashmir could have taken this step."

There is little doubt that the offerings and donations at the temple are enormous. During the first 20 days after the take-over, the donations made inside the cave amounted to Rs 20 lakh—Rs 16 lakh in cash and the remaining amount in gold and silver. Before the take-over, these inside offerings were shared by the baridars, 75 per cent going to Rajput families and the remaining being distributed among the Samnotra Brahmins living nearby. According to traditionally set formulas, a family's *"bari"* could come every two, four or six years on a given day of that particular year. Among the baridars were the pandits who presided over the deity as well as brought favoured clients, who rewarded them well for performing special pujas.

The Dharmarth Trust, established by maharaja Gulab Singh in the mid-19th century to manage Hindu shrines, was in overall charge of Vaishno Devi and the properties. While the trust did not take money from inside the shrine, it collected property rent, voluntary donations and earned income from forest contracts. Official sources also say that small shops close to the shrines were recently given year-long leases at between Rs 35 lakh and Rs 80 lakh. The Dharmarth Trust earned half its income from Vaishno Devi.

The entire income now accrues to the new board. Chartered public accountants have been assigned to compute and certify the earnings from the shrine. And at least two government officials are assigned around the clock to sit inside the cave, along with pujaris now on the Government's pay-roll, to monitor offerings and donations and ensure that everybody gets their fair turn for worship. TV cameras to be installed will monitor the activities inside the cave "so people can see if there's any hanky-panky going on", Goswami says.



Shankar Das, a baridar who has escorted several luminaries, including Mrs Gandhi, for darshan, says the traditional role of pujaris has been unfairly demolished.

There is little doubt that thousands of baridars who traditionally depended on the shrine for their income have been badly hit. A handful of them have grown fabulously wealthy and invested in property but a large section of them simply blew up their money. Says Pandit Shankar Das, a traditional baridar who has escorted luminaries like Mrs Gandhi for darshan: "Ours is a large family. Even if we get Rs 40,000 after six years it has to be shared among dozens of members. Our family in the old days did the Devi's puja when the *yatra* wasn't popular and there were no earnings. We did puja from oil extracted from *chir* pines when no oil was available. Now we are told that our role as pujaris is finished and we are not even allowed to escort those who ask for us by name into the cave."

Under the take-over act, a tribunal is being appointed to compute compensation for the dispossessed baridars and Goswami has pledged that he will give paid jobs to baridars on a priority basis if they ask for them. "Right now, they don't want to work in the shrine in a paid capacity," he says, "but we are morally bound to see that a baridar who was solely dependent on the shrine for an income gets to lead an honourable life."

Plans are already under way to start land improvement schemes for baridars with small holdings who have lost their incomes. Other schemes include the construction of hospitals, schools and job training centres to create an expected 1,000 new jobs. "The idea is to use the income of the shrine for the overall economic development of the area," says Jagmohan. "And all this is happening because the Devi must have wished it."

—INDERJIT BADHWAR

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CAR PLANS

EVEN as the Government continues to dawdle over reformulating its policy for the automobile industry, another hopeful entrepreneur has announced his plans to start manufacturing cars, this time in collaboration with Fiat of Italy. Venkatram Reddy (whose previous experience consists of running the Nagarjuna Hotel and the *Deccan Chronicle* newspaper in Hyderabad) has signed up with Fiat for manufacturing its Premio 1300 model, which is due to be launched in Europe later this year. The proposed Rs 304-crore project to make 30,000 cars annually may, however, take awhile to get on the road. Apart from the question of the new automobile policy and government clearances (both of which could take time), Reddy has also to first handle his existing Rs 28-crore Annapurna Foils project. The plus point for the Fiat project is that it is proposed to be located in Medak, Mrs Gandhi's former Lok Sabha constituency. Also, Fiat has promised to invest in the project's equity and to buy back some of the production.

NAME GAME

CLOSE on the heels of the Binaca-Cibaca affair comes another to-do about changing names. The Abacus, Delhi's first computer mart, metamorphosed into the Calculus, following a divorce between partners Abacus Computers and Anand Manufacturing. When Anand began advertising that the Abacus had now become the Calculus, Abacus Computers (which makes personal computers and other systems) said it was still alive and kicking, and announced plans to open show-rooms all over the country. Who eventually will qualify to call itself the pioneer is anybody's guess, but one of the two will have to settle for being nothing more than a chip of the old block.

HI-TECH DRUGS

IN a fresh bid to get the Government's clearance for its Rs 119-crore viscose fibre project, Modi Fibres has renamed itself Modi-Cortex (Cortex being the parent company of the project's foreign collaborator Courtaulds). Project promoter S.K.Modi has also signed a Rs 500-crore export deal with Courtaulds, which will buy back some of Modi-Cortex's production for sale in Western Europe and also for parts of the African, Asian and East European markets. Courtaulds will also invest in 26 per cent of the project's equity. The project had run into strong opposition from Grasim Industries, currently the only manufacturer of viscose fibre in the country. And reports of a compromise between the Modis and the Birlas (who run Grasim) seem to be without basis.

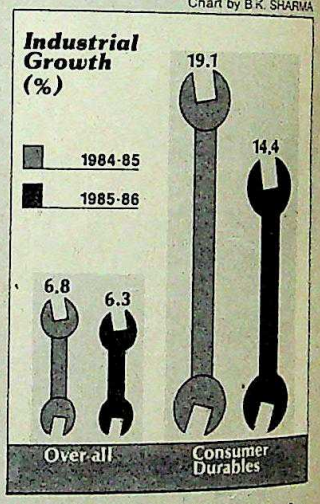
SOFTWARE BOOST

SOFTWARE exports may get a new thrust if a Department of Electronics policy package goes through. The long overdue package is expected to be announced shortly and will include a proposal to set up a software development agency. India exports some Rs 35 crore worth of software annually but the potential is much greater, and many big companies have recently tied up software collaboration arrangements with foreign firms. But software manufacturers complain that the Government has failed to clarify several issues on the software front. The new policy is expected to remedy some of this.

DURABLE INDEX

CONSUMER durables are now the fastest growing sector in Indian industry. In both 1984-85 and 1985-86, growth in the production of consumer durables outstripped all other sectors by a wide margin. Thus, in 1984-85, consumer durables production grew by a handsome 19.1 per cent, well above the overall industrial growth of 6.8 per cent. This was repeated last year, when consumer durables production grew by 14.4 per cent while overall industrial growth was no more than 6.3 per cent. In sharp contrast to this, consumer non-durables have seen virtually no growth (0.4 per cent in 1984-85 and 1.6 per cent in 1985-86). Unfortunately, consumer durables have a very low weightage in the overall industrial production index (3.81 per cent). And consumer non-durables have a weightage of 26.65 per cent.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



MODEST AWARDS

THE Government is now holding out a fresh carrot for public sector companies: awards to be presented by the prime minister for companies showing improvements in financial and physical performance with some weightage for 'qualitative dimensions' like technology absorption, self-reliance, export effort, industrial relations and safety. But the main stress will be on growth in turnover, reduction in costs and profitability ratios on the financial front and to capacity utilisation and diversification. Assessments by the concerned ministry will be vetted by experts to make the final selection. But the awards themselves are modest: a silver bowl, a silver salver and a certificate of merit. The total cost is to be less than Rs 5 lakh. The awards are open only to companies in steel, minerals and metals, coal, power, petroleum, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, engineering, consumer goods and textiles.

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An Unhealthy Relationship

SIX years ago, when the police in Bhagalpur began to blind their prisoners with the tacit approval of the entire Bihar police, one of the reasons given for this barbaric act was the policemen's utter desperation at the ease with which even dacoits with two and three previous convictions for robbery with violence were able to obtain bail. Yet bail is precisely what the Central Government has strenuously sought to deny to L.M. Thapar, one of the country's most respected industrialists. Should we presume, then, that the state sees robbery with violence as a less serious offence than the violation of the country's foreign exchange laws?

On the face of it such a suggestion is absurd. But a moment's reflection will show it is not wholly so. What has aroused the ire of at least the petty functionaries of the state is not the violation of this or that law, but the eminence of those allegedly breaking it. The purpose of enforcing the law of the land with the maximum rigour in such cases is not to uphold the rule of law, but to make an example of the law-breakers. It is to humiliate them and to pull them down. It is to impugn the legitimacy of their success and to plant the suspicion that this success has not been won by hard work, foresight or even sheer luck, but by manipulation and theft.

L.M. Thapar is not the first major industrialist to have been treated in this way. Last year, Kapal Mehra, the founder and chairman of Orkay Silk Mills, a major producer of synthetic fibres, was jailed for an alleged violation of the foreign exchange rules. He too was denied bail. During the height of the tax recovery drive of 1985-86, three senior managers of Voltas nearly suffered the same fate. The treatment meted out to S.L. Kirloskar is still too fresh in people's minds to need repetition. Numerous industrialists have had their offices and homes raided, and these raids have been widely publicised even when little or nothing incriminating has been found.

In the Thapar case, the grounds for arrest had not been furnished by the Government even one week after the arrest. But to judge from the prosecution lawyer's remarks, these were flimsy even by the most generous reckoning. On September 12, he told the Delhi High Court that the Government had taken action based on a RBI complaint that one or more of the Thapar firms had violated the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) by not repatriating foreign exchange earnings and by setting up a subsidiary company abroad without first taking the RBI's permission. When one or more limited liability companies have broken the law, it is at least open to question whether and to what degree its chairman or principal shareholder can be held responsible for each of its actions.

> "The purpose of enforcing the law of the land in such cases is not to uphold the rule of law, but to make an example of the law-breakers; to humiliate and pull them down."

Here, however, L.M. Thapar has claimed that since the RBI's permission had been taken for opening the parent company abroad, his board was of the view that no further permission was needed to open a wholly-owned subsidiary. Even if this plea turns out to be specious, it is at least arguable. In any country where the relationship between government and private industry is healthy, a violation of such a law would have been dealt with first through discussion, admonition and a heavy penalty. If the law required a civil or criminal suit, this would have been done discreetly, so as not to tarnish the reputation of the firm or its managers. And bail would have been granted as a matter of course, once the authorities had seized or sealed the pertinent files.

The key phrase is, of course, a healthy relationship. The treatment being given to Indian industrialists is entirely different because the relationship is an unhealthy one. It is characterised not by trust but distrust; not by cooperation but conflict. The state and private industry are not partners in development but adversaries.

This is illustrated best by contrasting this relationship with the one that has existed for the last nearly three decades in South Korea. In the late 1950s, faced with the rapid tapering off of American aid and spurred by the need to build up exports simply in order to survive, the South Korean Government placed almost the entire responsibility for industrialisation on private industry. It identified key investment areas, framing the projects and preparing feasibility reports, before inviting tenders from the private sector for their implementation. In this process, strength has bred strength so that South Korea today has no less than 17 companies (including one entirely state-owned steel plant) in *Fortune's* list of the 500 largest non-American companies. But it also has an industrial sector which takes its obligation to fulfil specified national economic goals for granted. By contrast, although India's private sector was older and better established than South Korea in 1955, the Government set out to "marginalise" it and build a public sector in pursuit of a socialist society that would do the job that South Korea's "Chaebol" did.

Today, 30 years later, the public sector has failed to perform this task and in the seventh plan, the Government has been forced to leave the lion's share of industrial investment to the private sector. But whatever Rajiv Gandhi and V.P. Singh may have intended, the bureaucracy has seen in their emphasis on a clean government a golden opportunity to renew its attack on the private sector. But tarnishing the private sector's reputation will not improve the public sector's performance or widen the taxable base of the economy.

Sooner or later, the Government will have to decide whether scoring populist points with an urban electorate will help it more, in the long run, than creating a better climate for investment and growth. In 1955, both India and South Korea had per capita incomes of about $80. Today, ours is under $300 while that of South Korea is over $2,000.

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PETROCHEMICALS

Boom Industry

FOR months, those in the big league have been talking of nothing else. And many have followed up talk with action, feverishly handing in applications to the Government, sewing up funds in advance, readying plant blueprints in the hope that the Government will finally flag them off.

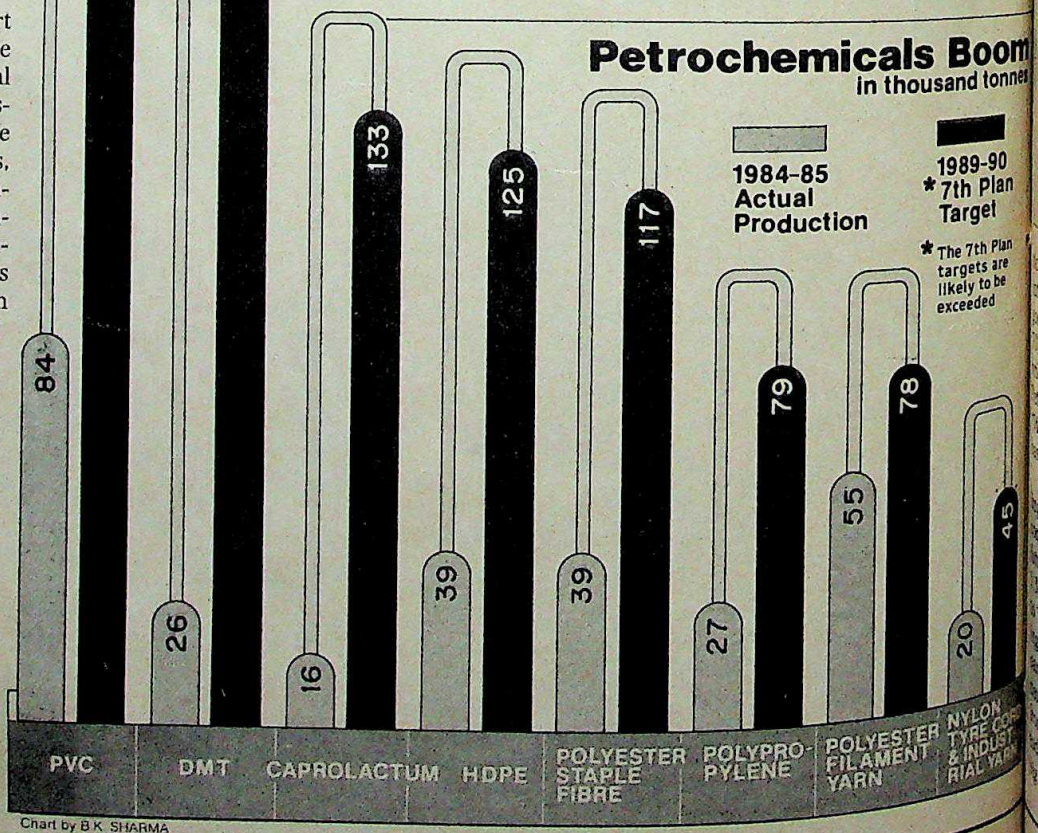
The focus of this intense corporate attention is an industry that, till recently, quietly ticked on in relative obscurity —petrochemicals. "Everyone's talking of petrochemicals," affirms S. Ganguly, chairman and managing director of the public sector Indian Petrochemical Complex Ltd (IPCL). Ganguly is right; even the Government is talking of petrochemicals. Last fortnight, the Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals was drafting a 15-year industry plan that could trigger off an even bigger demand explosion, for the report is expected to recommend lower taxes and input prices to the Cabinet.

Even before that report was being penned, private sector giants like National Organic Chemical Industries Ltd (NOCIL), Reliance Industries, JK Synthetics, the Mallya group, Hindustan Lever and Grasim Industries were bracing to expand production capacities or jockeying to climb on board one of the huge joint sector projects that the Government is scheduled to clear shortly in such exotic areas as purified terephthalic acid (PTA), aromatics, linear alkyl benzene (LAB), and in polyester fibre and yarn. R.P. Goenka's Duncan group already has one in its pocket: it has joined hands with the West Bengal Government to launch the Rs 1,200-crore Haldia petrochemicals complex. NOCIL talks of investing Rs 1,300-crore in the next few years, and Reliance's plans are even more grandiose, while IPCL already has on its hands the giant Maharashtra gas cracker complex.

For those who miss the mega-project bus, there are the smaller state government-promoted downstream petrochemical ventures. Gujarat has a Rs 3,000-crore complex in the pipe-line at Kawas based on offshore gas—and the offers have been pouring in. Reports H.K. Khan, the state's principal secretary: "We have 20 companies that want to join our downstream projects." Among them: Shri Ram Fibre, G.P. Goenka's Gujarat Carbon, Birla companies Grasim and Century Rayon, a Kilachand company, and Mafatlal outfits NOCIL and Indian Dyestuff Industries. Some, like the Southern Petrochemicals Industries Corporation (SPIC), have already sewn up deals with state governments. SPIC has banded together with a Tamil Nadu Government undertaking to turn out 50,000 tonnes of LAB annually.

Clearly, the petrochemicals industry is on the verge of taking off—and it has been put there by a huge demand that companies cannot meet even now, sizeable profits, prospects of quick growth, and a market that could burgeon rapidly if the Government cuts taxes. Just how vast the opportunity may be is reflected in recent official sanctions which have jacked up licensed production capacities in the synthetic fibre industry to 11.2 lakh tonnes; the seventh plan target is a mere 3.3 lakh tonnes. The growth potential on other petrochemical fronts could be equally staggering. The demand for the plastics required for the electronics industry alone will climb by a healthy 30 per cent a year in the seventh plan. NOCIL Managing Director M.S. Patwardhan further backs up the point: the country's per capita consumption of plastics is 600 gm a year; in Europe, it is 40 to 80 kg. Indeed, an official study found that about Rs 50 crore worth of wooden boxes were used last year to package the country's fruits—and a one acre orchard required wood from 10 acres of forests, clearly a wasteful use of forest resources. Says a government official: "Even if we were to replace 10 per cent of this wood, we would need about 1.20 lakh tonnes of polymers and we produce much less than this today."

Many believe that the overall petrochemicals and downstream product mar-



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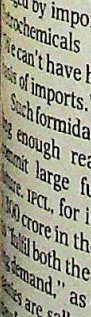


will grow by at least 15 to 20 per cent a year. Even the more conservative 10 to 15 per cent rate forecast by others is alluring enough. Says Patwardhan: "Demand is increasing by between 10 and 15 per cent a year. This is high by any standards."

But production capacities are lagging way behind demand, so much so that over 40 per cent of the country's requirements of petrochemicals and downstream products is imported. Says Anil Ambani, executive director of Reliance: "There is no reason why we cannot serve all our petrochemical needs ourselves. We have a market which has the highest aromatic content in the world but we are net importers of all key products." Example: the production of low density polyethylene (LDPE), an intermediate used to make moulded goods, falls short of demand by well over 1,000 tonnes a year and the shortage is bridged by imports. Says Chemicals and Petrochemicals Secretary D.V. Kapur: "We can't have high growth rates on the basis of imports."

Such formidable statistics are compelling enough reason for companies to commit large funds to the industry's future. IPCL, for instance, is investing Rs 1,000 crore in the Maharashtra complex to fulfill both the existing and the emerging demand," as Ganguly puts it. If companies are sallying forth on a new business frontier, it is also because yesterday's mainline areas such as electronics are largely viewed as overcrowded. But the real lucre could be the profits: at least a cool 15 per cent after tax, says A.J.A. Tauro, president of Haldia Petrochemicals. Adds Tauro: "Some petrochemical products are very profitable. Intermediate products are not so attractive though they do offer reasonable returns. High profitability lies further down the road."

It is also true that the rush into several segments of the petrochemicals industry is prompted by a desire to integrate backwards. A classic example is JK Synthetics. It is bidding for the Rs 750 crore joint sector aromatics project at Salempur, 80 km from the Mathura refinery in Uttar Pradesh, as well as for a similar Madras Refineries venture as both Orissa Synthetics, a JK group stable-mate, and JK Synthetics itself need PTA which is imported.

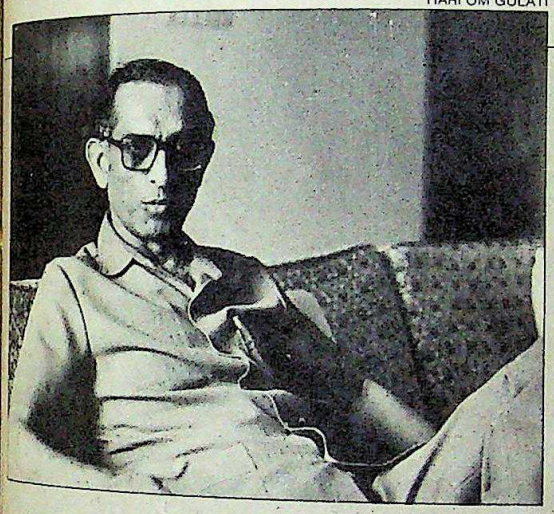
Finally, petrochemicals hold out to state governments the possibility of development and jobs. Khan echoes the point when he argues that state governments are interested in the industry because it "will offer employment and the possibility of a large number of small units coming up." So the state has acquired 200 hectares at Kawas for a plastics processing zone for small units.

Certainly, these arguments are convincing explanations for the big petrochemicals push. Still, several industry executives argue that firms aren't looking before they leap. IPCL's Ganguly, for one, contends that corporations see easy pickings without realising that it's a high-initial-cost, high-technology industry. He warns: "The present prices won't hold good when so many enter the industry. But the most efficient producer should win the pot of gold—if there's any." Haldia's Tauro is just as quick to argue the contrary: "The fears of those who think that companies are jumping in too rashly aren't justified." Haldia will turn out four major intermediates and Tauro claims that all of them can be easily hawked.

Amidst that verbal joust, it was increasingly evident last fortnight that the official report on the industry would have a decisive bearing on the debate. Petrochemicals Secretary Kapur may have indicated the shape of things to come when he said: "We are 25 years behind developments elsewhere. Demand in this industry is going to be so great that we will have to adopt an extraordinary approach." That approach could include concessions like providing feedstock at international prices to select exporters or to those whose products need to be promoted in the national interest, and lower taxes and input prices. Sky-high levies and administered naphtha prices have contributed to a high-cost domestic petrochemical economy. But the report, Kapur's last hurrah before he retires, could seek to rectify this. If the report does indeed turn out to be a path-breaker, the industry's Cassandras will be proved wrong—and the petrochemical boom will have finally arrived.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI
with bureau reports

HARI OM GULATI



"Petrochemical products are very profitable. The post tax-profits are at least 15 per cent."

A.J.A. TAURO
president, Haldia Petrochemicals

RANJAN BASU

"Demand in this industry is going to be so great that we will have to adopt an extraordinary approach."

D.V. KAPUR
chemicals and petrochemicals secretary

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COMPUTERS

Plunging Prices

SHARP price drops are not new in the hotly contested computer market, but this one was different. In a move that stunned the computer industry, the Delhi-based Hindustan Computers Ltd (HCL) announced last month that it was slashing the price of its personal computer from Rs 42,000 to Rs 20,000. The dramatic newspaper advertisement brought retail computer sales to an unprecedented standstill—and sparked off a fresh price war in the industry.

"We didn't want to get into a price war, but we're cutting prices," declared P.R. Shankar Kumar, general manager at DCM Data Products. For good measure, the Bangalore-based Eiko Computers offered a computer for Rs 16,300, Sterling Electronics in Madras announced that the price-tag of Rs 29,970 for its computer would also include a printer, and Wipro officials were scheduled to meet in Bombay to chart business strategies. Promised Ashok Soota, president of Wipro: "We are planning to announce lower prices by the month-end."

Even as a fresh battle for market shares was on, several industry executives were quick to allege that the price cuts were misleading and that companies had been overcharging customers. Said Farath Kapur, a director at Computer Shack, the retail computer outlet: "The HCL ad is just a gimmick." Added a director of a company in the South: "It's like quoting for a Maruti without wheels." He also argued that industry costs had not fallen, and that the price cuts showed that companies had been profiteering.

Some computer executives point out in defence, however, that firms are not flush with funds and that research and development costs had to be amortised in the early years. But the price reductions are clearly far less sweeping than the advertisements suggest. HCL's Rs 20,000 price-tag, for example, is for a basic machine and a few extras. If additional frills are tagged on, the bill would come close to Rs 29,000 or more. This is true of the other companies as well. "Most corporate users would need the frills," notes a DCM official.

It is also true that the new price-tags only bring out into the open a situation that has ruled the industry for months: firms have been freely handing out price discounts to customers. Equally clearly, companies will now bill buyers separately for a host of items that were free before. Examples: freight and handling costs. While Wipro's Soota conceded that customers will get fewer maintenance and warranty period benefits, an HCL spokesman argued that separate pricing enables clients to buy what they want. "Our computer came with a lot of hidden costs that the buyer couldn't perceive. So we decided to put a value to them and let the buyer decide what to pay for." He also disclosed that the decision to cut prices had been taken months ago, when it became clear that the company's 80 per cent annual sales growth target for micro computers would not be met.

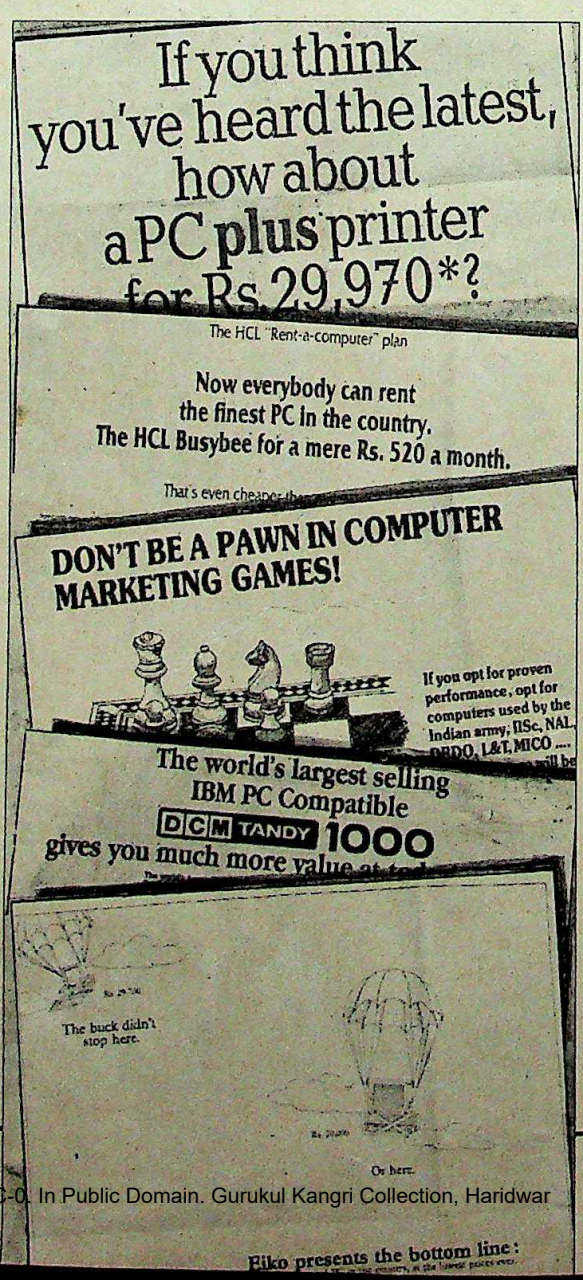
"It's a very smart marketing move," Nelco President and Chief Executive S.K. Mukherjee says admiringly, "but the question is for how long people in India will still want you to hold their hand and teach them what they can do." Nevertheless, the companies themselves do not seem to be worried. HCL hawked 1,700 business computers last year and now expects sales to almost double this year. Eiko Marketing Manager Pradeep K. Bhargava believes that his firm will sell a whopping 4,500 business computers this year when it sold just 175 last year. These could be overestimates, but most people in the business agree that the industry will peddle 20,000 computers after the price reductions, instead of the 15,000 forecast earlier. "Fence sitters will be tempted to buy computers," says an industry analyst.

Clearly, the lower prices will have other significant fall-outs. For starters, retail computer shops may be under pressure because their profit margins will be on a lower base price. Rishab Kumar, Wipro general manager, forecasts that small firms using screwdriver technology will be wiped out. Contends Kumar: "They can't invest the Rs 25 lakh needed for things like cabinet moulds. They'll be forced to continue importing by buying replenishment licences. That will add to costs. The big companies will be indigenising far more this year."

Such arguments are backed by a quick survey by International Data Corporation (India), the market research firm, on the impact of lower prices. Among its other conclusions: prices will drop even further; five major companies will emerge by the end of 1987; some of the big boys will move out of the low end of the market; the software business will get a boost; and firms that have foreign collaboration agreements that include expensive import requirements will have to review them to cut down on costs. If all that is indeed on the anvil, the world of bits and bytes is in for tumultuous times.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI with PARTHASARATHI SWAMI in Bombay and SRINIVASA PRASAD in Bangalore

Collage of ads: announcing cuts



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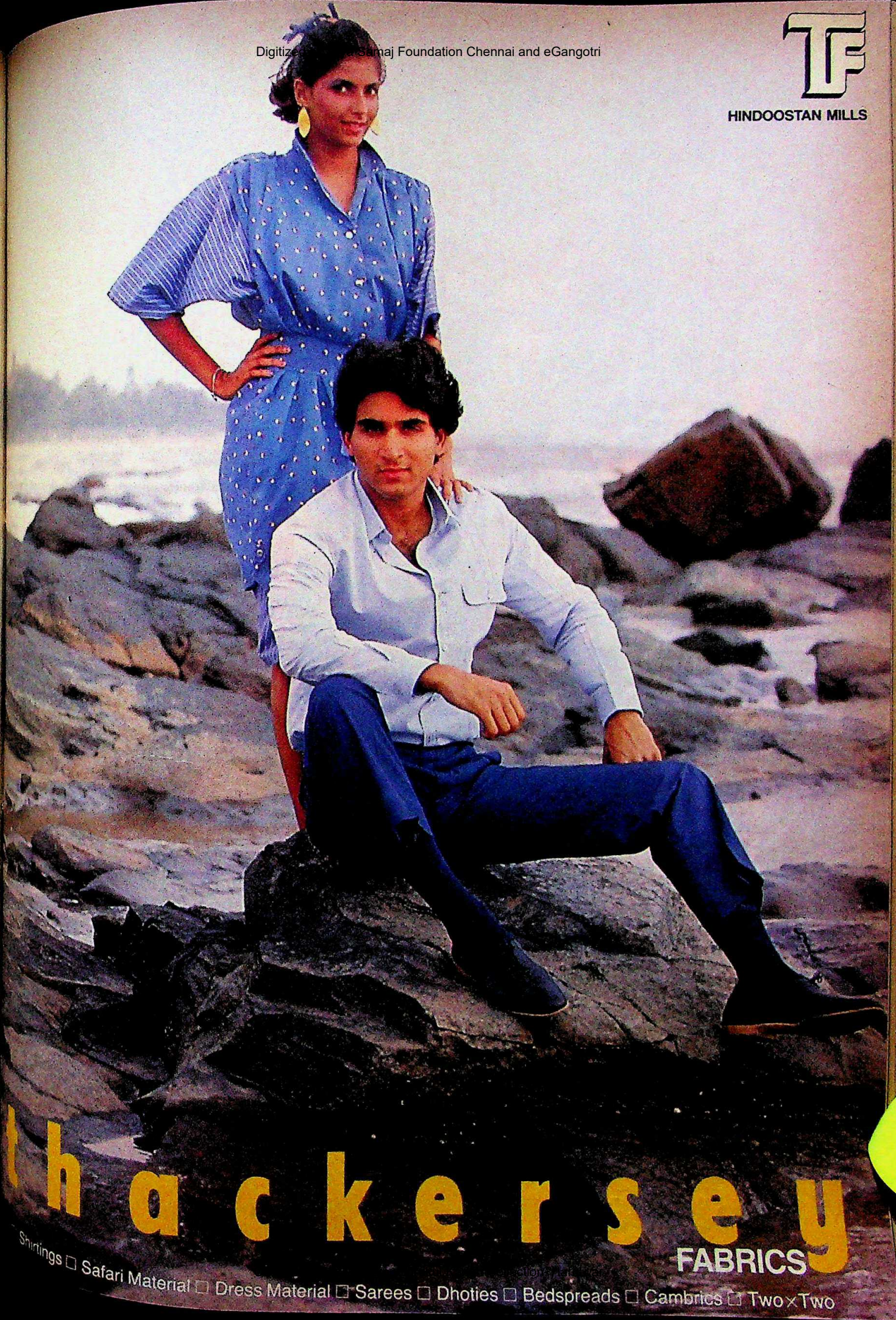

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Discover Amsterdam. The city of brightly coloured tulips and storybook windmills. Where the streets are paved with history and the air charged with the excitement of one of Europe's busiest commercial centres. Dykes and diamonds, Van Gogh and the vikings. Amsterdam is a city that has everything... specially surprises.

Take the silk route to Amsterdam on Thai. Non-stop early morning on Mondays and Fridays. The Royal Orchid Service is just part of the Dutch experience.

Thai
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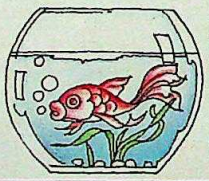

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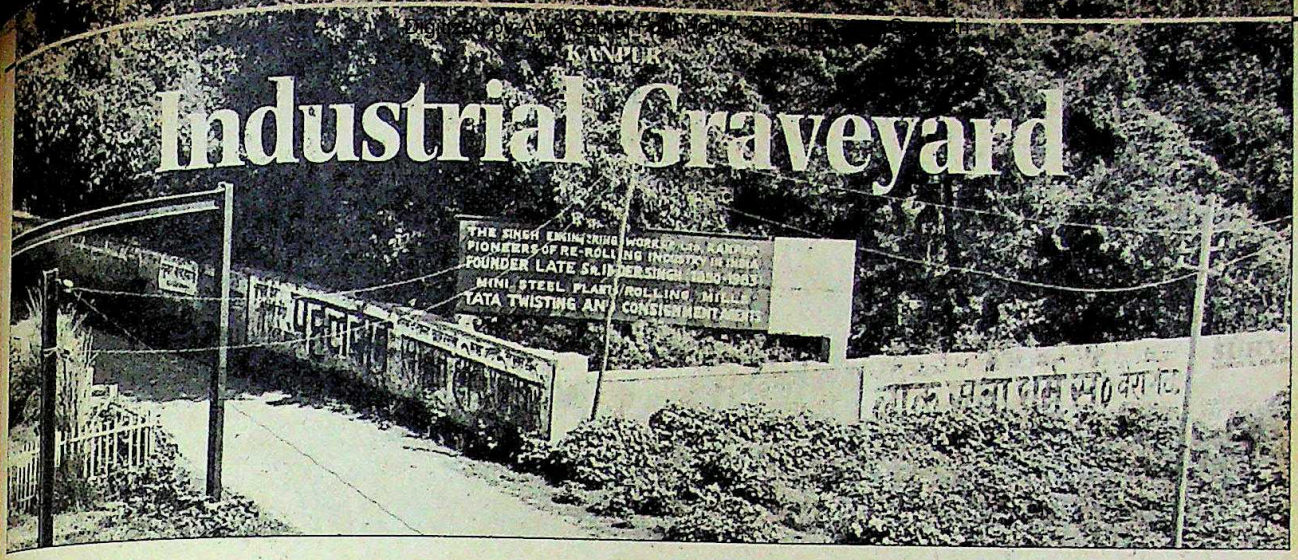
KANPUR

Industrial Graveyard



Singh Engineering: in the red

SINGH Engineering in Kanpur was one of the first re-rolling units to be set up in the country, and with three flourishing units was a name to reckon with in the business until a decade ago. Today, its unit on the Grand Trunk road has closed down, its Fazalganj unit is leased out, and three-quarters of the land of the Panki unit is used to cultivate wheat and grow rosewood. The company has installed sufficient capacity to roll out 450 tonnes of steel daily, but manages barely 30 tonnes, and has inevitably slipped into the red.

Singh Engineering is only one of over 1,000 sick or closed industrial units in Kanpur, once northern India's industrial capital. That is almost every fifth unit in the city. And on virtually every front, the evidence of industrial decline stares the observer in the face.

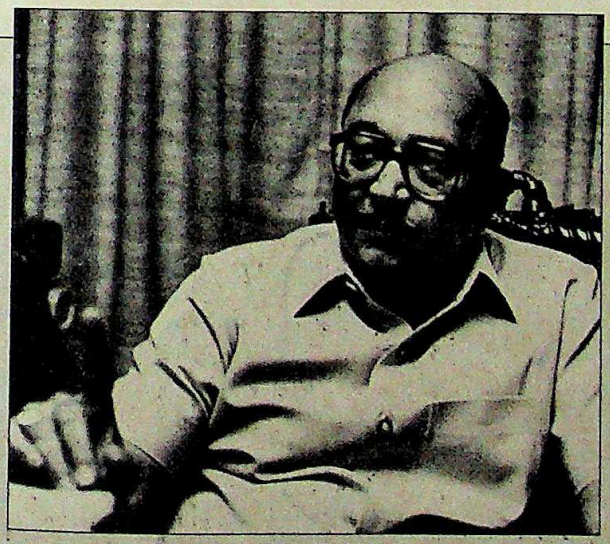
Thirty years ago, the textile mills employed 80,000 workers. Today there are 35,000, nine of the 10 running mills have been taken over by the Government, and 14,000 of their 35,000-strong work-force are surplus and may be retrenched.

Forty plastic units (out of 250) have wound up in the last three years, according to the Uttar Pradesh Plastic Manufacturers Association. The JK group—Kanpur's best known industrial conglomerate—has closed down four units over the last few years (JK Manufactures, JK Electronics, JK Sato and JK Bayon), and set up eight new units elsewhere: in Rajasthan, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Other industrial groups have also contributed to the flight of capital. B.B.L. Srivastava, general manager of the local District Industries Centre, said he had no estimate of the exodus, but unofficial estimates put it at 60 per cent. One result: in places like the Raina industrial estate, developed by the Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Corporation (UPSIDC) four years ago, 70 per cent of the plots are vacant.

Similarly, in the Dadanagar industrial area, drawn up in 1960 as one of the biggest cooperative projects in Asia, 19 units have closed down in the last three years while over 100 members of the cooperative society have moved out. Seventy-six out of the original 311 plots are still vacant. The number of permanent employees has dropped from 20,000 five years ago to 5,000. And, in a classic symbol of what has happened to the city's industries, the sprawling factory of the Laxmi Ratan Engineering Works (LREW) is now used as a godown by the Food Corporation of India.

Perhaps the only two industries doing well in the city are leather and hosiery, though the footwear business has wound down and two-thirds of the 15,000 workers once occupied in making shoes have shifted to Agra since 1980.

If Kanpur seems to be in a state of terminal decline, the problems seem endemic and unsolvable: no power, high sales tax rates, high labour costs (businessmen say minimum wage rates compare with those in Bombay), loss of orders (the Forest Department used to buy polythene bags for its nursery plantations, but this has been diverted to the Hill Development Corporation), shortage of raw material and a lack of infrastructure. For a telephone or telex connection in the Panki or Raina industrial estates, one has to run to the Jhansi circle. Said Ramesh Mehrotra of Cans India: "We were assured a telephone connection in six months of setting up the factory. I have been running from pillar to



GAUR HARI SINGHANIA
JK group

"We closed down our four units because of the power shortage. If you call Kanpur the industrial capital of Uttar Pradesh then it has to be given some facilities to grow into that role."

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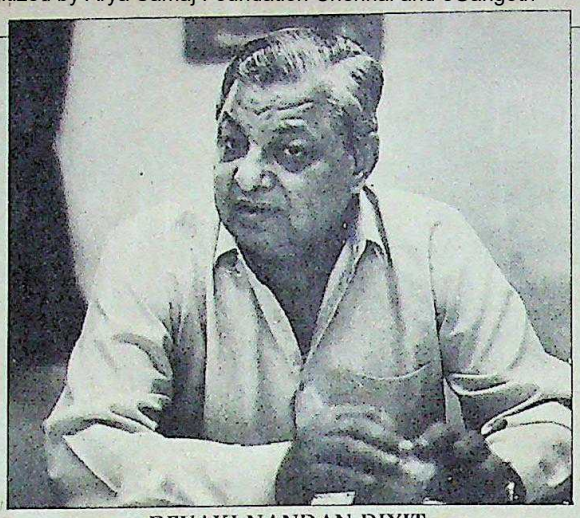
post, although I set up my unit in 1983." Power problems have added to Mehrotra's woes, and he has so far lost Rs 1 crore. Gaur Hari Singhania of the JK group also said: "We closed down four units in Kanpur because of the power shortage. If you call Kanpur the industrial capital of Uttar Pradesh, it has to be given some facilities to grow into that role."

Almost no one, therefore, talks with any hope for a city with a total investment of over Rs 800 crore in close to 6,000 industrial units, and an industrial workforce of 2.5 lakh. And the comments from the city's entrepreneurs are an endless litany of woe. Says M.R.K. Inayati, who runs N.I. Steel Pvt Ltd: "The steel re-rolling units are struggling to keep the pot boiling even if the furnaces blow cold air." Adds a spokesman of the Kanpur Steel and Engineering Association: "Forty-five per cent of the 1,100-odd engineering and steel units in Kanpur are facing closure." And, speaking of the power problems faced by the plastics industry, Kishan Gandhi, general secretary, Uttar Pradesh Plastic Manufacturers Federation said: "We are a continuous-process industry, but we have not been granted this status yet. We get power for only 20 hours in a 48-hour working week."



DEVAKI NANDAN DIXIT
chairman, British India Corporation

"These mills are old enough to become monuments. And our main problem is overstaffing."

EVEN the state Government and other authorities seem to have decided that Kanpur's heyday is over. Already, a section of the Industries Directorate has been shifted to Lucknow, and the rest of the financial and industrial development organisations might follow soon. The zonal headquarters of the State Bank of India have moved there too, as well as the foreign exchange division of the Reserve Bank of India. Kanpur's leather and tannery industry continues to flourish, but the headquarters of the Leather Export Promotion Council have moved to Madras. Despite government denials, industrialists suspect that the headquarters of the UPSIDC and the Uttar Pradesh Financial Corporation also might move to Lucknow.

When industry declines, trade unions get active. Gate meetings are a common sight, especially outside textile mills—where the fear of large-scale retrenchment haunts workers. "The meetings are much better attended now than before," said Ganesh Dixit, general secretary, Hind Mazdoor Kisan Panchayat, and some say union membership has quadrupled recently. Some 1,700 labour organisations function in the city. A Cotton Mill Joint Sangharsh Samiti has been formed by representatives of major unions to launch a joint offensive against retrenchment. And trade unionist Subhashini Ali, who is the wife of film director Muzaffar Ali and a familiar sight at gate meetings, said: "We are now organising workers of the small-scale units so that the fight against the industrialists and managements can have added meaning."

But the managements have their problems too. Production in textile mills is only 40 per cent of capacity, government-run mills lose a staggering Rs 75 crore every year, and gross overstaffing makes labour account for 30 per cent of total cost (against between 10 and 15 per cent for better-placed units). The Bombay Textile Research Association said in November last year, after a study of the work-load in Kanpur and Bombay mills, that 14,000 of the 35,000 Kanpur textile workers were redundant.

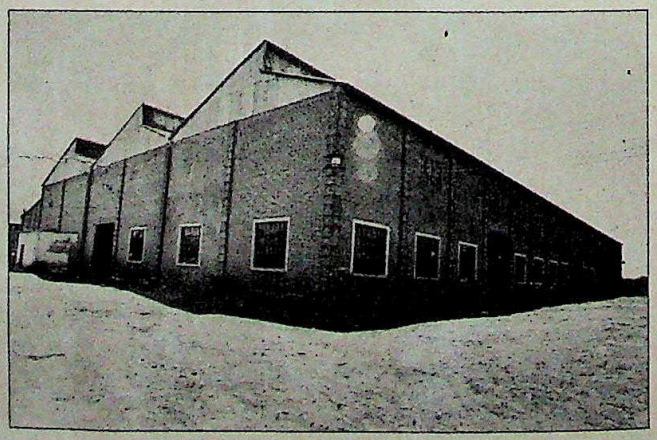
But the fact is that the Kanpur mills are also hopelessly out of date. Said Devaki Nandan Dixit, chairman of the British India Corporation, which runs three mills: "These mills are old enough to become monuments. And our main problem is overstaffing."

Despite the sense of gloom and crisis, however, the die-hard hopefuls continue to look forward to better days. Said UPSIDC Regional Manager S.B. Shukla: "Units have been coming up in the new industrial areas that we have developed." Added Gyanendra Misra, former general secretary of the Hind Mazdoor Sabha and a director of the Artificial Limb Manufacturing Corporation of India: "I cannot visualise a situation when Kanpur loses its identity as an industrial town. To say that industries and entrepreneurs are badly placed is a mistake, though there may be a power problem."

Nevertheless, there can be little room for cheer when existing units are on the decline, industrialists invest funds elsewhere, industrial promotion organisations begin to shift office and industrial employment drops steadily as factories close down or retrench workers. The British in 1819 may have planned the future of the then Cawnpore around industrial development, but today Kanpur's future is pretty gloomy.

—DILIP AWASTHI in Kanpur

Factory turned FCI godown



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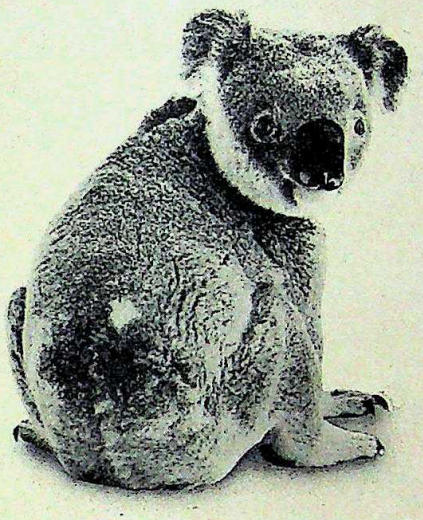

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TOURISM

A New Thrust

THE hard sell of India is on. For long peddled as the land of mysticism, ancient culture and elephants, the country will now also be packaged by the Department of Tourism as the land of fun and games. This shift in emphasis is part of a major government effort currently underway to breathe fresh life into the tourism industry. On the planning board are marine parks, Disneyland-type amusement parks—both inspired by non-resident Indians (NRI's)—water sports, adventure tourism and the development of some of the exotic little isles of Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep. The Government is looking at various other proposals sent by NRI's from Bangkok and the United States. Duty-free shops—until now restricted to airports—could now sprout in the metropolises. These will be open to foreigners, tourists, diplomats and the increasingly visible tribe of NRI's.

The NRI and the foreigner are being hotly wooed as potential investors. Ushering them in at immigration counters might soon be "younger, better-looking Indian police officers", as Tourism Secretary S.K. Mishra puts it. NRI's will be allowed to hold up to 40 per cent equity in hotels (the ceiling is now 30 per cent) and foreigners might be given multiple-entry five-year visas. The Government has also more than doubled its advertisement budget to about Rs 7 crore—most of it for its campaigns in Europe and the US—which have been designed to reap the harvest of the two Festivals of India. With this aggressive advertising thrust, the Government hopes to raise the number of foreign tourists from over 8 lakh last year to more than a million, as well as raise the foreign exchange inflow from Rs 1,300 crore brought in by tourists last year to Rs 1,800 crore.

On the anvil are tourist charter flights to six cities, including Trivandrum, Delhi, Bhubaneswar and Calcutta, perhaps initially from West Germany. Weekly charter flights already land at Goa. The Government is also promising the travel trade less red tape, more attractive depreciation rates on hotels and cars and lower customs duties on about 200 items. Among them: air-conditioned tourist cars, water sports equipment, scuba diving, camping and sports gear. Added incentive is a higher interest subsidy (up from 1 to 3 per cent) on loans from financial institutions.

India, for long peddled as the land of mysticism, will now be packaged by the Department of Tourism as the land of fun and games.

A major thrust is planned in the Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands for domestic tourists. Runways will be expanded to accommodate the wide-bodied Airbuses and the Government plans to buy a Rs 25-crore luxury cruise ship for Port Blair. The India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) will build a 300-bed hotel in Port Blair which will eventually be expanded to 1,000 beds. Two new islands, Neil and Havelock, will be opened to tourists but the Government will not allow any construction in many of these and other islands since the Department of Environment is anxious to preserve their ecological state. Water sports—particularly scuba diving—will be a highlight of the islands. An airstrip at Agati in Lakshadweep has also been sanctioned, but to prevent tourists from spoiling the environment, the Government might introduce a luxury-liner to which the tourists will return each night.

In the North-east, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura will each get three-star hotels and lakes in the area will be developed for water sports. To beef up the convention business, ITDC, the Karnataka State Tourism Corporation and the chamber of commerce will build a 2,000-seat convention centre in Bangalore. A similar centre with 1,000 seats will be built in Agra.

The private sector has reacted with guarded optimism to the ministry's proposals. Inder Sharma of Sita World Travels says he is happy about the Government's intentions but he thinks that it would be better to concentrate on the nitty-gritty. "We should remove all the immigration and red-tape hassles first. What we really need are more clean two and three star hotels. We cannot create oases in a desert." Gautam Khanna, vice-president, Oberoi Hotels, is optimistic but not euphoric: "The Government has to give proof of its intentions. Thus far they have not divested themselves of any property... Air-India should also get out of the hotel business."

But the consensus within the trade appears to be that while the new initiatives are to be welcomed, the Government should demonstrate its earnestness by first cleaning up and modernising existing tourist attractions such as Goa, Bhubaneswar and Varanasi before plunging into schemes which still have a pie-in-the-sky ring to them.

—MADHU JAIN

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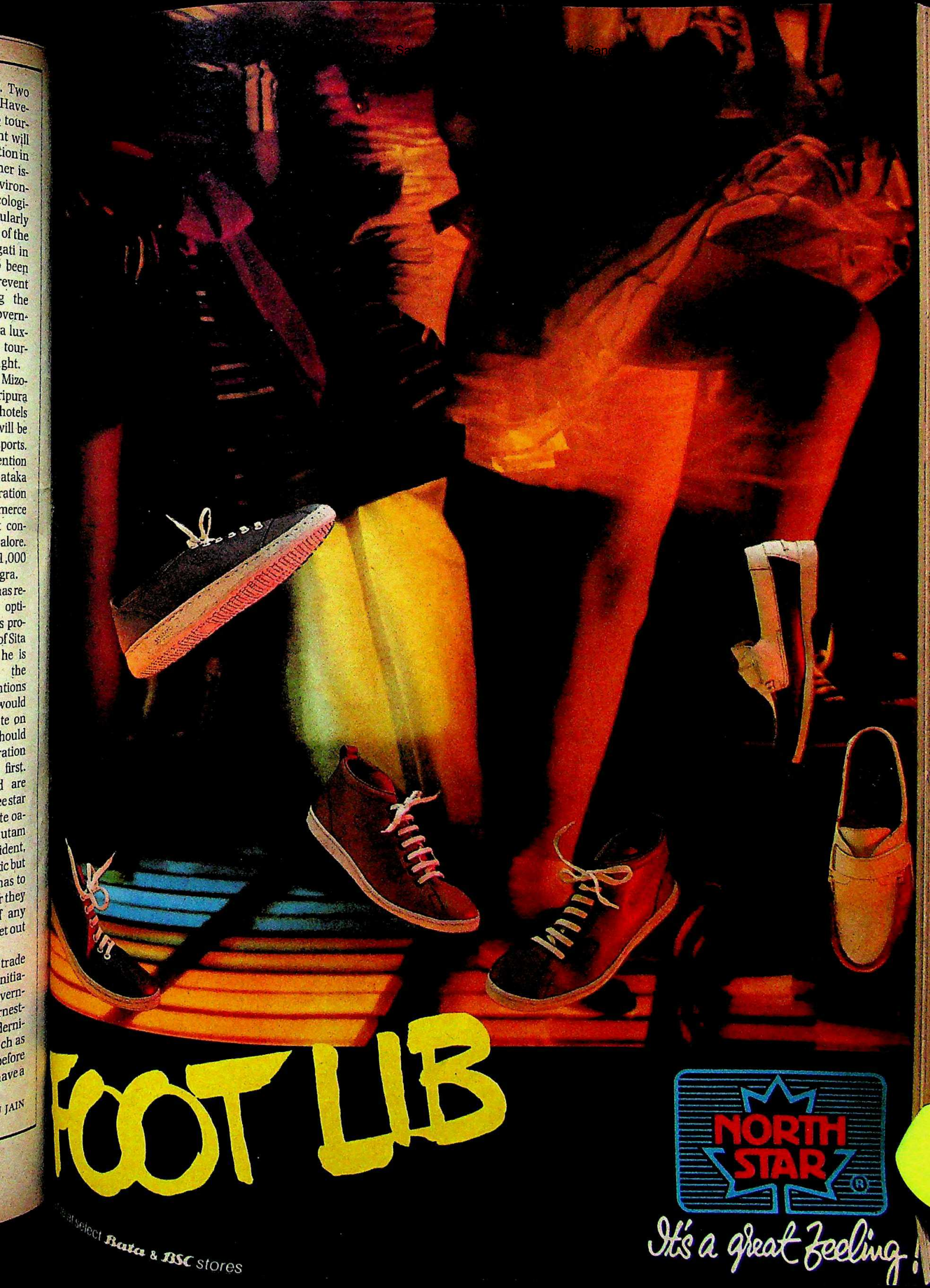

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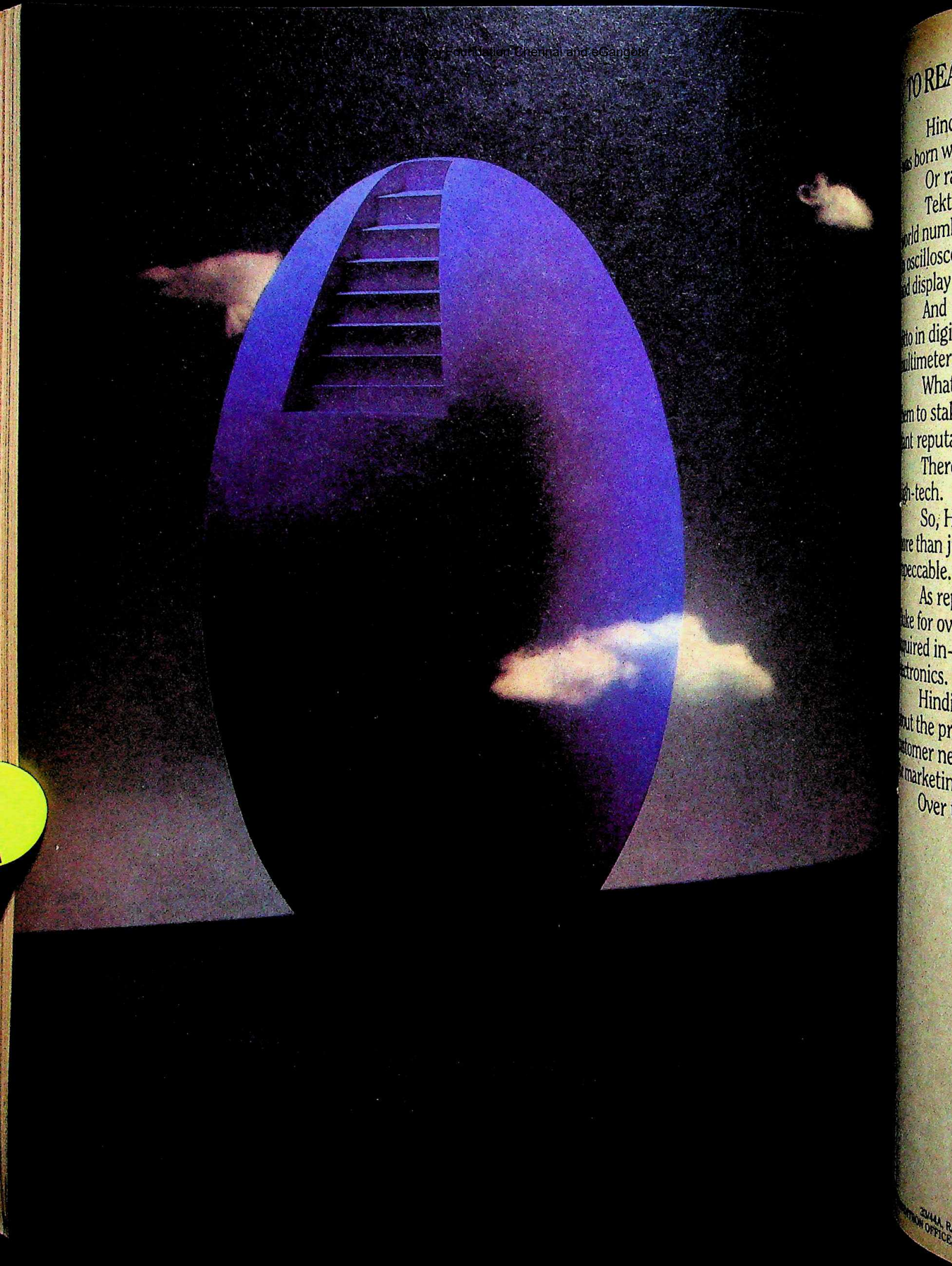

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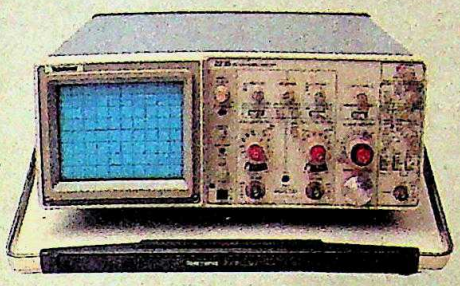

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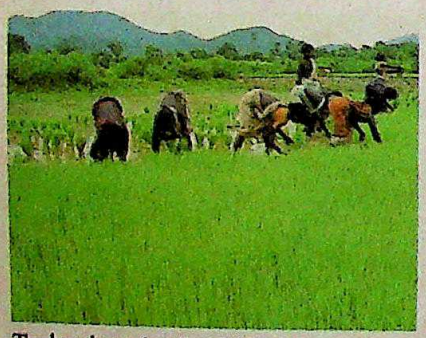
TISCARE
A quality product from Tata Steel

Milch cattle receive special care under animal husbandry programmes organised by the Tata Steel Rural Development Society (TSRDS). Started as a voluntary agency in 1979, TSRDS today covers 120 villages around Jamshedpur and 110 villages in Tata Steel's mines and collieries. People's participation plays a vital role in this ambitious venture that extends beyond animal husbandry to other areas of rural life as well.

Two crops where there was one

TSRDS entered a mono-crop area with very low irrigation facilities. Realising that rabi cultivation could revolutionise rural economy, it undertook field-based training programmes and started demonstration farms.



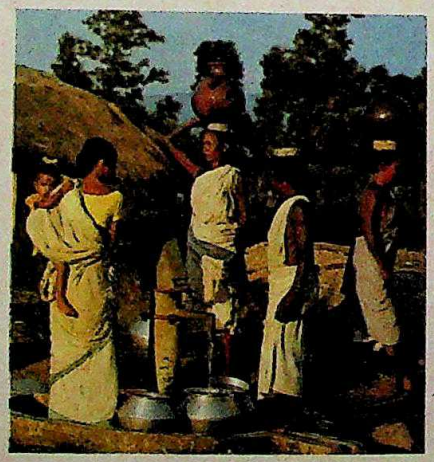
Today, hundreds of families are reaping second crops, thanks to cash crop cultivation over vast acreages.

Helping people help themselves

Rural industries are encouraged so that traditional skills and craftsmanship may be gainfully employed to augment family incomes. On-going schemes include cane furniture making, cocoon rearing and tussar silk weaving.

Community forestry has also been given an impetus by Tata Steel. A concerted programme of afforestation, through plantation and introduction of new and useful species of plants, has helped turn vast stretches of barren land into green areas.

The rehabilitation of fast-vanishing tribes like the Birhores,



building of link roads and irrigation projects, the supply of clean drinking water, the establishment of schools and health services, are some of the other TSRDS schemes that have helped change the face of rural areas around Jamshedpur.

Tiscare has come to mean hope in so many areas. Ranging from health services to sports programmes. Employee welfare to community service. Rural development to relief and rehabilitation. Tiscare means many different things to many different people.

To Tata Steel, it is a continuing commitment to improving the quality of life.

TIS-6305

TATA STEEL

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PUBLIC SECTOR

Merger Moves

FOR the public sector, big has suddenly become beautiful. In an unusual burst of activity, the Government is moving to prune costs and eliminate competition among firms that hawk similar wares. The new watchwords: mergers and holding companies. A proposal to combine the State Trading Corporation of India and the Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation has been hanging fire for months, and a committee is examining a proposal to form a holding company for Indian Airlines, Air-India and Vayudoot. The Rajasthan-based Instrumentation Ltd, which competes with Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) in the electronics instruments market, is to become a BHEL subsidiary.

There is more. Three losing Calcutta-based pharmaceutical firms could face the prospect of a shotgun wedding, and the Cabinet has cleared a proposal to set up two holding companies for a clutch of engineering firms, most of them based in Calcutta and Allahabad. "Bigger companies are healthier, generate their own resources and finance their own expansion. If smaller companies are put under bigger ones, the Government will be freed of the responsibility of financing them," explains K.K. Tewary, minister of state for public enterprises.

The wave of mergers and holding companies is part of a package aimed at pepping up state enterprises. Other elements of the package: annual targets for companies, a proposal to convert government loans to 20 losing concerns into equity, and updating technology.

The latest flurry of activity is clearly rooted in the recommendations of a series of committees that looked at the issue of revamping government firms. Along with earlier committees, a committee headed by Arjun Sengupta, then additional secretary in the Prime Minister's Secretariat, had backed the holding company structure to insulate public sector managements from bureaucratic interference. Matters have come to a head because government firms are expected to contribute to seventh plan funds but may not be able to ante up much. Last year, 85 state units were Rs 1,620 crore in the red. Belt tightening could help improve results.

Senior government officials were quick to suggest precisely this last fortnight. A functionary of the Department of Chemicals, in whose bailiwick pharmaceutical firms fall, said that the products and marketing efforts of Smith Stanistreet, Bengal Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals and Bengal Immunity overlapped. Maintains a public sector grandee: "Bharat Heavy Plate & Vessels and Bharat Pumps & Compressors make compressors. It makes sense to group technologically allied companies."

Then, big companies can lure better managers. Bharat Bhari Udyog Nigam, the new Calcutta-based combine, and the Allahabad-based Bharat Yantra Nigam represent sales of Rs 275 crore and Rs 274 crore, respectively. Says a government official: "Small public sector companies don't attract good people at either the bottom or top levels. Big firms offer better career prospects."

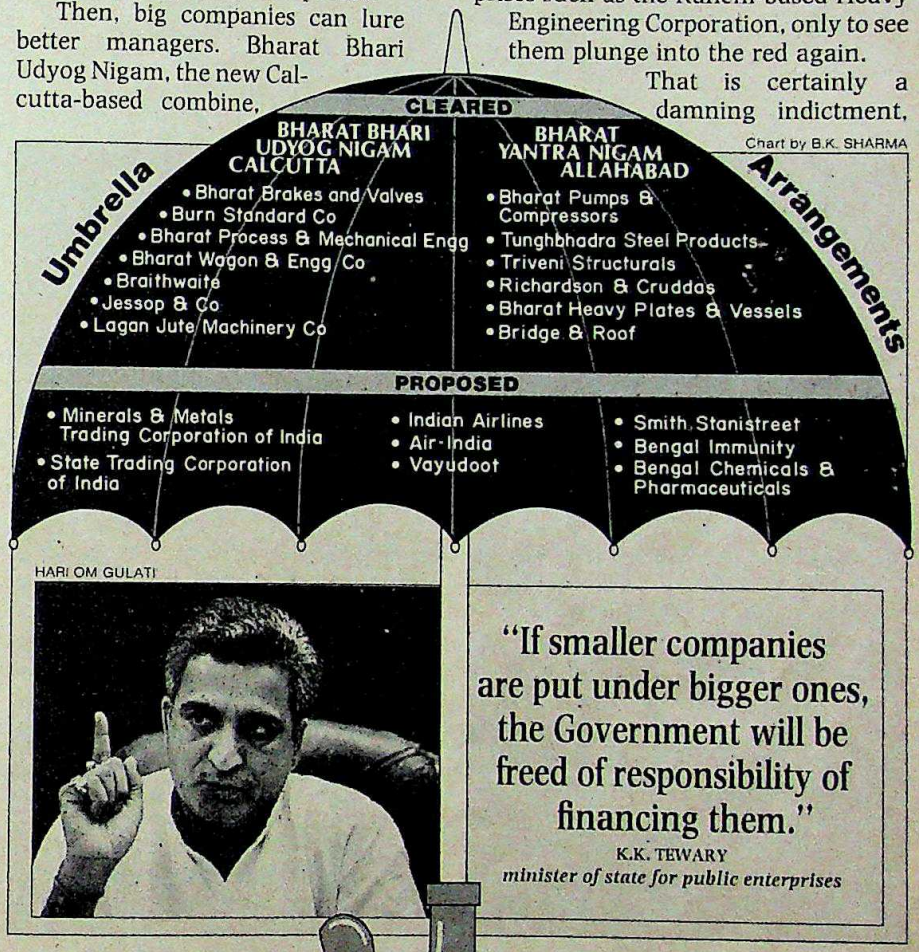
Still, holding companies and capital restructuring are not novel to the public sector. The Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL) had a holding company in the '70s, but gave it up when the Janata government came to power. And the National Textile Corporation (NTC), which is awash in red ink, has had a holding company for years.

Last fortnight, the chairman of a major state-owned firm argued that holding companies fettered operations because company boards would have to pass special resolutions to transfer men and funds, and that the Sengupta Committee's suggestions on introducing autonomy were naive. Says he: "We have to go to the Government for foreign exchange. We can't even sign a collaboration agreement without government approval." The Government has also written off the losses of state-run enterprises such as the Ranchi-based Heavy Engineering Corporation, only to see them plunge into the red again.

That is certainly a damning indictment, but holding companies have their defenders too. Public sector men argue that SAIL fared well when it had a holding company, and that NTC has been in the dumps because most of its powers have been usurped by the Textiles Department. Tewary for his part promises that the subsidiaries of the new conglomerates will enjoy great freedom. Even so, he concedes that holding structures are not the final solution to the ills of state sector firms: "This is an experiment. We will try not to commit the mistakes made in the past." Still, it may be difficult to stick to that promise if greater autonomy remains a pipedream. And big may not remain beautiful either if the latest revamping strategy comes to naught.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



HARI OM GULATI

"If smaller companies are put under bigger ones, the Government will be freed of responsibility of financing them."

K.K. TEWARY
minister of state for public enterprises

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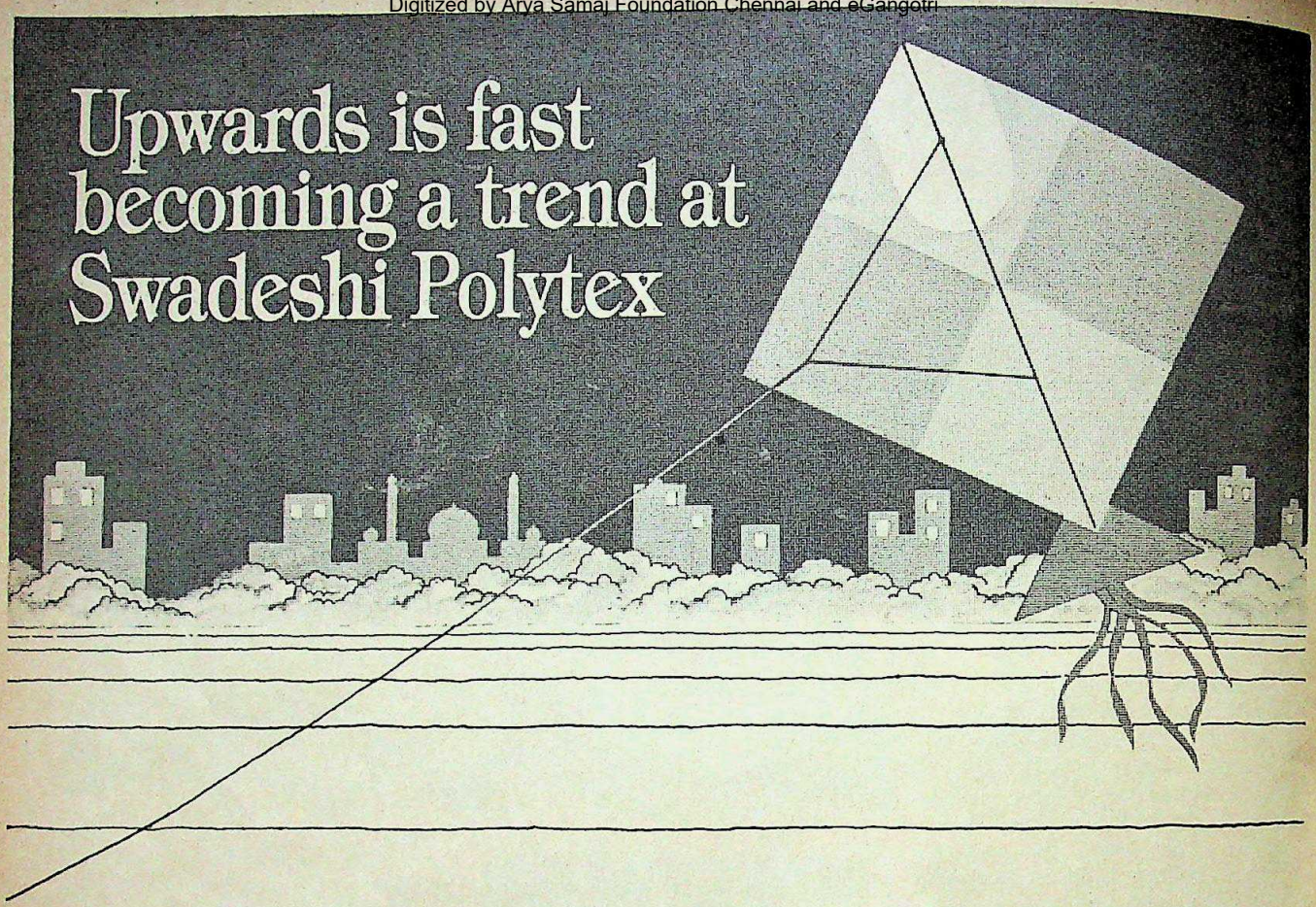

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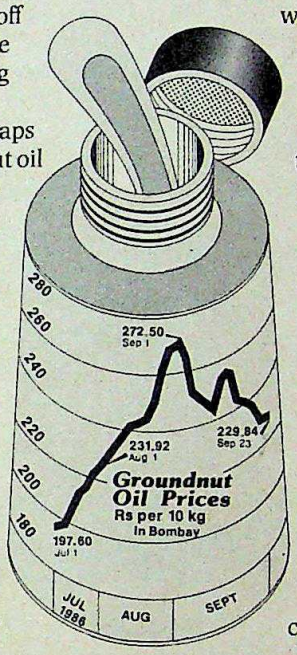
EDIBLE OIL

Topsy Turvy

FIRST the rise: edible oil prices leap skyward. Then the raids: the Maharashtra civil supplies authorities along with armed police pounce on over 30 dealers. Inevitably, the relapse: nervous unloading of stocks, fresh crop arrivals and rumours of more anti-hoarding initiatives spark off a decline. The Bombay edible oils market has been having an exciting time of late.

The brouhaha was perhaps unavoidable. The groundnut oil price, which governs the movements of most other edible oils, was a sedate Rs 197.60 for 10 kg on July 1. One month later, it had perked up substantially to Rs231.92, and yet another month later, it had scaled a new peak of Rs 270.40. In just two months, prices had risen more than 35 per cent. The glorious gallop could hardly go unchecked.



Initially, there were the peace missions—meetings between trade associations and state civil supplies authorities, parleys with the Centre, letters and telegrams. In fact, in mid-August a voluntary price ceiling was agreed on. The arrangement lasted precisely three days before the bulls started roistering again. So on September 12 came the raids, which left the market in disarray and resulted in a two-day trade bandh. After all the ado, finally, come the long-term steps: the Centre has raised the minimum support price for kharif oilseeds and is planning various other measures to encourage oilseeds cultivation.

"It is a simple question of demand and supply," says Navinbhai Shah, vice-president of the Bombay Oilseeds and Oil Exchange. "There wasn't enough oil coming into the market from the producing centres because there wasn't enough oil to go around. The only way prices could have been checked was by the Government pumping in more imported oil." Shah is dead right. Oilseeds output this year will be 116 lakh tonnes, 20 lakh tonnes short of the target of 136 lakh tonnes, chiefly because the rain gods were less than bountiful in the groundnut belts of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. In terms of edible oils, that means a production of only 35 lakh tonnes—this when the year's demand is projected as some 49 lakh tonnes. The Government has not fully covered the deficit with imports.

The edible oils trade squarely blames the Government for the shortage that now exists, arguing that massive imports in the past with the avowed purpose of keeping prices at a reasonable level made oilseeds farming uneconomical. The argument is not entirely unfounded, but a government official explained last fortnight that imports were now being pared to provide farmers incentives to grow more oilseeds.

If the rising prices have been partly checked by the raids, and by increased Central allocation to the vanaspati industry and for the public distribution system, the only long-term solution lies in boosting supplies. The yields in India are practically the lowest in the world.

While the rising prices have been partly checked by the raids, the only long-term solution lies in boosting supplies.

The Government is evidently aware of this. Union Minister of State for Agriculture Yogendra Makwana recently announced that a comprehensive package was on the anvil to boost oilseeds cultivation. The higher floor price is perhaps the first sign. The other is the paring of imports. This marks the beginning of a new official balancing act to keep edible oil prices high enough for farmers, simultaneously ensuring that prices do not hit the roof in retail shops. Says a government official: "We're certainly supporting the prices of those oilseeds which sagged earlier." The implications of this are clear enough. The days of cheap edible oils are over.

—PARTHASARATHI SWAMI

UNIT TRUST OF INDIA

Fund Flush

THE very first day's takings were a whopping Rs 2-crore. Mastershare, the country's maiden venture into mutual funds, has evidently got off to a spanking start. Launched by the Unit Trust of India (UTI) on September 19, the fund aims to corner as much as Rs 50 crore, with permission from the Government to retain another Rs 25 crore of over-subscription. If the initial reaction is anything to go by, the money is there for the asking.

The Mastershare is not the only feather in UTI's cap for the current year. A couple of months earlier, it had in tandem with Merrill Lynch, picked up a handsome £75 million in the first-ever India Fund. And its domestic operations are keeping excellent pace with the other successes: 1985-86 saw a Rs 1,033-crore increase in investible funds, an increase of close to 50 per cent.

UTI is certainly going places. And with the Mastershare—described as the small investor's entree to the stock-market—it is going to take a large number of people along with it. "The average investor with limited resources has always been our prime concern," says Chairman M.J. Pherwani. "This is another scheme for him to make the most of his money."

The scheme is simple in principle: One buys the Mastershare (the minimum investment is Rs 1,000) and leaves the rest to the UTI experts. They will invest the money in growth-oriented, high-flying scrips and undertake all the red tape involved in operating on the market. The Mastershare will itself be listed on all the stock exchanges. It will thus have easy liquidity, though the UTI will redeem it only after October 1993.

What the fund-flush UTI's increased presence in the market will do is to inspire another share market boom. Almost all the India Fund and Mastershare money will be invested in equity and debentures. This means that, initially at least, investors are likely to be presented with a bonanza.

But the critics have been sharpening their knives too. Stock-market circles contend that there is not enough floating stock for the UTI to pick up. "Bunk," counters Pherwani, "look at the number of capital consents and new issues. A hundred crore is a drop in the bucket." He has a point in this. The market

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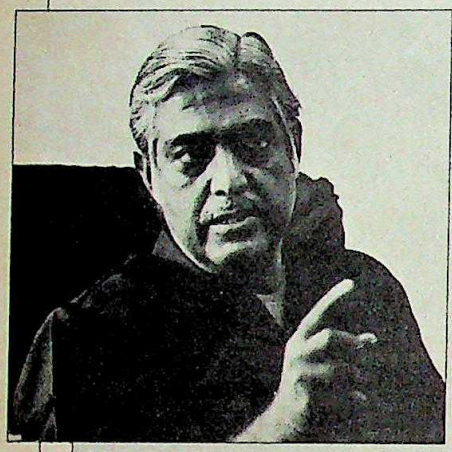
capitalisation of the top 10 companies alone was Rs 2,317 crore in the year 1984-85.

The other criticism is that the Mastershare scheme, because of its in-built tax advantages (Mastershare holders will be entitled to the same tax exemptions as Unit holders), will help only the rich. This is even more emphatically denied. "The rich will have already crossed the investment limits for exemption purposes. Mastershares will not give them any significant advantage. Besides they can afford to hire the best investment experts and plan their portfolio. The small cannot and it is for them that we are doing the job," says Pherwani.



"The average investor with limited resources has always been our prime concern. This is another scheme for him to make the most of his money."

M.J. PHERWANI
chairman, UTI

The difference between UTI and the others, the chairman adds, is that "we are given a fee while the investor takes the profit. For the rest, be it debentures or equity, the investor gets the fee while the company takes the profit".

UTI now has other plans up its sleeve. The India Fund's success has paved the way for more such ventures in the future. And while it is premature to talk of a fresh issue of Mastershares, such a possibility is not ruled out. Mutual funds, very much the rage abroad, have at last come to India.

—PARTHASARATHI SWAMI

CALCUTTA

Hotel High

ITS hotels, with rare exception, are of a piece with the city: seedy facades, sagging arcades, thinly peopled lobbies and restaurants that tiredly belt out the strains of other times. But the times are a-changing in Calcutta. Job Charnock's city is readying to roll out the welcome mat again for the well-heeled traveller.

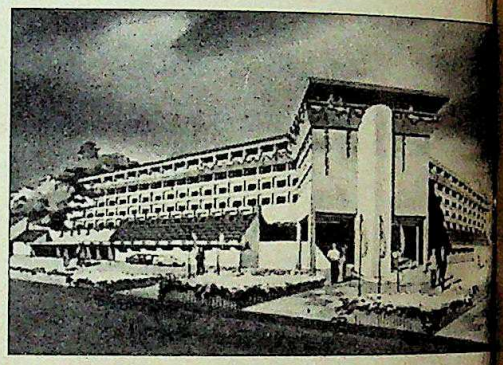
Last fortnight, the ITC-managed Welcomgroup chain of hotels announced that it was negotiating for a prime location in central Calcutta to build a 200-room hotel. Not to be outdone, the management of the West Bengal Government-owned Great Eastern declared its intention to demolish in phases the 150-year-old hotel in the city's central business district, replacing it with a spanking new 14-storeyed monolith. Both the announcements came even as the Oberoi group was half-way through a Rs 24-crore programme to renovate the Oberoi Grand. The new-look Grand will have a new colonial style drive-in, an underground car park, additional restaurants, clubs, and suites with private saunas and lawns. Simultaneously, the Taj chain was busy putting up the 200-room Taj Bengal, its first foray into Calcutta.

The four ventures mean an investment of over Rs 100 crore, and will offer clients 1,000 deluxe rooms in a city that now has three nominally five-star hotels, but only one genuinely deluxe hostelry. So there could be room enough for the new entrants. For starters, big business is scouting for investment opportunities in West Bengal. Then, a number of international airlines, including Singapore Airlines and Poland's LOT are bracing to touch down at Calcutta airport. Last month, the Tokyo-based principal of McKinsey and Company, the international consultancy firm, offered its services to turn Calcutta into the "gateway" of eastern India.

The optimism, however, is not universally shared. Executives of rival hotel groups are quick to suggest that the new ventures will not be money-spinners. Said Satish Kumar, vice-president of Oberoi Grand: "ITC's and the Taj's decisions to put up new hotels are not strictly business decisions. Their motive seems to be to establish a base in Calcutta for the future." That is partly true. ITC is kicking off its Rs 40-crore venture, because it wants a hotel on its home turf. Explains an ITC spokesman: "We are ashamed not to have a Welcomgroup hotel in the city where we have our headquarters."

But the Taj project is commercial enough. Project costs have doubled from Rs 12 crore to Rs 25 crore, but the four-storeyed hotel may enjoy a cost advantage over its rivals—it will have to pay the West Bengal Government a relatively piffling rent for the four acre plot on which it is to be sited. So soft were the terms that the venture kicked up a storm in the Calcutta press a few years ago.

Ironically, however, the Government has not been quite as responsive to the needs of its own hotel. Great Eastern's management has been arguing that the profitable state-owned hotel has to be rebuilt. "Our facilities are outdated, our rooms are enormous and the air-conditioning is prohibitively expensive," says hotel administrator A.K. Banerjee. But its ambitious solution to the problem has run into a wall: the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority, the Government agency responsible for the city's development, has declined to clear it so far.



The Taj Bengal: new presence

Nevertheless, Calcutta plainly faces an unprecedented hotel boom. The loser in this could be the highly profitable Grand. Its steady stream of clients has been undeterred by the stiff room rates (50 per cent higher than its five-star competitors). "The Taj is certainly a force to be reckoned with," admits Oberoi's Kumar, "but we intend to give them a run for their money." That could presage a room rate war, but with renewed hope on the city's economic horizon, the prospects of that happening seem remote.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

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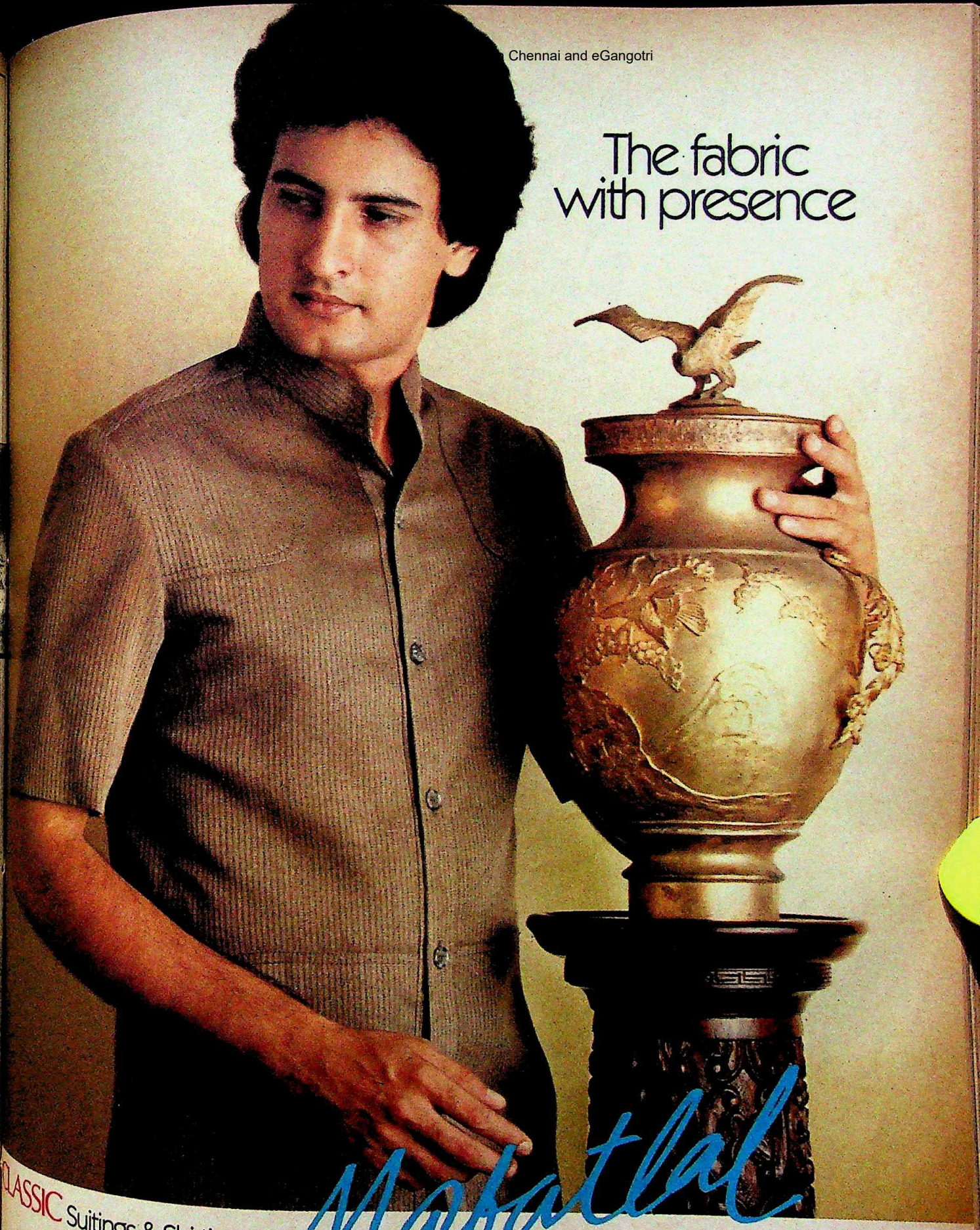

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It takes an Otis engineer 7 years to attend to a complaint.

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Before an Otis engineer dares to so much as lay a finger on your elevator, we put him through five years of rigorous training.

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In the first year, all he does is learn how to fix and repair ropes, doors, cables and gears.

And that's not because he's a slow learner.

It's just that when you're part of a company that moves the Earth's population every 9 days, the last thing you need is something turning out wrong. From people who're there to set things right.

The competent few who make it through a gruelling exam at the end of the year, have the privilege of entering the portals of the Otis Machine Assembly Shop.

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They work alongside a full-fledged service engineer. Accompanying him on calls.

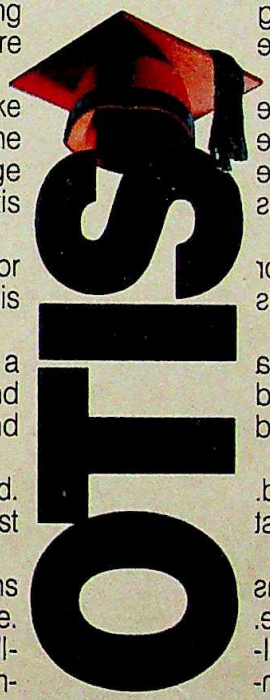
Having excelled in this, the Otis engineer now spends the fourth year studying lift adjustments for various kinds of elevators.

And finally, in the fifth year, he actually gets to handle jobs. Under the critical gaze of a senior foreman.

It'll take him another two years at least before he can lead his own servicing team.

Of course, when you call in with a complaint, you'll find an Otis engineer attending to it in no time at all.

But that's no great shakes, really. After all, he started out seven years ago.



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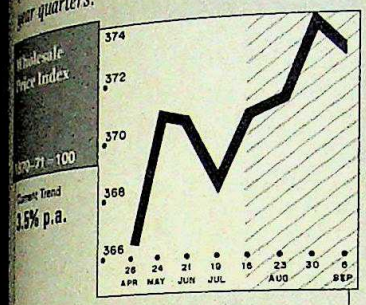
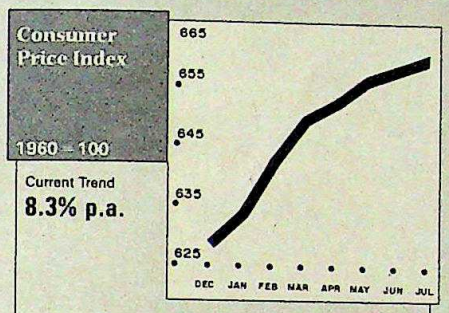
All the signs are reflective of economic health—both inflation and the price of gold are relatively low, and money supply, bank credit and exports are on a healthy track. Share prices are also showing signs of recovering. Exports have already recovered. The only matter of worry is on the infrastructure front.

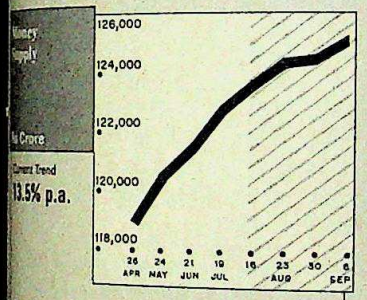
All data are seasonally adjusted. The current trends are computed on the basis of six-month (weekly data) or two-year (monthly data) figures. Quarters in the text refer to the calendar year quarters.



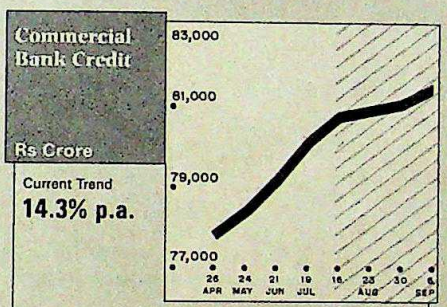
Wholesale prices continue to remain reasonably steady, despite a spurt in late August, auguring well for the future.



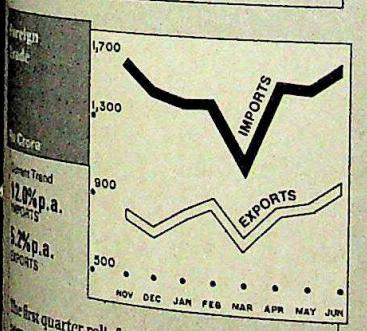
The increase in consumer prices is now at a decelerating pace, and may improve given the trend in wholesale prices.



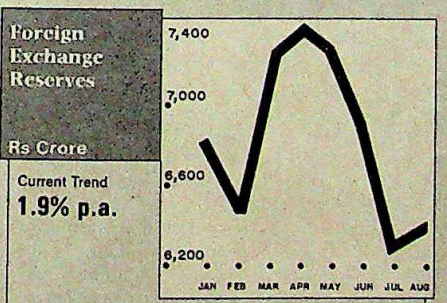
Money supply growth is accelerating. But even with low inflation, the expansion in M3 is normal, and may even be slightly restrictive.



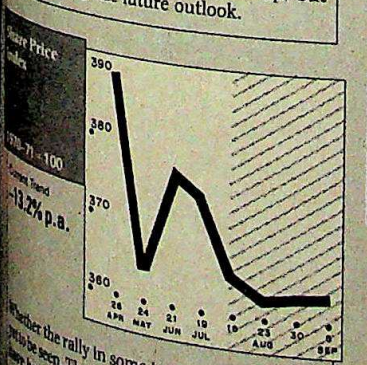
Though apparently below trend during the last month or so, credit availability in real terms was expansionary in the second quarter.



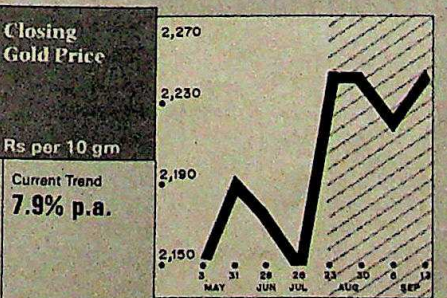
The first quarter relief on imports seems to have been temporary. Exports have picked up, but caution should guide future outlook.



As a multiple of imports, reserves are equivalent to 4.3 months of imports. But there has been a noticeable decline in the last four months.



Whether the rally in some issues is corrective is yet to be seen. The 10% drop in share values may have been good for an over-heated market.



Notwithstanding the present rally, a persistent gold bull would still be losing his fight with inflation. Gold prices have declined slightly.

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

Growth of Items in August, 1986

	% Growth
Solvent Extracted Oil	22.99
Oranges	14.84
Onions	12.99
Groundnut Oil	11.18
Cashew-Nuts	7.64
Cotton Seed	7.59
Groundnut Seeds	6.96
Ghee	6.43
Gingelly Seed	5.77
Gingelly Oil	5.34
Tapioca	5.22
Iron Ore	4.37
Linseed Oil	3.1
Linseed	3.09
Coconut Oil	2.96
Arhar	2.83
Meat	2.82
Butter	2.82
Mustard Oil	2.68
Jowar	2.68
Bajra	2.62
Transformers	2.55
Cars	2.23
Biscuits	2.11
Milk	1.91
Bananas	1.79
Pet Crude & Natural Gas	1.63
Rubber	1.63
Rape & Mustard Seed	1.58
Hides Tanned & Leather Belting	1.54
Logs Timber Bamboo	1.5
Copra	1.48
Aviation Spirit	1.32
Machine Tools	1.31
Mustard Oilcake	1.19
Mining Machinery	1.12
Rice	1.01
Groundnut Oilcake	.95
Soda Ash	.92
Nitrogenous Fertilisers	.86
Plywood	.81
Tractors	.8
Tubes	.8
Zinc	.76
Handloom & Powerloom Products	.74
Lubricating Oil	.7
Limestone	.69

Of the 139 series considered, 85 of them with a total weight of 50.949 had a positive growth and 54 of them with a total weight of 35.677 had a negative growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1986	1985
Coal		
Thousand Tonnes, August	11293	10701
Saleable Steel		
Thousand Tonnes, August	608.7	666.0
Cement		
Thousand Tonnes, August	2400	2697
Plant Load Factor		
Per cent, August	44.5	46.5
Call Money Rate		
Per cent, August	9.99	9.98

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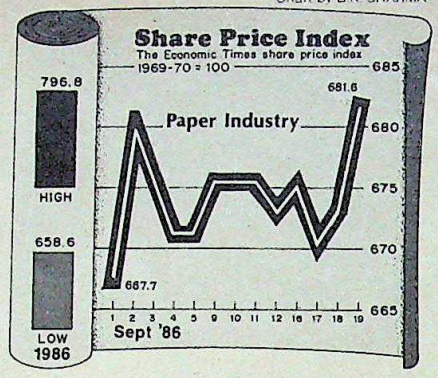
THE MARKETS

New Cheer

COME September, and the stock-markets are finally in a cheerful mood. Sustained buying by the cash-rich Unit Trust of India (UTI) has finally sent the bears on the run, while Finance Minister V.P. Singh's promise of a plan to give a boost to the market has raised general confidence about the future. Several industries seem to be in for good times: higher tea prices at auction centres have sent tea shares soaring and the reports of cement prices being decontrolled have helped cement shares.

Till late August, UTI's strategy of following up selective buying with selective selling (of such shares as Grasim, Hindustan Aluminium and Larsen and Toubro) had seen the market still in an uncertain mood. But UTI's subsequent buying spree on several counters saw the Bombay Stock Exchange sensitive index of equity prices shoot up by 12.67 points in one week, to 563.22, while the *Financial Express* and *The Economic Times* indices also notched up substantial gains. Several scrips did well for themselves as a result, including Bajaj Auto, Century Spinning, Gujarat State Fertilisers, the fancied Indrol and Kinetic Engineering.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



But there were the laggards as well. The two Tata giants lost ground, partly because of UTI selling, partly because of the state of the truck market and partly because steel costs have gone up without any immediate prospect of a hike in steel prices. Orkay Silk Mills also notched up only very small gains, despite the company chairman's painting of a bright future. And Reliance lost ground marginally, even as the report of the Rangarajan Committee was awaited on the question of whether the banks had violated Reserve Bank guidelines in giving loans to Reliance's proxies. Larsen and Toubro was affected by fears of a decline in financial performance.

So far, however, the recovery in September has done little more than make up for the ground lost in August, and *The Economic Times* share index, for instance, is still well below the 500-point mark, not to speak of the year's peak of around 550. Also, the market remains unhealthily dependent on the UTI, whose buying and selling operations have become the focus of practically all attention.

This is unlikely to change until the bulls recover sufficiently from their drubbing in recent months and are in a position to make fresh commitments of any significant nature. Also, with the market having been in a bearish mood for so long, some of the investible funds may have sought profits elsewhere, in such items as bullion (gold has seen a sharp price rise in the recent past). But so long as the bearish mood shows no signs of returning, there should be reason for cheer.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1986 HIGH	1986 LOW	CLOSE 19.9.86	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	45.00	24.00	24.00	1.50 –
Asian Paints	280.00	130.00	201.75	1.75 +
Associated Cement	389.00	186.00	213.50	9.50 +
Atlas Copco	97.00	64.00	84.00	4.00 –
Avery India	146.00	100.00	133.00	2.00 +
Bajaj Auto	3975.00	1950.00	3850.00	25.00 +
Baroda Rayon	490.00	235.00	242.50	28.75 –
Bata India	107.50	54.00	103.00	12.00 +
Bayer	680.00	445.00	567.50	12.50 –
Bharat Forge	86.00	48.00	64.00	2.00 +
Birla Jute	97.00	42.90	48.50	4.50 +
Bombay Dyeing	123.00	77.00	95.00	2.00 +
Brooke Bond	96.75	56.00	80.00	5.00 +
Ceat Tyres	525.00	240.00	525.00	10.00 +
Century Spinning	1690.00	710.00	810.00	65.00 +
Chloride India	132.00	86.00	119.00	0.50 –
Colgate	350.00	200.00	315.00	17.50 +
DCM	58.50	26.25	31.00	0.50 +
Dunlop	74.50	49.75	61.50	2.50 –
Elecon	127.00	80.00	102.50	nil
Escorts	117.00	69.00	94.50	2.00 +
Finolex Cables	97.00	36.00	94.00	7.00 +
Food Specialities	375.00	164.00	179.00	155.50 –*
Garware Nylon	61.50	34.50	36.00	1.00 –
Glaxo	87.00	52.50	55.50	0.50 +
G.F. Shipping	36.00	13.00	17.75	2.75 +
Gujarat St. Fertilisers	182.00	92.50	163.50	10.50 +
Grasim Ind	92.00	59.00	90.50	10.50 +
Hind. Cocoa	175.00	97.50	165.00	20.00 +
Hindustan Lever	184.00	124.00	168.00	0.50 –
Hindustan Motors	128.50	37.75	46.60	4.85 +
Hind. Dorr	660.00	310.00	335.00	5.00 +
IEL	84.50	61.50	67.00	1.25 +
Indian Organic	97.00	63.00	76.00	3.00 +
Indian Rayon	151.00	100.00	125.00	2.50 +
Indrol	465.80	200.00	457.50	67.50 +
Ingersoll-Rand	505.00	250.00	275.00	5.00 +
ITC	76.50	53.00	72.25	6.25 +
J.K. Synthetics	132.00	90.00	107.00	1.50 –
Kinetic Engineering	385.00	220.00	370.00	65.00 +
KSB Pumps	495.00	205.00	235.00	10.00 +
Lakme	195.00	120.00	135.00	5.00 –
Larsen & Toubro	204.00	102.00	106.50	13.50 –
Lipton	69.00	46.50	64.00	8.00 +
Lohia Machines	70.00	21.00	23.00	0.50 +
Madura Coats	92.00	51.00	57.50	2.50 +
Mahindra & Mahindra	86.00	46.00	48.00	nil
Motor Industries	1000.00	605.00	840.00	5.00 –
National Organic	840.00	512.50	535.00	230.00 –*
Nirlon	77.00	29.00	31.00	4.00 –
Orkay Silk Mills	192.00	111.00	155.00	2.00 +
Peico Electronics	104.50	48.00	64.50	5.00 +
Ponds	390.00	200.00	300.00	30.00 +
Premier Auto	975.00	555.00	907.50	22.50 +
Ranbaxy	160.00	105.00	131.00	1.00 +
Raymond	97.00	72.00	77.00	1.00 –
Reckitt & Colman	152.00	81.25	132.25	0.75 +
Reliance Industries	392.00	226.00	266.00	2.00 –
Shriram Fibres	88.00	35.00	38.50	7.00 –
Sandoz	135.00	62.00	109.00	5.00 +
SPIC	184.00	51.00	58.75	1.75 –
Tata Steel	1610.00	1090.00	1230.00	12.50 –
Telco	910.00	575.00	652.50	2.50 –
Vulcan Laval	162.50	52.50	55.00	2.50 +
Wimco	98.00	54.00	56.00	4.00 –
Zenith Steel	97.00	68.00	79.00	4.00 –

*Ex-bonus

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	7.9985	7.9220
Austria	Schilling	100	91.0659	90.2007
Bahrain	Dinar	1	33.5332	33.4980
Bangladesh	Taka	100	42.7038	42.6670
Canada	Dollar	1	9.1666	9.0904
Denmark	Kroner	1	1.6876	1.6725
Egypt	Pound	1	13.8668	13.7330
France	Franc	1	1.9175	1.9011
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	1.6296	1.6171
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.7380	0.6980
Iran	Rial	100	16.6230	16.5180
Italy	Lira	100	0.9099	0.8878
Japan	Yen	100	8.3527	8.2827
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7847	0.7638
Kuwait	Dinar	1	43.2228	43.0186
Malaysia	Dollar	1	4.8360	4.7916
Mauritius	Rupee	1	0.9440	0.9339
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6099	0.5838
Netherlands	Guilder	1	5.6464	5.6006
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7499	0.7338
Singapore	Dollar	1	5.8826	5.8318
Spain	Peseta	1	0.0986	0.0838
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4498	0.4330
Sweden	Kroner	1	1.8692	1.8522
Switzerland	Franc	1	7.9076	7.8338
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.7880	0.7660
Thailand	Baht	100	49.0860	48.9970
UK	Pound	1	18.7687	18.6445
USA	Dollar	1	12.7725	12.6445
UAE	Dirham	1	3.3889	3.3538
USSR	Rouble	1	13.6889	13.5783
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	6.2774	6.2658

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 22.9.86

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The Archetypal Woman

"When lovely woman stoops to folly and
Paces about her room again alone,
She smooths her hair with automatic hand
And puts a record on the gramophone".
—T.S. Eliot

WHEN Eliot wrote these lines in *The Wasteland* in the mid-1920s, he was creating an icon of the liberated western woman which would endure for half a century. Today the gramophone has yielded to the video cassette player but the icon remains firm: a word-picture whose 'meaning' is inherent and self-evident. The art of advertising which identifies and manipulates 'by type' is supposedly expert in the creation of complex life-style icons. And advertising addresses women all the time.

Who is the real Indian woman? She is the small town housewife with three children and the metropolitan career woman. She is the one who stopped studying at school and the Ph.D graduate. She is the 18-year-old college girl buying jeans and the 60-year-old country mouse shopping for potatoes, kerosene and matches. But in the commercial media, we see very few images of her.

"Will the real Indian woman please stand up?" If you were to address such a question to the advertising industry you would get an answer by way of two approximate demographic images. One is the 18-24 year old, with at least a school level education and from the upper-middle income group. She wears cosmetics, uses toiletries, buys ready-made garments, sanitary towels and personal products. The other is older (25-34), also urban, similar in education and income level, but wears a saree and tikka and buys detergents, scourers, cooking media and food products.

There are two conflicting assumptions here. The first is that one type is the other grown up. That is to say, at an age of exactly 24 years and 11 months, the girl in jeans gets married, acquires a saree and turns from idle fun to the serious business of setting up house and family. The other assumption is ludicrous—that the jeans-wearer never gets married but fades away into some psychological limbo and the saree-wearer equipped with pressure cooker emerges full-fledged from the void!

Ask the advertising man why he restricts his icons to women between 18 and 35 and he might answer that the Indian woman has a very young profile by age. In fact, 58 per cent of women are below 24. What he would not tell you is that those below 18 have next to no spending power. He might also skirt the facts emerging from the Third National Readership Survey, that there are 13 per cent more women over 45 than between 25 and 34, and they have 10 per cent more purchasing power.

> "With the decreasing product differences between competing brands, the psychographic profiling of feminine types might be the only way of carving out niches in the market-place."

In Indian advertising, the 'over-40s woman is completely ignored, except by way of 'grandma recommendations' for children's tonics. Even advertising for hair-dye shows women in their early 30s. There seems to be an implicit assumption that at about 40 the Indian woman goes to seed. This appears to be a false notion and I believe there is an untapped goldmine in the 'over-40s' segment for the imaginative marketeer who addresses himself to an Indianised version of Joan Collins in 'Dynasty'. Such an attempt was in fact made by Richardson Hindustan with Oil of Olay. The positioning was sound but the product failed for entirely different reasons. It was priced out of consumer reach.

Consumer studies show that the woman in the 25-30 segment suffers from severe limitations. She is in what may be called 'the early full-nest stage' of her life, and has little discretionary personal income. For that you must go to the over-40s who spend lavishly on travel luxury goods and appliances, expensive furniture and perfumes, home improvements and up-market paints.

It follows that the greatest advertising opportunity lies in the psychographic profiling and segmentation of feminine type. With the decreasing product differences between competing brands and the increasing hybridisation of life-style, this might prove the only way of carving out 'positional niches' in the market-place; for 'Market Share' closely follows 'Share of Mind'. Always!

I set down some possible advertising archetypes. The model and terminology are based on a psychographic profile of the American woman by Kathy Ziff.

► **The Sensuous Woman:** Eyes closed, luxuriating in unabashed self-abandon. Film model: Parveen Babi.

► **The Siren:** Sexy, provocative, using body language. Film model: Mandakini (*Ram Teri Ganga Maili*). Advertising model: Garden Vareli.

► **The 'Come Hither':** Shy and sexy. Film model: Sharmila Tagore.

► **The Exotic Art Object:** Personality subservient to mood. She serves as a decoration. Film model: Rekha (*Umrao Jaan*). Advertising model: Raymond's Suitings, Old Spice.

► **The Cheer Leaders:** Friendly, engaging, non-seductive. The girl next door. Film model: Jaya Bhaduri. Advertising model: Fair & Lovely.

► **The Serious Woman:** Key dimension: Attractive competence, real authority. Film model: Priya Tendulkar (*Rajni*). Advertising model: Lalitaji (Surf).

► **The Amazon:** Dominant by sexual allure. Film model: Zeenat Aman. Advertising model: Dimple Kapadia (Crowning Glory).

► **The Independent yet Vulnerable Woman:** A free spirit who invites protection. Film model: Kitu Gidwani (*Air Hostess*). Advertising model: Stay-Free.

The above shorthand can be treated as a first definition towards a richer and more accurate advertising iconography, moving away from the current impoverished stereotypes, towards a truer prefiguration of our increasing urban complexity as India heads for the 1990s.

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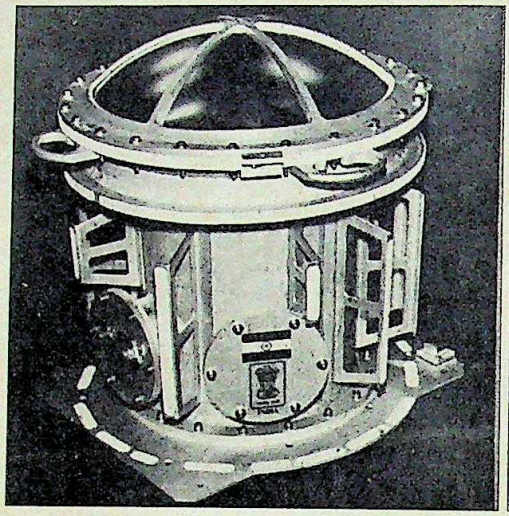
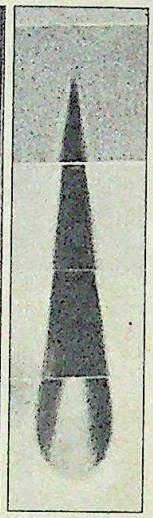
COSMIC RAYS

Anuradha's Bounty

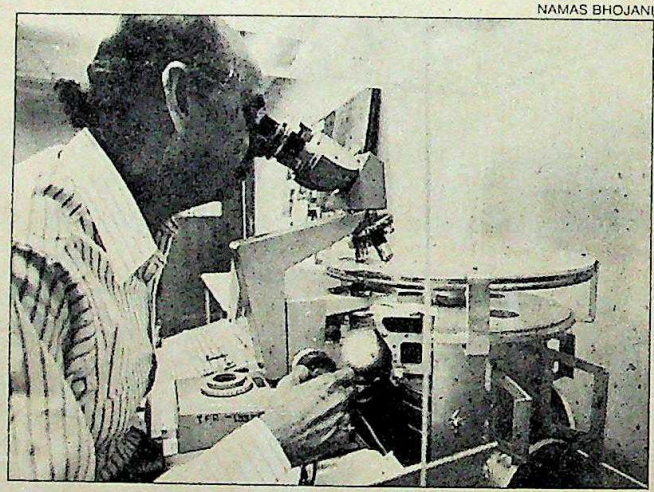
SCIENTISTS call them the starry messengers. But 74 years after cosmic rays were discovered, astrophysicists are yet to decipher their origin. Moving at almost the speed of light, these tiny, highly energetic cosmic particles are thought to have trekked through space for around 10 million years before bombarding the earth. When recorded they look like microscopic tear drops which scientists believe contain information about the origin of the universe. Peering at more than 10,000 such "signatures" imprinted by cosmic rays on acrylic plates, scientists at Bombay's Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) last month came up with fascinating details about the nature of some of these particles.

Sending up a barrel-shaped cosmic ray recorder, coyly called "Anuradha", inside the US Space Shuttle Challenger, in April last year, the TIFR scientists found that low-energy cosmic rays had intensified more than 50-fold since they were last recorded three years ago. Said Prof. Sukumar Biswas, who heads the five-man Anuradha research team: "There is something happening up in space that is causing this dramatic increase. Understanding this phenomenon would give us clues about the rays' origin."





NAMAS BHOJANI



(Clockwise) Cosmic ray recorder Anuradha; a cosmic ray's track; and Biswas examining plates: exciting findings.

Anuradha's findings have already generated a great deal of scientific debate about why there has been such an intriguing increase in low energy cosmic rays. Discovered as recently as 1974 by an earlier Spacelab mission, low energy cosmic rays have always puzzled scientists. Although they travelled at half the velocity of the usual cosmic rays, they were nevertheless able to traverse millions of kilometres and penetrate the solar system. And unlike their higher energy cousins, these particles had a different chemical composition—leading researchers to believe that they originated from other sources.

The TIFR scientists believe that the increase in low energy cosmic rays is partly due to the sun changing its polarity. In a curious phenomenon, the magnetic poles of the sun reverse themselves every 22 years, with the North Pole becoming the South Pole and vice versa. The last time this happened was in 1980. TIFR scientists theorise that when the sun changed its polarity it seems to have aligned itself with the magnetic field of stars, thereby attracting more such cosmic rays into the solar system.

The Anuradha experiment is India's latest contribution to cosmic ray research. With more than six national laboratories and 25 universities doing some form of cosmic ray studies, India has been a front-runner in this area of research. In a deep mine in the Kolar Gold Fields, TIFR scientists along with a Japanese team are trying to find out whether protons, the basic building blocks of nature that were thought to be stable, do decay into smaller particles. These particles have already been noticed in cosmic rays and if it is proved that protons do decay, then it means that the universe with its 10 billion galaxies is slowly dying. Another significant experiment is going on at the Physical Research Laboratory in Ahmedabad, where scientists are studying the "nuclear tracks" left by cosmic rays on meteorites hitting the earth, for clues about the solar system's origin.

Biswas' team have been working on low energy cosmic rays ever since they were discovered and has come out with various explanations about their origin. In a rare gesture the US offered to send up a cosmic ray recorder if the TIFR built one. The building of Anuradha itself took four years and was a triumph of indigenous ingenuity. While the Challenger orbited the earth 116 times, Anuradha's gently rotating recorder, consisting of plastic sheets stacked like a cake, faced a volley of cosmic rays at seven a minute for 64 hours. It took a year for scientists to decipher the 10,000 sheets of data that Anuradha's computer had produced and much remains to be interpreted.

But despite more than 60 years of research on cosmic rays, scientists the world over have yet to agree on their origin. Initially it was believed that they were produced by supernova explosions or giant stars breaking apart. Then scientists speculated that these rays were accelerated in the interstellar medium when they collided with magnetic clouds littered all over the universe. It is now believed that these rays have extragalactic origins.

But if this sounds like a lot of *Star Wars* jargon, it is bread and butter for cosmic ray scientists. And the mystery of the origin of cosmic rays only seems to deepen as more researchers crowd the field. As Biswas says: "It's a never-ending quest."

—RAJ CHENGAPPA in Bombay

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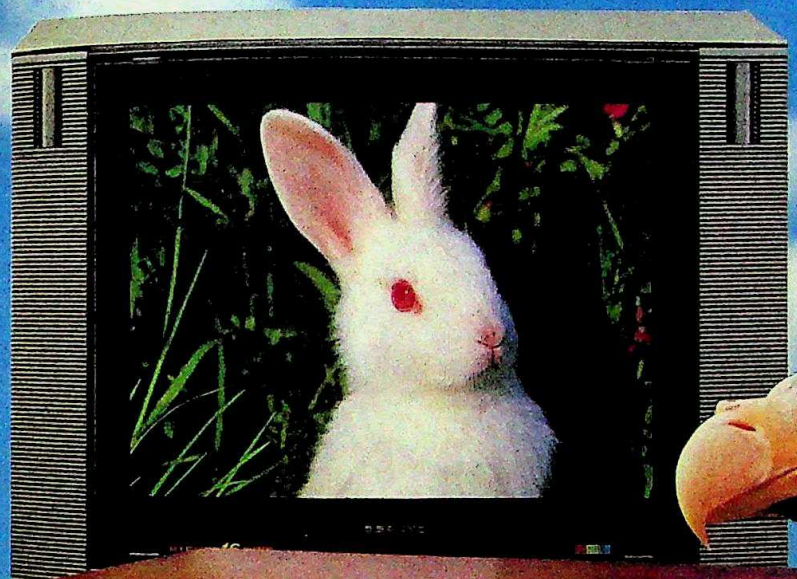
SANYO

SHARPEN YOUR SIGHTS

Our new VHS format video doesn't miss a thing. It has HQ (High Quality) picture enhancement. Using advanced circuitry to raise the white clip by 20%, it sharpens the edge of objects on the screen and reduces interference. Whites become truly white. And with a detail enhancer the fine details of even whiskers and fur appear crisp and distinct. Indeed, the definition and color fidelity are so true you might think it's "real". Picture it for yourself. Sanyo's High Quality VHS Video.

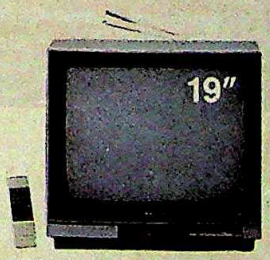


CMX2100STR Great sight and sound come together in this 21" 16-System Color TV with Hi-Fidelity Stereo Sound, FST (Flat Square Picture Tube), voltage synthesizer electronic tuning, 27-function infrared remote control and Automatic Voltage Selection.

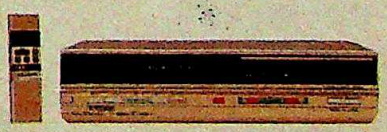
VHR-1700M The ultimate VHS VCR with worldwide multi-system versatility: PAL B/G, PAL I, PAL D/K, MESECAM, MESECAM OIRT, NTSC 3.58MHz and NTSC 4.43MHz. It also features HQ (High Quality) picture enhancement, 14-day 4-event programmable timer and 13-function infrared remote control.

HQ VHS

CMX2600STR If you're looking for the ultimate big-picture television, look no further than the magnificent 26" 16-System Color TV with Hi-Fidelity Stereo Sound, voltage synthesizer electronic search tuning, 27-function infrared remote control and Automatic Voltage Selection.



CMX1905R The styling from Sanyo couldn't be any sleeker with this 19" 16-System Color TV with FST (Flat Square Picture Tube), voltage synthesizer electronic search tuning, 27-function infrared remote control and Automatic Voltage Selection.



VHR-1200PS This attractive PAL/MESECAM system VHS VCR features HQ (High Quality) picture enhancement, 14-day 1-event programmable timer, 12-function infrared remote control and automatic power-on. It comes in your choice of gold, silver or red.

HQ VHS

VHR-1110 A PAL system high-performance VHS VCR featuring HQ (High Quality) picture enhancement, 14-day 2-event programmable timer, Quick Start Recording, 9-function infrared remote control, self power-on and automatic tape playback after rewind.

HQ VHS

BPL-INDIA
In pursuit of perfection

Sanyo products can be serviced at these authorised service centres:
- Bangalore: TEL 220266 Telex: 0845-511
- Calcutta: TEL 431916 Telex: 021-2390
- Bombay: TEL 4940384 Telex: 011-73789
- Madras: TEL 637207 Telex: 031-2692
- New Delhi: TEL 35422
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ELEPHANTS

Killed for Ivory

IN the thickly forested Bandipur wildlife sanctuary in Karnataka it is often the vultures circling high above that bring news of death in the jungle. And last month, as a posse of forest guards rushed to the spot above which the vultures hovered, they were forced back by the stench of rotting flesh. On a slight hump a body of an elephant lay sprawled on the ground, its face a bloody mess. Its trunk lay curled in a pool of blood. Two white stumps near its mouth were all that was left of its tusks. And from its forehead blood oozed from a gunshot wound.

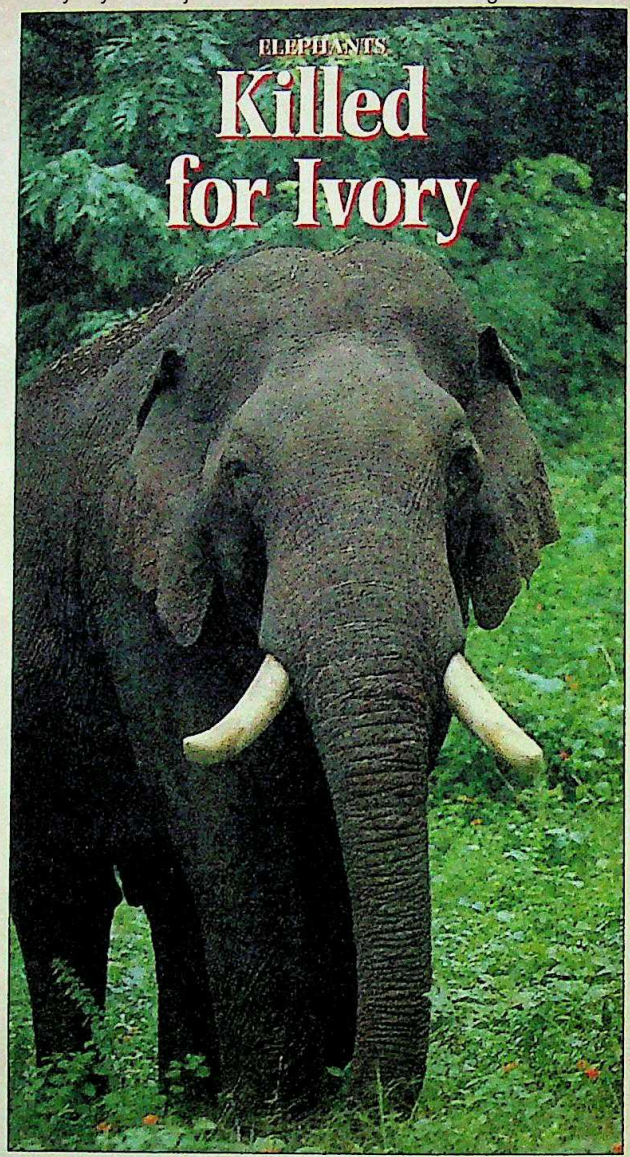
There was little the foresters could do but record the elephant's death and leave it to the buzzards to reduce the four tonnes of flesh to skeletal remains. But the toll is mounting. Five elephants have been shot dead by ivory poachers in Bandipur and 12 in Karnataka as a whole in the past three months. In the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu, another four tuskers have met with a similar cruel fate.

Ivory poaching, in fact, has become as routine as felling trees in the forests. Altogether, around 100 elephants are now brutally massacred for their tusks every year in the states of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. With poachers selectively hacking adult male elephants—the only ones in the herds to grow tusks—the very survival of the great Indian tusker is now in question.

Ecologists have already noticed an alarming drop in the number of adult male elephants. In Bangalore, ecologist R. Sukumar, who recently completed a four-year study of elephants in the southern states, estimates that the number of adult male elephants fell from 603 in 1981 to an alarming 258 last year. They used to constitute 7 per cent of the total elephant population; that number is now down to 3 per cent. Earlier, there used to be two adult male elephants for every 10 adult females; now there is only one for every 10. This genetic imbalance has obvious implications. Warns Sukumar: "If this continues we may soon be faced with the serious situation of having no adult tuskers for breeding."

That is not an idle threat. Before poaching became rampant in Sri Lanka, 90 per cent of the male elephants had tusks but now this is down to 10 per cent. Ecologists fear Indian tuskers are not far off from the same fate, with even small elephants whose tusks weigh a bare 2 kg not escaping the poacher's bullet. For while in north India only half the male elephants are tuskers, in the south—which has half the country's elephant population—nine out of ten elephants grow tusks. There is apprehension now that in the not too distant future, the Indian male elephants may be only *makhanas*, or tuskless.

So extensive have been the killings that in the past decade almost 18,000 kg of ivory, worth Rs 2.7 crore have been



R. SUKUMAR

A lone tusker in Mudamalai (top) and elephants massacred by poachers (below): mounting toll

H.K. APPAYA

H.K. APPAYA

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smuggled out of the forests by unscrupulous poachers (each kilogramme of ivory fetches Rs 1,500, and an average tusk weighs 10 kg). Most of this has found its way into the flourishing ivory market in the country and the rest has been exported out. Recent reports also speak of the precious ivory being smuggled to Dubai, where the Arabs are said to be hoarding it as "white gold".

Realising that the problem had reached dangerous levels, Parliament in the recent monsoon session banned the sale of Indian ivory all over the country and stipulated that all those trading in African ivory would need a licence. And the Department of Environment (DOE) has agreed to fund half the cost of state government anti-poaching measures. Funds from the Central Government could not have come at a better time. The state forest departments are ill-equipped to meet the challenge from poachers, who have sophisticated weaponry and extensive contacts both among the tribals that inhabit the forests and ivory traders. Most of the guards are equipped with obsolete .303 rifles or muskets, hardly the type of weapons to frighten away poachers who carry the best in the business. Moreover, in Tamil Nadu there is a shortage of ammunition, leading a forester wryly comment: "We use only the butt end of the guns." In Karnataka although the Forest Department asked for 200 more rifles the ordnance factories have asked them to wait for two years. Admits S. Kondas, Tamil Nadu's chief conservator of forests: "We are no match for poachers. We have been outmanoeuvred and outgunned by them."

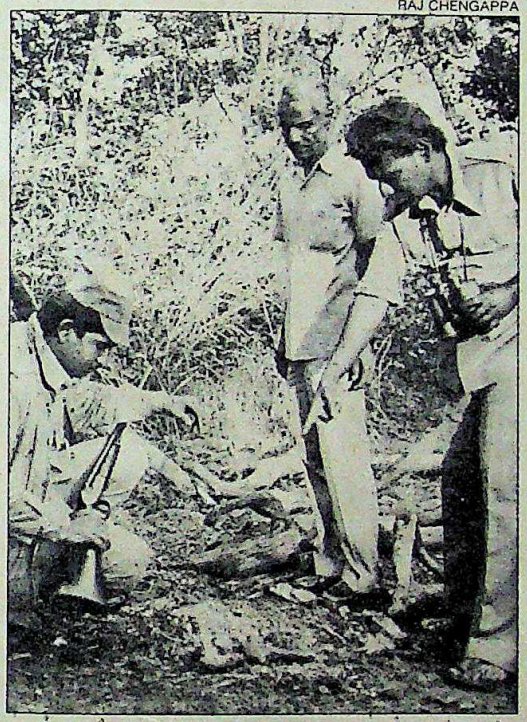
An encounter in the Bandipur sanctuary last month best illustrates the impotence of the Forest Department in fighting poachers. Madhav Muthu, a forest guard, while sitting in his machan spotted a fire lit by poachers around 8 p.m. Since the range office was 8 km away and since no vehicle is provided to forest guards, Muthu hitched a ride in a passing lorry and managed to reach the range office a full three hours later. By the time the range officer got a posse organised, another hour had been lost. Now there were other problems to follow. Of the two guns they had, only one was working. And as soon as they got into the vehicle, a 20-year-old station wagon, it broke down and they had to borrow a jeep.

By the time they reached the site where they spotted the fire, it was 2 a.m. It took them another hour to locate the poachers, and when they finally confronted them the poachers opened fire, blowing a hole the size of a fist in the chest of Siddaramma, a forest guard, and killing him instantly. With their only working gun the foresters returned the fire, killing a notorious poacher called Rathnam, but the remaining 11 poachers got away. Among the items they left behind were six sophisticated rifles, 100 kg of rice and other rations meant to last more than a month and 200 rounds of ammunition.

The encounter in Bandipur was the closest that the Karnataka foresters got to nabbing a poaching gang. The shortage of policing staff has not made the job of the foresters easy. In Tamil Nadu there are only six watchers and one guard to comb 40 sq km of forest land. The ratio is no better in Karnataka, except that the foresters have equipped themselves with wireless sets. M.K. Appaya, chief wildlife warden of Karnataka, adds: "There have been very few convictions of poachers, and even if they are penalised they get off with light fines."

As a result elephant poaching continues to flourish. Forest intelligence cells have very little dope about the poachers. They only know around 20 odd large gangs operate most of them from Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Since most of the forests in these states are in the bordering districts poachers easily slip in and out because of the lack of coordination between the various forest departments.

RAJ CHENGAPPA



Forest guards on the poachers trail: outmanoeuvred and outgunned

The men behind the 20 gangs rarely involve themselves in the actual killings, which are left to middlemen to organise. The middlemen themselves hire sharpshooters to do the actual job and enlist tribals to learn about elephant movements and provide rations to the poaching teams. The killings are almost always at night and that too at short range. A more cruel practice is putting a bullet into the elephant's knee and laming the beast. With the elephant unable to move, the poachers come back and collect the tusks at will. While earlier sulphuric acid was used to detach the tusks from the elephant, nowadays it is axed from the mouth.

Many of the forest guards find it easier to to be in league with the poachers. In fact a large number of elephant killings in the forest go unrecorded. While in the past decade the three state forest departments have recorded only around 500 elephant deaths from poaching, ecologists say that around the same number have gone unreported. In a bid to avoid detection many of the foresters even try to burn the carcass. To prevent this, the Nilgiris Wildlife Association, a voluntary organisation, got tribals in the area to report elephant killings. And last year it was able to get 14 forest guards suspended for trying to destroy evidence of a poached elephant.

Ironically poaching seems to have intensified after both Tamil Nadu and Karnataka stopped the auctioning of tusks recovered either from elephants dying of old age or from poachers. The two states now have between them six tonnes of ivory in their forest godowns. And the poachers are encouraged by the fact that forest departments are not organised enough to nab them.

But plans are finally being drawn up to make the anti-poaching drive more effective. Tamil Nadu is planning to equip its forest guards with wireless sets and introduce rewards for forest guards who catch poachers. Karnataka has asked for sophisticated guns and is equipping each range with more jeeps and men. And the Central Government is urging the three states to set up a joint anti-poaching cell to ensure greater coordination. All this, of course, has come late in the day. And if the poaching is not checked quickly, the only Indian tuskers to be found will be in the zoo.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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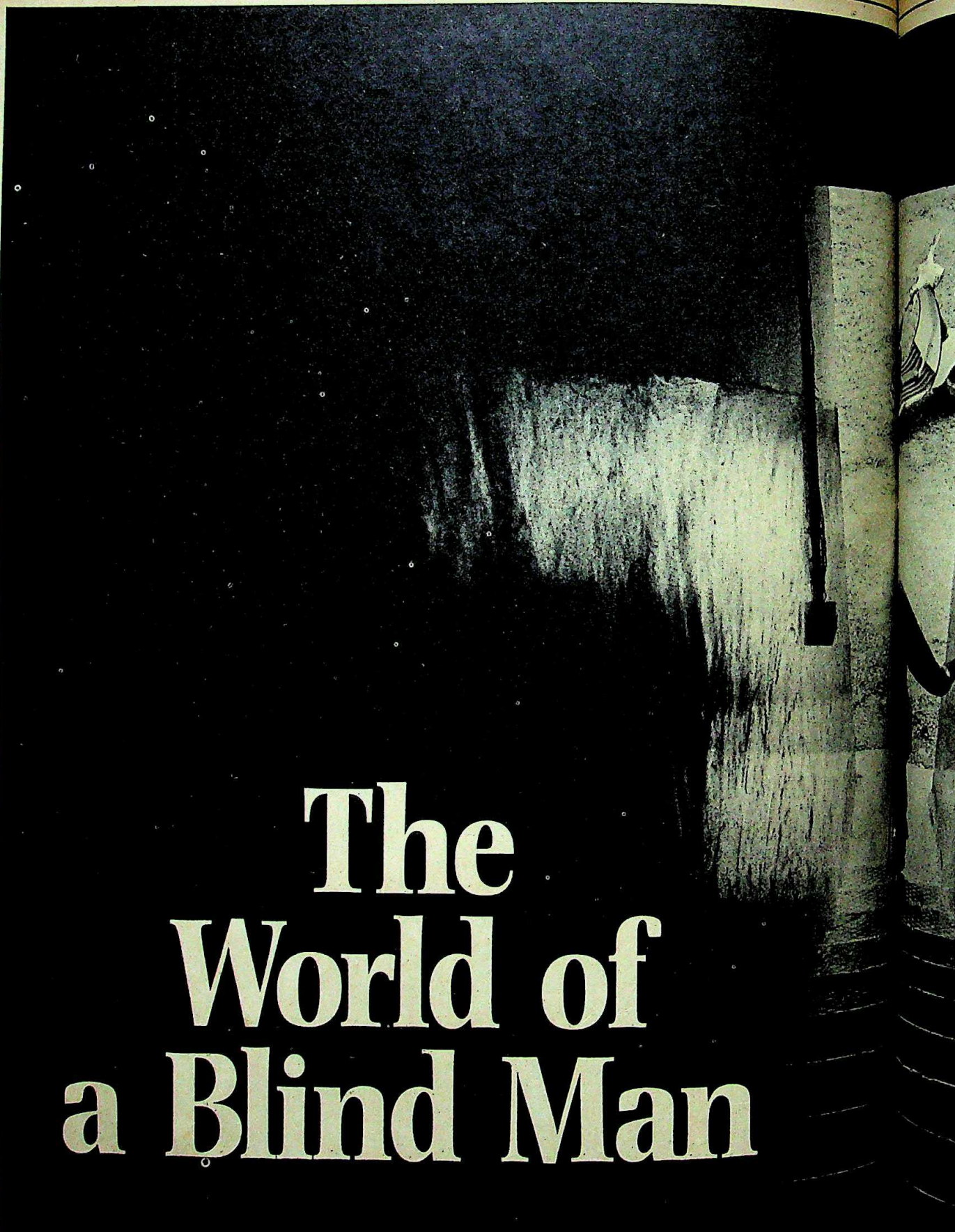

The World of a Blind Man

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TO most of the world, Mangalsain Bhalla is just another blind man, who has found a vocation in teaching music. In the hustle and bustle of everyday life he is just one more lost, faceless human being, part of a familiar neighbourhood scene of daily drudgery in which he taps his way with his cane from his two-bedroom flat in New Delhi's Sarojini Nagar to his school. But the world around Bhalla is also blind. It is blind to the raging intensity, the nuances, the pathos, and humour in Bhalla's life. When it sees the familiar sight of Bhalla tapping his cane, the world cannot know that Bhalla has a wife who is also blind, that he has two beautiful children blessed with perfect eyesight, and that Bhalla goes on "sightseeing" excursions. His last trip was to the Taj Mahal. This is not an essay on blindness, the plight of the blind, or even about the heroic struggle of blind people to overcome their handicap. What follows is simply the exploration of one man's inner world.

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BHALLA even dreams in voices. In sounds. "Without them, my world dies." Born blind, he does not know what light is. "I don't even know what darkness is."

As the evening shadows deepen, Bhalla, sitting on his *charpoy* in his little bedroom, knows that night is approaching. He can "hear" it. The endless chirping of sparrows now huddled together on the shoulder of a drain-pipe on the building, has ended. Now is the time for the hiss of a dozen pressure cookers as neighbours get their dinners ready. The occasional whiff of spicy food signalling preparations of evening meals wafts in. And the cacophony of Doordarshan's night programmes. All tell him it's 'night'.

In the kitchen he can hear his wife, Sanvari, getting their dinner ready. She became blind at seven after an attack of smallpox. They met at a national convention of the blind nine years ago. Theirs is a marriage of voice and sound—her lively voice, the rustle of her night-gown, her soft footstep, and, his gruff voice and shuffling walk.

He did not know there was an opposite sex until he was 17 and a classmate told him about the facts of life. "Till then, I didn't even think of sex. How could I? I had no mental images about it. Only after my friends told me I started feeling the sexual urge. I knew the difference between man and woman only after marriage."

Their two children—Sampada, 7, and Dipanshu, 5—play nearby. He has never seen them grow. But he has listened to their voices mature. "When they call me papa, half my tiredness goes. I am the happiest person in the world."

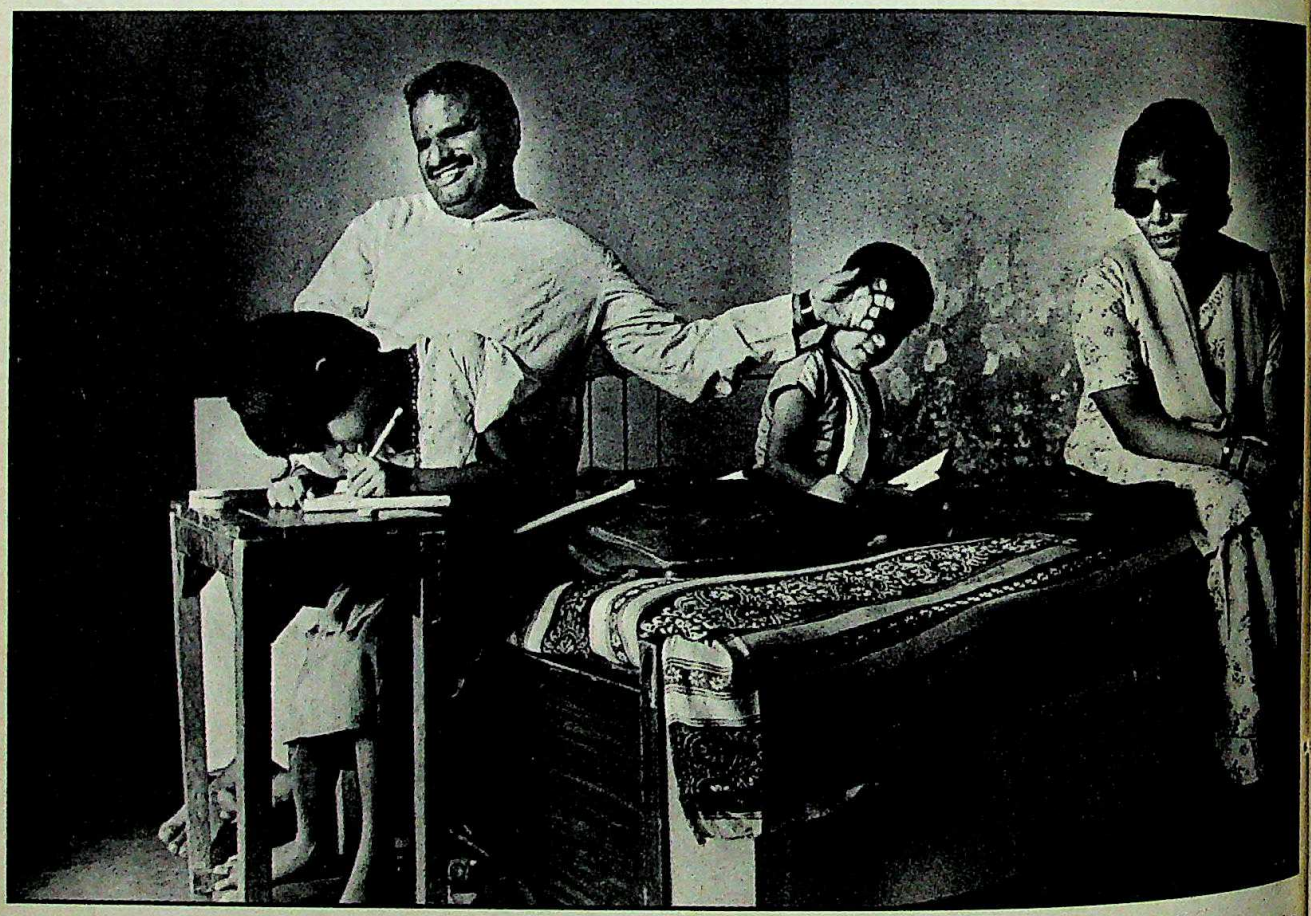
"Sometimes, being blind helps. Recently, when a Hindi film was being telecast there was a rape scene on. Sampada turned around and asked me, 'Papa, what are they doing to her?' I replied instantly: 'How do I know? I can't see what's happening'."

Flowers, clouds, beauty. They are mere words, descriptions. As he makes his way to school each morning he feels only the heat of the morning sun on his back. "I can only hear the wind rustling through the leaves of the trees. And I know that some have sweet smelling flowers and the others thorns." And during his visit to the Taj Mahal, "its main dome echoed voices perfectly. Its beauty can't be felt."

At times it does not matter at all whether he can see. At other times it hurts—when his friends told him his wife "looked radiant" when she was pregnant. And now tell him that his son looks like him. Or once before marriage when he went to a cinema hall to 'listen' to a movie and he heard people laugh at him." I wanted to commit suicide then. But on my way to the medical shop I heard a small boy selling newspapers and I thought I have a better life than he does."

He did not realise he was different till he was five years old. He was playing around on the sofa when his mother admonished him, "stop doing that." He sat in puzzled silence, then asked: "How did you know what I was doing?" When she didn't answer he thought, "she has an extra quality that I do not have."

The next day his sister called out to him from a distance. Again he asked: "How did you know where I was standing?" The only answer he got was



His marriage to Sanvari is one of voice and sound. He has never seen his children grow. But he has listened to their voices mature and "when they call me papa, my tiredness vanishes."

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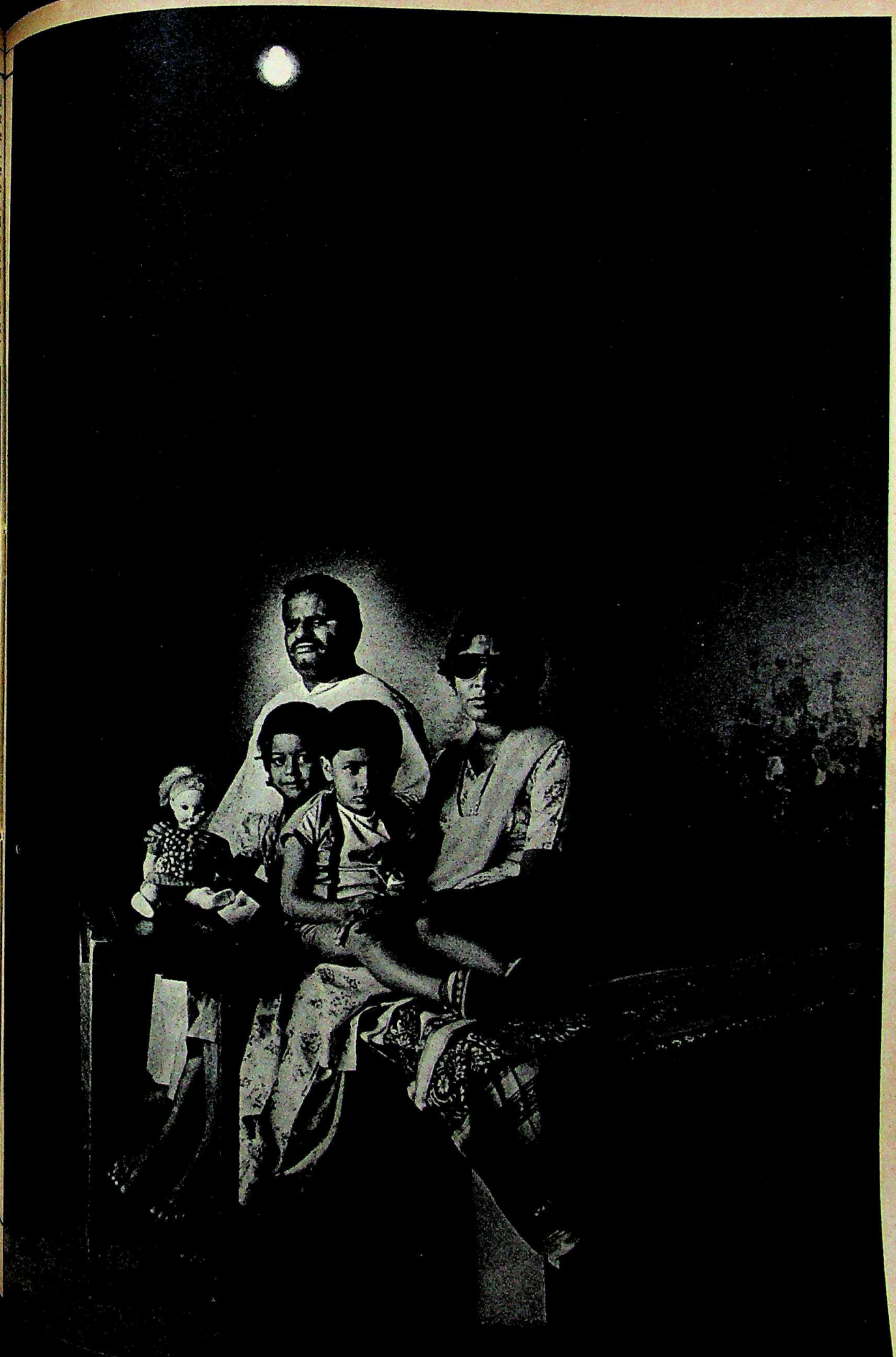

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the sounds of her weeping. "While I had to feel around or listen to sounds to know what was happening, I realised they could see. Something I could not do."

For months he rebelled. He refused to eat, dress or play. In the mornings when his mother asked him to wash his face he would ask: "Why should I when I can't even see my face?"

And then there were the hours of loneliness at home while other children went to school and he was forced to stay back. "In the evenings they used to call me to play hide and seek. I used to be asked to blindfold them."

The pain never leaves. The blind learn to push it aside and try to live normally. "If we keep thinking about the impossible then we can't live at all."

OVER and over he must prove to the world, "I'm self-dependent. I'm not inferior because of my blindness." Making friends is difficult. He extends his hand searchingly to shake the hand of a new voice he has heard. He must learn to judge the person only by his grip and the tenor of his voice. A pleasant voice usually means a friendly person: "It doesn't matter to me whether a person is wearing a suit or a torn shirt. I judge people only by what they speak and their actions towards me. That gives me a true indication of their nature."

Not always. Like the time a polite voice offered to help him and Sanvari cross the

Bhalla has two children, Sampada, 7, (left) and Dipanshu, 5

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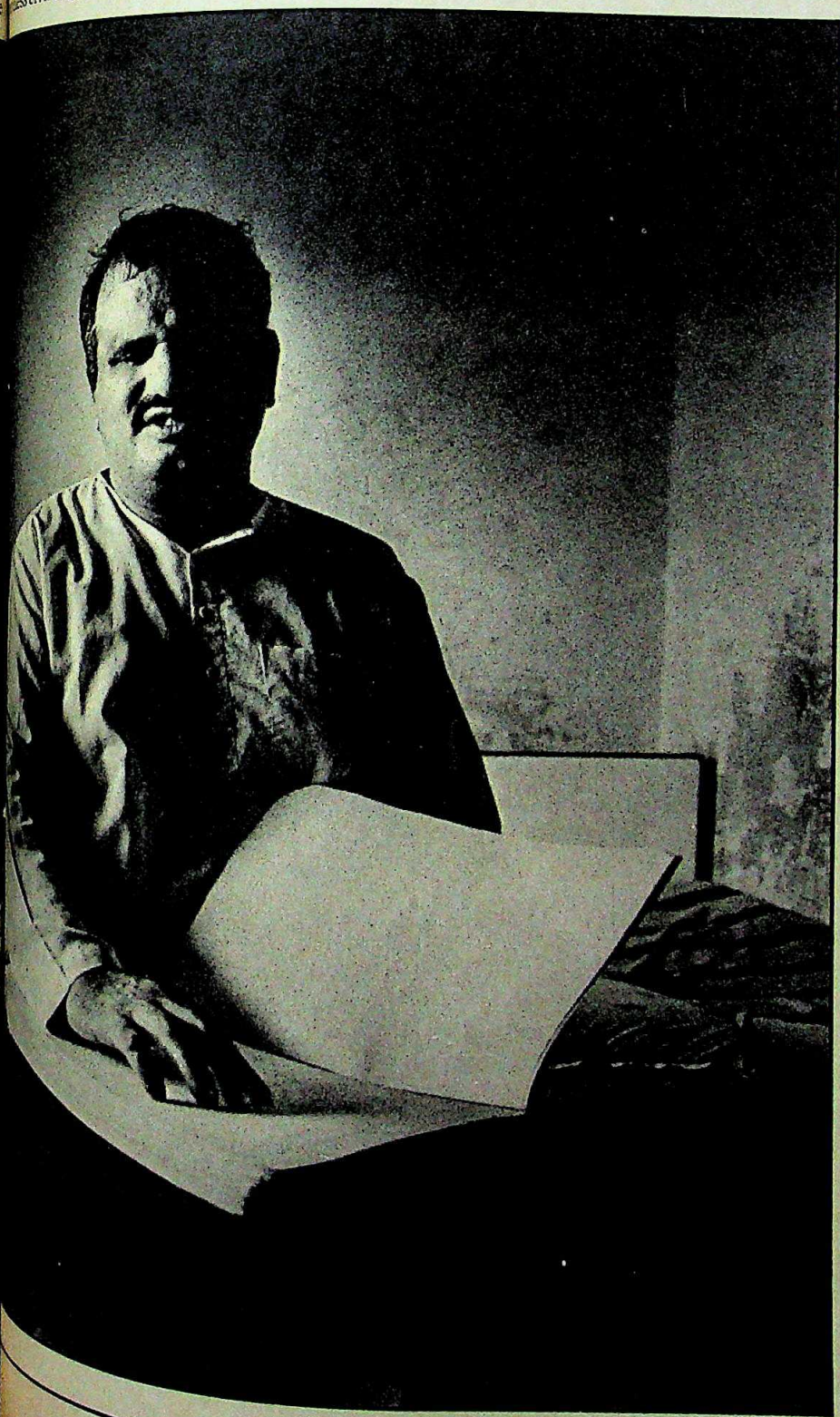
and then snatched Sanvari's chain left them stranded in the middle of the road. Fortunately the chain she was wearing was made of a cheap metal. A bus driver seeing their plight stopped his vehicle and helped them to the other side. Every morning, resolute of step, he finds his way to the school nearby. He crosses the road by feel: "Nature and careless civil engineers have provided me with many clues to find my way."

A pot-hole on the road becomes a signpost indicating a left turn. The change from tarmac to concrete means that a flight of steps follows. A wall that blocks the whispering wind tells him that he has to turn right. He skilfully avoids oncoming traffic: "I'm not deaf, you know, just blind."

On a rainy morning last week he is desperate to reach school on time. He gets into a passing autorickshaw. The driver protests. Bhalla pushes the ferrule of the umbrella against the driver's back and tells him: "Take me where I want to go or I'll shoot you." The driver complies, laughing all the way.

At school Bhalla taps his way to the classroom and waits for the shuffle of students' feet and their voices to fill the room. During the lesson truant students start whispering or skip doing their class work. He hears the indiscipline and reprimands them severely.

"When I think someone is taking advantage of my blindness I lose control of myself and sometimes shout at the students. But afterwards I feel sad. They do not



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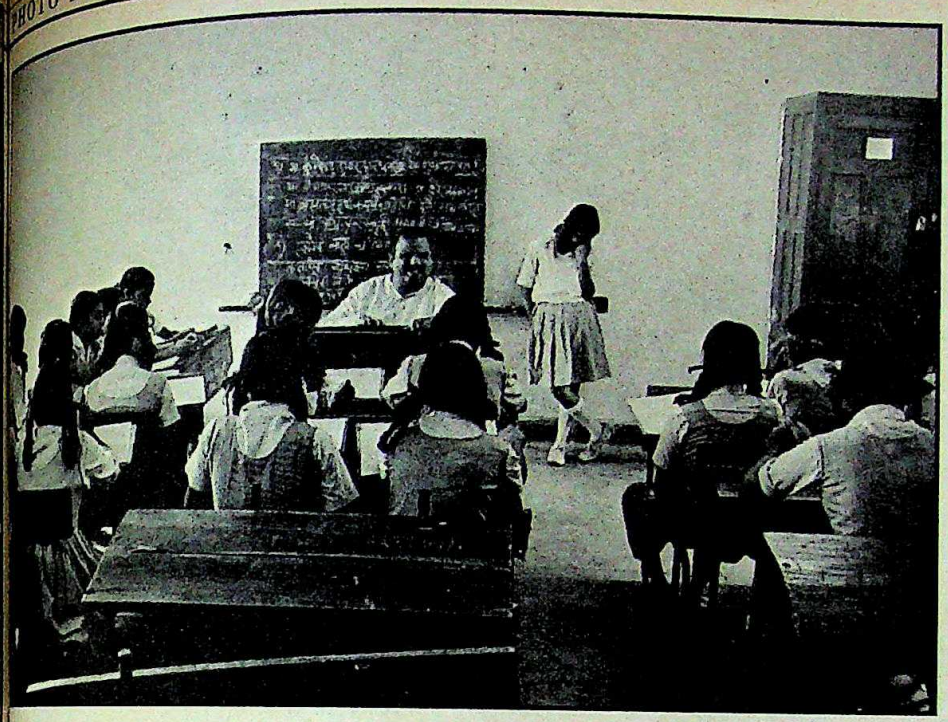

"When I sing I forget the world. It does not matter whether people listen or I am alone."

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n he begins to teach singing. The pain
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m alone. When I sing I sing only for

myself." He taught himself to sing picking up tunes from the radio, a constant companion when he was young.

In the evenings Bhalla, almost unnoticed, makes his way up to his house. The magic eye on his door is barely two feet above ground level—to suit the eye-level of his two children.

Sanvari gets the food ready for the children. She feels the heat of the flame and smells the food. Deftly she tosses a *chapati* on the *tava*. She presses the potatoes to see if they are boiled and then puts them into a frying pan.

Eight years in front of the stove have made her an expert cook. Her only regret: "I can't see how yellow the *haldi* has made the food."

Sanvari once wanted to learn how to make *puris*. But when she asked her neighbour she was told, "it will be too difficult for you. I'll make them and send it across." Sanvari was deeply hurt: "Why are people always trying to remind us that we are blind?"

Bhalla adds: "We are not something to be pitied. What we want is to be treated like normal human beings. We are capable of doing as much as anybody can, even though we may learn more slowly."

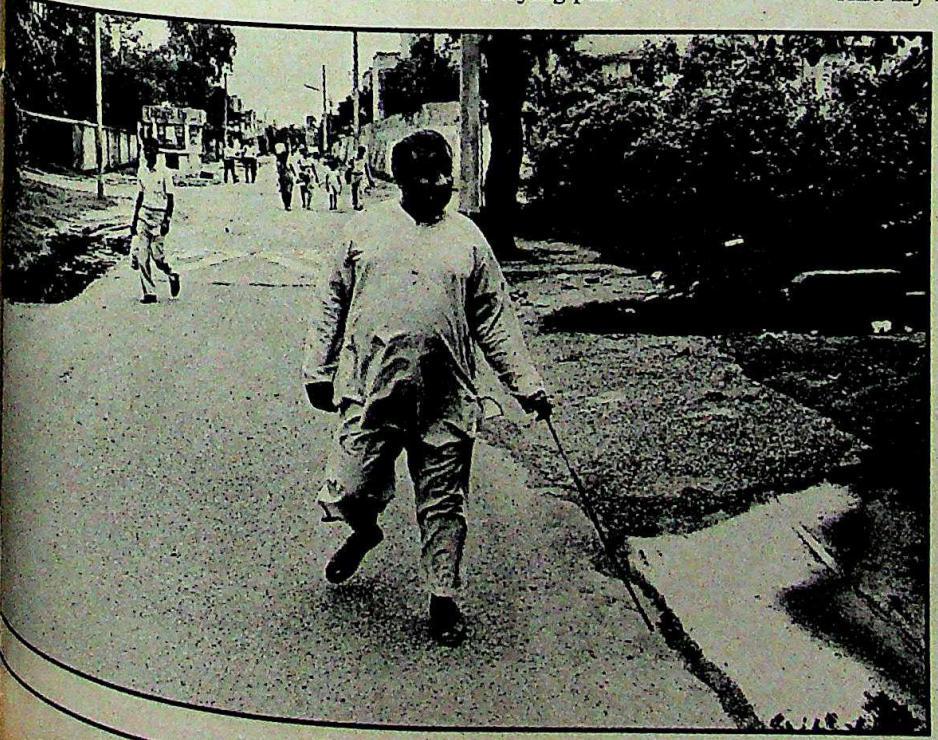
Every day they are confronted with new examples of society's lack of understanding. When he took his transistor in a bus recently to listen to cricket commentary, people laughed asking him what silly point or long off was.

LITTLE do people realise that we played cricket in school. That we have a special beeping ball that tells us from which direction it is coming. The only difference is that the playing captain tells us where he has placed his fielders. The only person sighted is the umpire. I was a leg spinner and took seven wickets once. And my highest score was 47."

Bhalla's happiest memories are of the blind school at Panipat. "At home people would tell me where the plates were, how to go to the toilet, where to wash up. Although they were being kind by their actions, they were constantly reminding me I was blind. But at school to be blind was normal. Because nobody else could see."

"One day on the dining table while searching for the curry dish I accidentally dropped it on the floor. And you know we laughed and laughed. We never felt bad about such things."

"My happiest moment was when I sat by a river near the school. The running water was like music. I could hear the birds singing and sugarcane stalks



he taps his way to school through
hi's Sarojini Nagar where he lives

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The Bhalla family goes out on an evening stroll

moving in the breeze.I was one with nature. It didn't tell me I was blind."

Still, life in the blind school was tough. Since there is only one institute in the country which prints textbooks in Braille—the Institute for the Visually Handicapped in Dehra Dun—these were always in short supply. The whole class had to share one book and that meant taking turns in studying.

Things have not changed much for Bhalla since then. He has enrolled himself as an external candidate for a bachelor of arts degree in history and political science. And even now he has to get the textbooks transcribed on tape. He studies at night and his niece, Sweetie, also blind, usually helps him.

Bhalla switches off the lights—they don't need them. And in the darkness, he switches on a cassette tape on which he has recorded various textbooks and starts listening. And while he dictates, Sweetie swiftly takes down notes in Braille—a series of dots punched on a page.

HE would like to import a Brailler—the equivalent of a typewriter—which would help him speed up his note-taking at least 10-fold. But the Government's inordinately long bureaucratic red-tape would take him years to cut through.

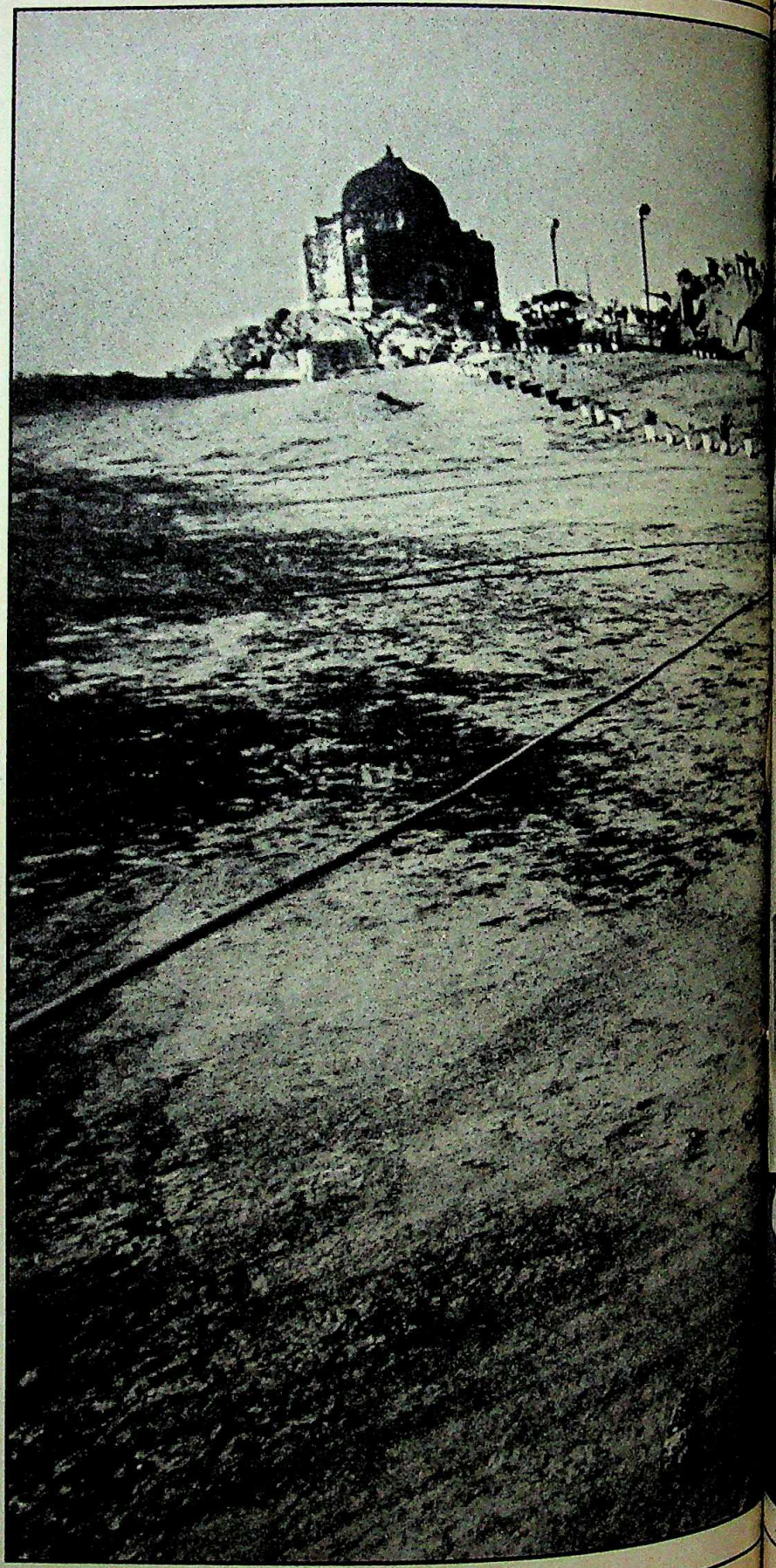
There are other things Bhalla would like the Government to do: like importing thermometers specially for the blind. When he falls sick, Sanvari has to make a trip to the neighbours and ask them to read his temperature.

Within Bhalla there is pain but little bitterness. Years of fighting discrimination have deadened any self-pity that he had. The hurt surfaces when he attends marriages. "I hear people having a lot of fun singing and dancing. But I feel aloof and sad. Many people chat with me but I always feel that they think me a burden."

For Sanvari Diwali is not joyous: "I can hear the crackers going off. But I can't see the *diyas* and the rockets lighting up the sky. That's when I really miss my eyesight."

Bhalla knows it is late at night because of the silence. The stillness is broken occasionally by a lone dog baying outside. He checks the time on his Braille watch—midnight. Time to sleep. He settles down next to Sanvari.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA



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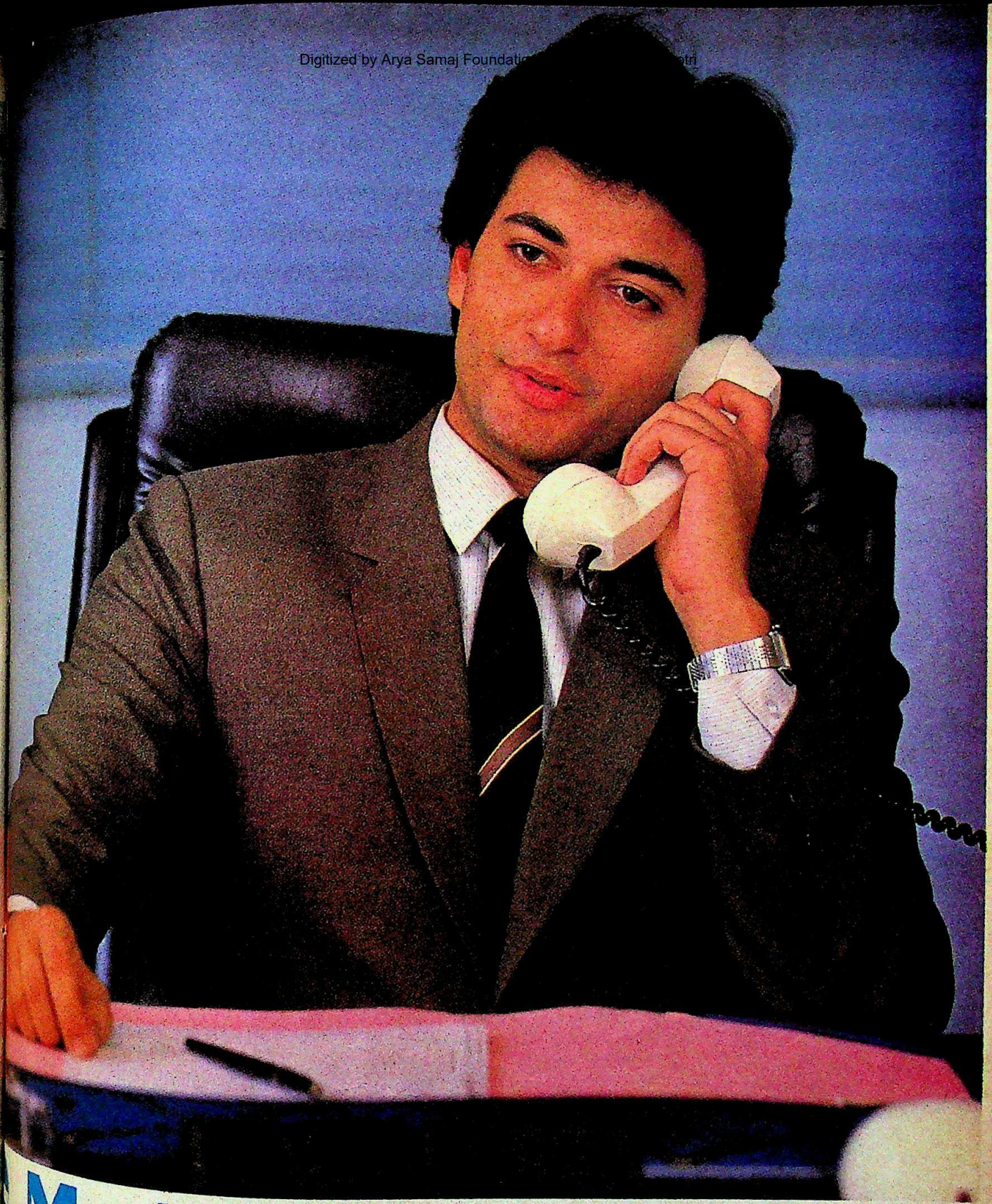

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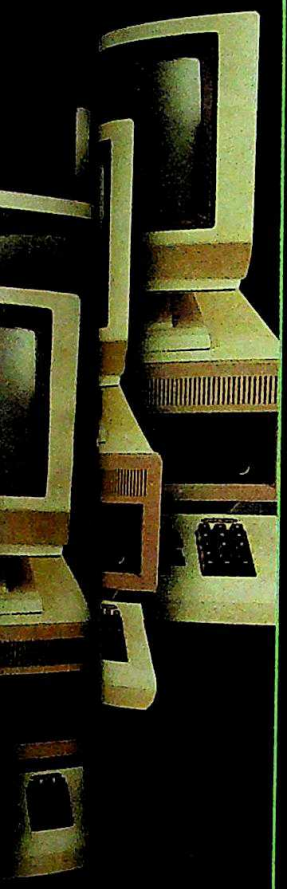

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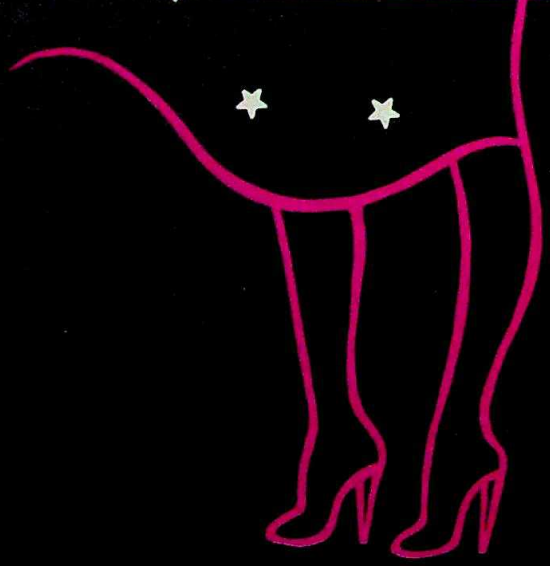

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KUDAL COMMISSION

Chasing Chimeras

IT'S hearings are open to the public and yet hardly anybody turns up at the offices of the Kudal Commission. Out of 228 commissions appointed under the Commissions of Inquiry Act, it is the only one set up by a vote of Parliament but barely half-a-dozen Members of Parliament have deposed before it. Even senior ministers privately say it should be wound up but the Government continues to give it repeated extensions.

The Kudal Commission, headed by Purushottam Das Kudal, was set up in February 1982 to probe into the working of three Gandhian institutions—the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, the Gandhi Peace Foundation (GPF) and the Sarva Seva Sangh—and the Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (AVARD). The main charges against them were that they had compromised national interests by receiving funds from tainted foreign sources and had taken part in political activities even though they are charitable institutions.

Denying the charges, the agencies—which have even staged a silent protest march to Parliament against the commission—retort that the commission is politically motivated. Says A.C. Sen, general secretary of AVARD: "The Government is using the Kudal Commission to conduct a witch-hunt against us because we backed Jayaprakash Narayan's pre-Emergency stir against Mrs Gandhi." The appointment of Justice Kudal—who was a member of the Congress Party till 1967—and of Daljit Sen Adel—a known CIA-baiter and critic of Jayaprakash Narayan—as the commission's counsel, they argue, betrays this design.

The agencies first saw red when the commission started recording preliminary evidence without involving them. Matters reached a breaking point when they found that evidence they had supplied was being used against them with the result that they got a stay order from the High Court absolving them of the responsibility of supplying documents to the commission. Home Minister Buta Singh denies the charge of political vendetta but the denial carries little weight because their link with JP is the only common characteristic among the four agencies.

In the absence of cooperation from the agencies—the Sarva Seva Sangh has boycotted it since 1984—the commission has had to requisition files from the Government to build up cases, which is not only extremely time-consuming but also lacking in supporting evidence. Expectedly therefore, the commission has little to show for its expense of Rs 1.2 crore and staff of 125, including one DIG and two SP's.

But the Home Ministry argues that the commission's continuance is necessary because many matters of national security are involved in the 330-odd cases that it is still investigating. Listing some of these cases—supply of aerial survey/photographs of areas in Hazaribagh district of Bihar to a West German Christian funding organisation, collection of biological data by the GPF from the hunger-belt of the country and transmitting the same to a foreign agency to facilitate research on biological war—Buta Singh says the organisations were involved in "anti-national activities". Justice Kudal and his staff also see their mission in similarly heroic terms: of peeling off, layer by layer, attempts by

Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR

Justice Kudal—and the Home Ministry—argue that the commission is exposing the designs of CIA-backed foreign agencies so the commission's continuance is necessary in the national interest but voluntary agencies say the commission is politically motivated.

"The commission is a witch-hunt ordered because we backed JP's pre-Emergency stir against Mrs Gandhi."

A.C. SEN
general secretary, AVARD

"Why does Kudal have to be an investigator, judge, income-tax officer and spy catcher all in one?"

BUNKER ROY
adviser, Planning Commission

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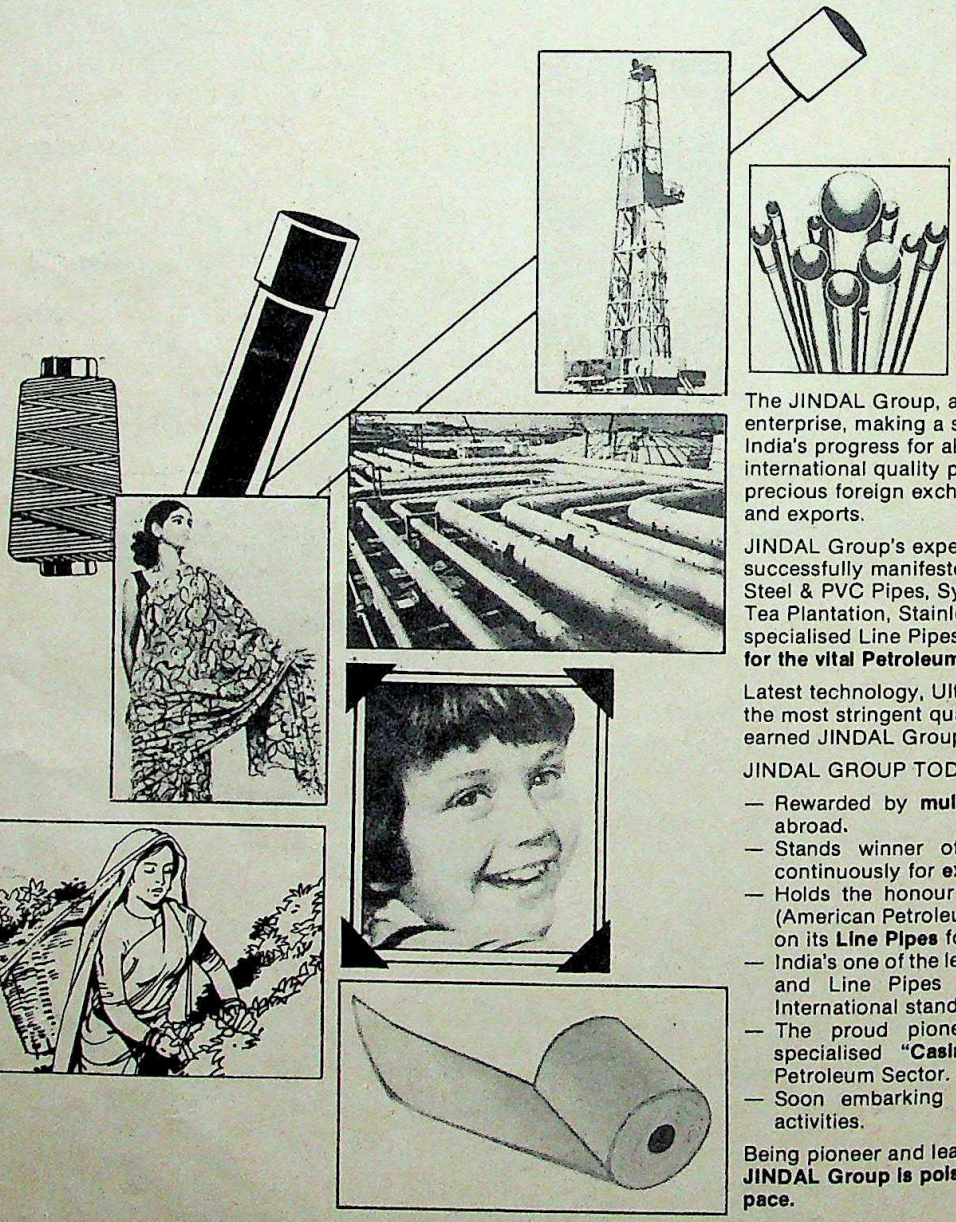

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NGA-backed organisations to use the voluntary agencies to provide sensitive information on border areas.

However, this concern with national security is hardly reflected in the 118 cases concluded. The maximum number—47—relate to misutilisation or misappropriation of funds given, in many cases, not by foreign agencies but by government institutions.

About a dozen-odd cases pinpoint alleged acts of personal corruption by office-bearers. One of these cases pertains to Rs 10,000 allegedly embezzled by the GPF's Bhagalpur centre for the purchase of lanterns and petromax lamps—which is one of the nine cases registered by the CBI. Even the other eight cases with the CBI mostly involve cases of minor corruption: like the granting of a personal loan of Rs 45,000 to an AVARD office-bearer, or money-lending by employees of the Gandhi Memorial Museum, Madurai.

The only case supposedly involving interests of national security which has been completed pertains to a map of the Ganga-Brahmaputra basin given by noted journalist B.G. Verghese, then associated with the GPF, in his 1977 Coromandel lecture. The commission has accused him of committing a breach of security by publishing two maps without informing the Surveyor General of India. But Verghese contends that the maps were "of no larger scale than what is freely available in common school atlases and Survey of India wall maps".

Even the other map cases currently being investigated hardly prove any major wrong-doing. One of these refers to maps of Kohima and Changtangia blocks of Nagaland prepared by AVARD and the Nagaland Gandhi Ashram (NGA). The commission has accused AVARD of violating the Official Secrets Act, but AVARD's Sen argues that the maps were copied from census reports which are freely available. Says Sen: "We challenge the Government to file a case against us."

SIMILARLY, even where the commission has found the agencies guilty, the agencies say that either their defence has been unfairly dismissed by the commission or the commission has taken a hyper-technical view of a minor infringement.

Says an indignant Bunker Roy, adviser to the Planning Commission on voluntary agencies: "Why does Kudal have to be an investigator, judge, income-tax officer and spy catcher all in one?"

The most tragic victims of the Kudal Commission have been the 946 smaller agencies the commission identified as "closely-connected" to the four main ones. A notice from the commission can turn the bureaucracy against it, as in the case of the NGA, a sterling institution built by a Gandhian from Gujarat, Natwar Thakkar, who went there in the '50s when the Nagas were in revolt. Thakkar's good work has been vouched for by a host of senior government functionaries, including ex-governor L.P. Singh and Manmohan Singh, deputy chairman of the Planning Commission. But, after the notice, the ashram has stopped getting government funds.

Further, according to secret circulars issued by the Government, semi-government agencies such as the Central Social Welfare Board and the People's Action for Development India (PADI) have been directed not to have any dealings with agencies found guilty by the Kudal Commission in its first two reports. Admitted a senior PADI official: "The Kudal Commission has created a scare psychosis in the voluntary sector."

Even the four major agencies have been badly crippled by the commission. They have already spent over Rs 10 lakh in legal expenses. The hardest hit is AVARD: two-thirds of its 450-odd affiliates have stopped paying their subscriptions. Admits Sen: "The Kudal Commission has brought our activities to a virtual standstill."

The Government is under increasing pressure to deny any more extensions to the commission. Nine Padma Shree recipients, including Ela Bhatt, Mahashweta Devi and Chandi Prasad Bhatt, have jointly appealed to Rajiv Gandhi to wind it up. Uninvolved people working in voluntary agencies, like Bunker Roy, argue that even if these institutions are guilty of neglecting their charter and entering into the political field with JP, the continuance of the commission defeats the Government's intention of involving voluntary agencies in rural development.

Says Sasmita Srivastava, chairman of the Central Social Welfare Board: "We need to look to an era of cooperation in the future, not fight old battles of two political personalities."

The commission now has till January to come up with cases where national security has been compromised. If it does, it will have served some purpose. If, as is likely, it only ends up chasing shadows it will be difficult to describe it as anything but a witch-hunt.

—AJAY KUMAR

The Kudal Commission now has time till January to come up with cases where national security has been compromised. If it does, it will have served some purpose.

Gandhians protesting: victimised?

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DOORDARSHAN

Good-morning India

DOORDARSHAN is all set to be an early bird. In about two weeks' time, Doordarshan will be saying Good Morning India at 7 a.m. Visual: the orange glow of sunrise over a different city's skyline every morning. Sound: *Vande Mataram*. Breakfast television or in Doordarshan's stodgy phrase, "morning transmission"—is finally set to make it to India. The alarm has been set for October 12, but the mandarins of Doordarshan have not yet committed themselves. Producers, though, have been told to be ready by this date, and not to be caught napping.

The menu for the hour-long, nationwide breakfast is rather heavy and more starch than protein. And cultural indigestion cannot be ruled out. Forty-five seconds of *Vande Mataram* and the varying sunrise sequences will be followed by four minutes of *Suprabhat*, music which you can see as well as hear. The "invocation of the morning"—as Mandi House states in its circular to film makers on September 4—will "incorporate the essential spirit of the dawning of a new day in different parts of the country."

Three producers have already invocated the morning: Mike Pandey of Riverbank Studio, Sadhan Malik, a former director of Delhi Doordarshan Kendra, and Mudra Videotec. The morning raga (Carnatic or Hindustani) or bhajans will be interpreted by (among others) Amjad Ali Khan, Bhimsen Joshi and Hariprasad Chaurasia. These ragas will be accompanied by, as Mike Pandey says, "the chirping of birds, the waking up of flowers, and nature slowly coming alive". The raga can carry you to the Rohtang pass, as it does on the strains of Amjad's sarod with the smoke wafting slowly from the cottage in the foreground and the gurgling streams below, or to the many-storeyed temples of the south.

The appetisers are followed by the main dish: 10 minutes of the news in Hindi, not such an easy swallow for those outside the Hindi belt. If that brings back the yawns, the quarter of an hour of exercises and aerobics that are to follow will get you ticking again. Independent Television (ITV) will have people on their toes four times a week with exercises from the Heart Foundation. For those who want to be more than fit, there will be aerobics twice a week, conducted by NRI Veena Merchant. The director is Gulan Kripalani from Bombay. Aerobics without supervision can do strange things to the body, but ITV's Ashok Raina is confident about not pulling the wrong muscles: "These will be the warmup kind, not *a la* Jane Fonda." Not even *a la* our very own Rekha. On Sundays, Doordarshan itself will step in with yoga.

Next comes food for the mind. Mondays and Fridays have PTI television for 15 minutes. Monday morning has the economic magazine with a hard economic story, a business story and an international story. Fridays take you to the villages. Says Sashi Kumar, chief producer of PTI Television: "It will not be an exotic, quaint approach with sunrises and colourful villages, we want to study the process of rural development..."

How can there be breakfast without serials, and corny ones at that? The Doordarshan circular prescribes "wit, humour and satire" for 15 minutes a day. Delhi-based producer Vijay Sharma will do *Film Nagar* (Mandi House gossip has it that Sharma is trying to get Basu Chatterjee of *Rajani* fame to direct). *Chalte Chalte* is the other serial already on its way to Doordarshan. B.M. Shah, acting director of the National School of Drama, and Shobha Doctor (who started dinner television with *Hum Log*) are also slotted.

The chef's speciality, the in-house one that is, will include Doordarshan's staple fare. There is a category called Bharati which, as the circular goes, "is a series of programmes designed to project various historical, cultural and social perspectives of Indian life and values and individ[illegible] places of interest". In this list are "[illegible] and fauna of India, monuments of Ind[illegible] places of tourist interest, our herit[illegible] *Hamare Vadya Yantra* (musical instr[illegible] ments) and folk dances" to be recorded [illegible] "natural surroundings".

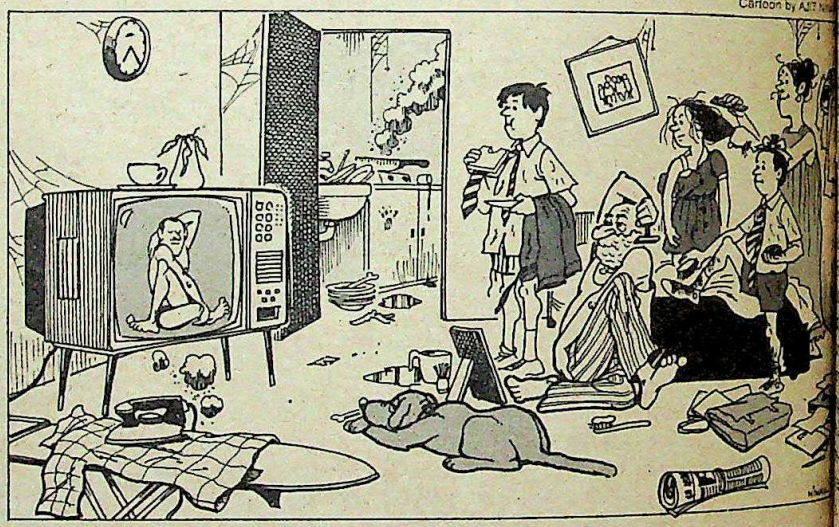
The menu will be peppered with pe[illegible] ple: *A Face in the Crowd* by S. Malik ("b[illegible] round persons who look very common [illegible] have achieved distinction in vari[illegible] fields..."). Times Television will do [illegible] personality a week. Political personali[illegible] are not taboo, but not exactly welcom[illegible] The anchormen will probably be celeb[illegible] ties as well. Says Gautam Adhikari, ch[illegible] executive of Times TV: "We would like t[illegible] interview to be in the form of [illegible] conversation...We might also have a st[illegible] dio audience asking questions."

There will be no sponsored pr[illegible] grammes, just three minutes of advert[illegible] ing spots divided into slots of one minu[illegible] each. Doordarshan's contract with th[illegible] producers ensures that all the rights [illegible] with it. Some of the producers are not t[illegible] happy with the price of purchase, whic[illegible] varies from Rs 20,000 per programme [illegible] about Rs 70,000. But breakfast is after a[illegible] a low-cost meal.

Will the early bird catch the worm[illegible] Most advertisers are in a wait-and-wat[illegible] mood. For the proverbial man in th[illegible] street, that one hour in the morning [illegible] already surcharged. Will the man of th[illegible] house look up from his newspapers? W[illegible] the lady of the house have the tim[illegible] between sending children to school a[illegible] husband to office?

Breakfast television might of cour[illegible] surprise everybody and become a habit [illegible] has in England and the United States. S[illegible] will morning become Doordarshan?

—MADHU JA[illegible]



Cartoon by AJIT N[illegible]

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KERALA

Plugging Pulp

THREE pages of mush, four of sex, five of real life drama and crime, one of kid stuff, one lonely hearts col-, one 'the doctor replies'. Stir well and do you get? The Malayalam Molotov cocktail. Over the past few months, bookstands in Kerala have been hit by a magazine boom that has few parallels in the country. Relying heavily on this sure-shot cocktail, a plethora of Malayalam magazines—described as *painkili* (pulp)—are taking the state by storm.

One of these, *Mangalam*, is not only the largest selling weekly in the country with an audited circulation of an unbelievable 14,44,974, has already left the *Malayala Manorama*—long the unrivalled number one seller—trailing far behind at 1,39,159. *Sunanda* has just hit the 1.70 lakh mark with its 4th issue. In 1980, there were only six such magazines. Today, there are 15—and more in the pipeline—almost all of them published from Kottayam. Says A.S. Nair, who has been involved with three such magazines, *Mangalam*, *Sakhi* and *Sunanda*: "*Painkili* publications are the biggest industry in Kottayam."

The success of the *painkili* magazines is attributed to their serials that are avidly followed by a largely undistinguished audience of housewives, idle office-goers and semi-literate readers. From the titles—*These Eyes, Wet Eyes; The Small Boat in the Ocean Waves* and *The Colour of Blood is Red*—to the contents, the serials are either imitation Mills and Boon or Chase-like whodunits. For variety there is real life drama. Recently, when a housewife committed suicide, she left behind her tear-jerking autobiography for *Mangalam*. The magazine had a windfall as its readers lapped up the soppy episode of her martyred life. Then there are the occasional gimmicks like the mass marriages organised by *Mangalam*. Other magazines give away sewing machines and pressure cookers as prizes in various contests. *Mangalam* has now started building houses for its "poorest of the poor readers". No wonder then that a single copy of *Mangalam* is read by eight people—a readership amounting to almost half the state's total population.

There is a lot else that's common to all *painkili* publications. They are all low-priced, mostly black and white and carry little or no ads at all, thus exploding the myth of advertisement support.

Malayalam magazines: booming

Mangalam's owner-publisher Mangalapalli Chacko Varghese, who began as a packer in Kerala's oldest newspaper, *Deepika*, started the weekly in 1971, brought in A.S. Nair, then a proof-reader in the number two *Manorajyam* (circulation: 2,60,000) and the duo elbowed *Malayala Manorama* out of its top slot.

It was Nair again who, on leaving *Mangalam* in 1982, took over *Sakhi*, then an ailing porno magazine, and gave it a sex change. Early this year, he started *Sunanda*—an instant hit— thus proving the efficacy of the *painkili* prescription.

Inspired by the success of Varghese, Nair and others, many rich planters and financiers have diversified into pulp magazines. Though Varghese is reluctant to talk about his profits from *Mangalam*, he is obviously raking it in. The production cost of the magazine—priced at Re 1—is 70 paise per copy and it is sold to agents at 75 paise, bringing in 5 paise for Varghese on each copy of the over 14-lakh print order every week. This, when the magazine refuses ads except for the title pages. Says Varghese: "My revenue from ads is limited. It is only through mass circulation that we break even."

Predictably, the growing demand has thrown up a whole new generation of pulp writers. A *painkili* writer is paid between Rs 250 and Rs 400 for each weekly episode and if the serial becomes popular, it is snapped up by film producers. The lodges and hotels of Kottayam are overflowing with such writers, who churn out mush by the magazine-full. Among them is Jonson Pulikunnu, a government employee who is writing for seven different publications, and C. Joy, who was just another jobless youth till he found this golden goose.

But there are also growing rumbles of protest. Of late, there has been a vociferous campaign against *painkili* literature, spearheaded by the students wing of the Marxist party and the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP). Noted Malayalam critic Professor Krishnan Nair has charged that the growth of pulp literature has increased the number of suicides in the state. Varghese, however, attributes all this criticism to jealousy. "These press barons cannot stomach my success. The circulation of intellectual magazines in the state is not even one-tenth of the circulation of *Mangalam*."

This remains a fact. Inspired by the success of *Mangalam*, more and more magazines are joining the bandwagon with the dictum: the spicier the magazine, the bigger its success. And for as long as they keep supplying the spice, the readers will keep getting their weekly fix of fancy.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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PUPUL JAYAKAR

"Culture is not entertainment"

Pupul Jayakar has been variously described as the high priestess of culture and *grande old dame* of letters. Last month she took over as the prime minister's adviser on heritage and cultural resources, stopping speculation about her being shunted from the main line of culture. She was in the news after reports about the damage to th priceless Didarganj Yakshi. In the splendour of her man urned house on Safdarjang Road, she spoke to Princip Correspondent MADHU JAIN about her new assignmen her life, and about culture. Excerpts from the intervie

RAGHU RAI

Q. The Didarganj Yakshi and you are in the news again. Would you like to comment on newspaper reports about the crack in the priceless Yakshi?

A. The Yakshi went to the National Gallery in Washington in April last year. It was packed by the National Museum. The man from the museum accompanied the Yakshi. He was there throughout. The Yakshi came back last July; and the man from the museum unpacked it. The first time I heard about anything going wrong was in *the Times of India.* No report was given to the Government. It was on display in the National Museum for the last nine months or so. I asked the Director-General of the Archaeological Survey if he had any information about this. He said he had no knowledge. Dr Sihare (of the National Museum) never called me; no letter was sent to my office.

Q. Aren't such masterpieces supposed to be certified when they are returned?

A. The National Museum took it over; this is usually done by the Archaeological Survey. The Yakshi has been out three or four times. The year before it went to Japan.

Q. The news of the damage to the Yakshi came almost along with your appointment as cultural adviser to the prime minister. Is there any connection?

A. You mean is it an attack on Mrs Jayakar? I don't want to come into this. But I would like to state that neither the Festival of India office here or the Festival of India office in Washington nor our embassy in the United States received any official intimation about the damage to the Yakshi.

Q. India has never had a cultural adviser to the prime minister before. How do you see your new job?

A. I will not be doing very different things from what I was already doing. They will send me more papers and I will initiate more things.

Q. Why the sudden need for a cultural adviser?

A. Probably the prime minister likes being supported by an adviser. Culture is

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ry important to him. He considers the breakdown of the fabric of society to have occurred because of a breakdown of the force of values. Culture is not entertainment, as it has become. Culture is a mind of the mind.

Q. How is Rajiv Gandhi different from Indira Gandhi as far as culture goes?

A. His mother was intensely interested and directly involved. We used to have long discussions about the outer manifestations of culture and the inner process culture.

Q. And the son?

A. The son has inherited this interest but does not have as much knowledge as his mother, but the concern is the same.

Q. How do festivals help? Are not roti, *kapda and* makaan *what people are asking for?*

A. Yes, but below this there are other things. India is asking the question; the world is deliberating on humanity vs material technology. But in India we may have of a strong current of interiority to explore the answer.

Q. Yes, but how have the festivals helped the ordinary Indian?

A. Nearly 1,000 villagers went abroad and earned money. Moreover 95 per cent of the money spent by India was spent here. We sent 1,000 artisans and I can't tell you with what dignity they behaved.

Q. But didn't many of these people who had never seen a town, let alone Paris and New York, have a problem of adjustment when they returned?

A. You know what the two bards sang at the Eiffel Tower after the inauguration of the tower: "Come my beloved, the festival is over. After all, it is fantasy. Let us go back to that which is ours."

Q. What is the role of culture in rural development?

A. Culture is the hinterland of the mind. If you permit the mind to become artificial, if it becomes concerned only with the material, it becomes very brittle. What sustains villages are the seasonal rituals which go with the cycles of life and traditions. There is so much feeling for the earth in India. The tree is worshipped. This might be looked upon as primitive but it is important in the ecological context. There are groves round the villages. Destroy the myth and the grove is also destroyed.

Q. To return to the subject of your new office: will you get a new office?

A. I never function like others. I never move. I function from my own milieu. And therefore to enter a different landscape of politics, its paraphernalia and all the hierarchies is not for me.

Q. You will be more directly involved with the Government. This means that the officials will have to move.

A. They don't have to move. Work has to be done, it is not important where you do it. I have a certain culture of work. I have my own discipline of work.

Q. Such as?

A. I believe in a very frugal staffing pattern. I have a tight time schedule. For some years my life has had one mainstream: the interior of myself.

> **"I never function like others. I never move. I function from my own milieu. And therefore to enter a different landscape of politics, its paraphernalia and all the hierarchies is not for me."**

Q. It is being said that you are not interested in the USSR festival because the proletariat is not your cup of tea.

A. For the last six months the newspapers have been saying a lot about me—that I am a czarina of culture, that I am authoritarian, that I waste a lot of money. Perhaps this is so because I don't go out very much. But I am not very interested in this kind of talk. If I am attacked, I don't speak out. All this is not true but I can't do anything about it. Can I go round saying that I am not authoritarian?

Q. It is also being said that you were lying low but have made a come-back.

A. It was the ending of the festival. What was I supposed to have been doing? I was busy doing a book and seeing that the festival was properly documented. I have spent my whole life working and I have always been lying low.

Q. And the question of not being interested in the proletariat.

A. I have been to the USSR three times. I have done a fashion show there. I am most interested in the Soviet Union. I have had five years of festivals, I am exhausted.

Q. Festivals are celebrations. Have we in India much to be happy about?

A. Let us talk about the birth of these festivals. When Mrs Gandhi became prime minister, she asked me to take over the chairmanship. We decided that rather than present an image of the country as a fragment, which leaves nothing behind, a festival would be better. It would be the same as a public relations exercise to change our image in a country. And in terms of public relations expenses this is peanut money. People abroad only hear about Indians being butchered and dowry burning or caste problems. But there is another side of India, a side which is intellectually alive, inwardly alive. It is not a question of India rejoicing over anything. The exercise was to make India a little more than a mark on the globe...India was in the limelight for 18 months. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, the media coverage of the festivals abroad in money terms was over $2 billion.

Q. You have said that you are on an inward journey. Your deep interest in Krishnamurty and philosophy are also well-known. But you also have a remarkable understanding of commerce. How do you reconcile the two traits?

A. I can do anything as long as it is not meant for myself. If I had to do business for myself I would make a mess of it.

Q. Does being a Gujarati have anything to do with your abilities? The Gujaratis have also mastered the art of making money and management.

A. Gujaratis are very precise when it comes to dealing with a problem. Be it business or art I can't make money for myself, but I could for the country. I understand what it is to create wealth, yes, possibly because I am a Gujarati.

Q. What are going to be your priorities as cultural adviser?

A. I believe in conservation. There are so many museums, libraries, archives which need a great deal of support, and we still keep on building new institutes. Photography needs to be treated more as an art. There ought to be closer links between education and culture.

Q. What is the role of culture for rural and urban unemployed youth?

A. Let me look as a Gujarati. We don't look widely to see the avenues of employment. Nobody wants to become a plumber, electrician, foreman. Ask anyone in a village, his ideal is to be a *chaprasi*.

Q. What kind of avenues of employment were you referring to?

A. Health foods for example. I have been talking about this for years. It is a multi-million dollar industry in the US. Every woman in a village here knows how to use a *chakki* and grind wheat or rice. Abroad wild rice costs $12 to $15 a pound. My ayah tells me that it grows wild in her village where they feed it to the cattle. There has to be some thinking outside the realm of convention.

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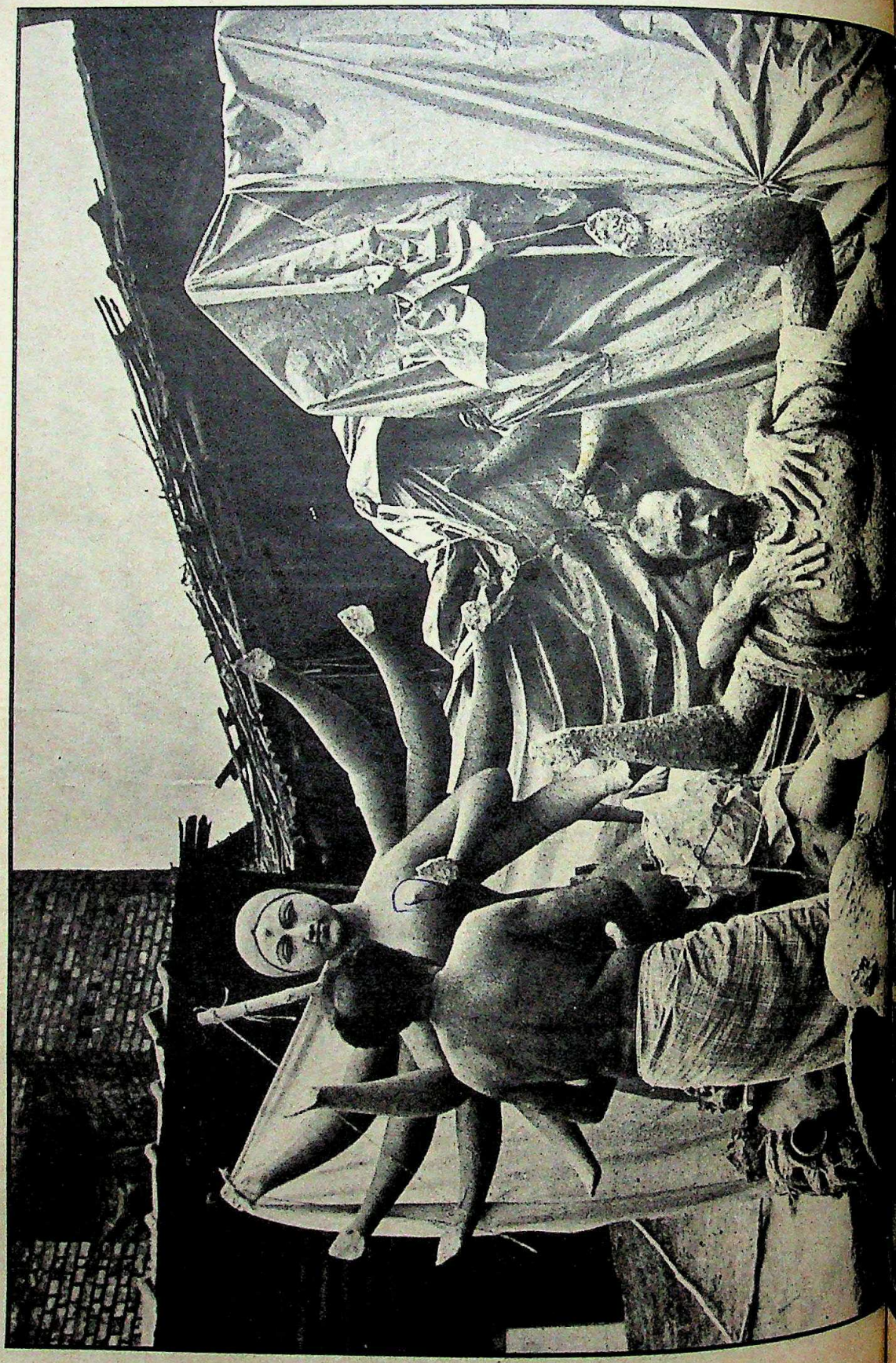

SNAPSHOT

RAGHU RAI

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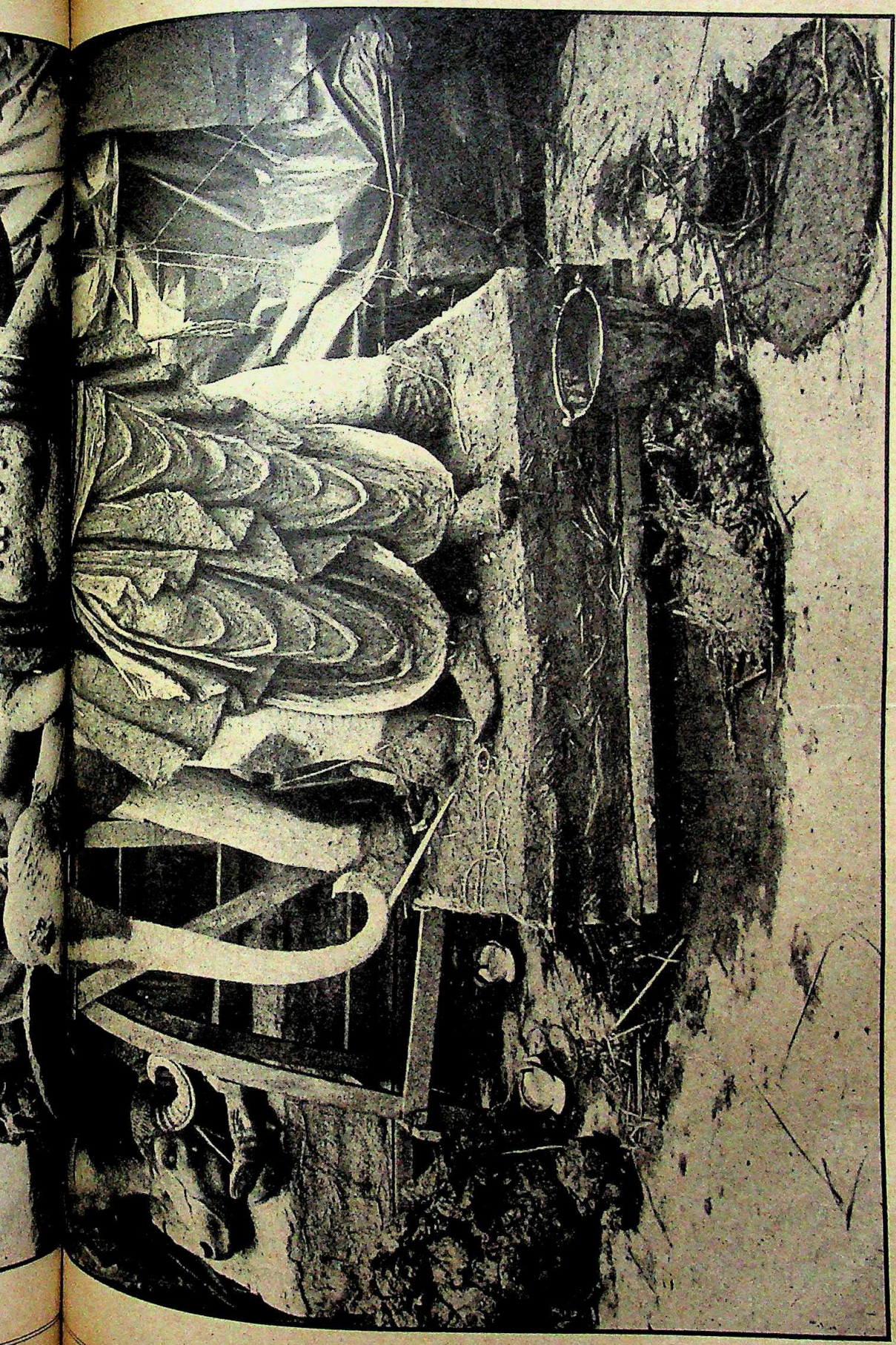

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ORDINANCES

In the Balance

THREE years ago, D.C. Wadhwa of Pune's Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics was the focus of nationwide attention: his book on the re-promulgation of ordinances in Bihar created a media sensation, lavish praise was heaped on it by eminent constitutional law expert H.M. Seervai and the issues it raised led to an opposition walk-out in the Rajya Sabha. But two years and eight months after the Supreme Court admitted his writ seeking a stop to the practice of re-promulgating ordinances, the highest court in the land oddly cannot find the time to hear the case.

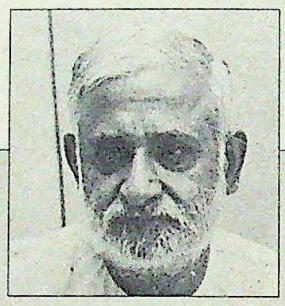
Wadhwa's foray into what was for him an unknown field—law—was an accident. While studying agrarian legislation in Bihar he realised that certain ordinances had been in effect for years. Intrigued, Wadhwa began the investigation that took the lid off a major scandal.

While Article 213 of the Constitution empowers the governor to promulgate an ordinance if the state Assembly is not in session, it also says that the ordinance will lapse if it is not passed as an act within six weeks of the Assembly meeting. Since the Assembly has to meet within six months of its last session, in effect, the life of an ordinance is restricted to seven-and-a-half months. Indeed, the Constituent Assembly debates make it clear that the promulgation powers were expected to be used sparingly, only in an emergency.

Wadhwa found the situation in Bihar to be appallingly different. Ordinances were not put up for the scrutiny of the house at all, but were re-promulgated just before they were about to expire. The fact that the Assembly always met for less than six weeks was, of course, part of the plan.

So the Bihar Sugarcane (Regulation of Supply and Purchase) Ordinance, for instance, was in effect for more than 13 years instead of seven-and-a-half months. In all, 256 ordinances were thus misused between 1967 and 1981, and in 69 cases even the President's consent was obtained. As Wadhwa argued, the constant re-promulgation was a flagrant misuse of the governor's powers and a deliberate attempt to bypass the state Assembly, which alone has the power to make laws.

Wadhwa's book, *Re-promulgation of ordinances: a fraud on the Constitution of India*, was an eye-opener. And on January 16, 1984, he filed his writ in the Supreme Court. Replies were filed by the Bihar and Union governments in mid-1984, and the matter was listed as the eighth case to be heard by the court in August 1984. But after that, instead of going up in priority in the weekly list of cases to be heard, the Wadhwa case actually started sliding down: in end-September 1984, it was placed 41st! Worse, for several weeks in 1985, it did not even appear on the weekly list of the Supreme Court.



Wadhwa's writ petition against the re-promulgation of ordinances has been hanging fire in the Supreme Court for 32 months even as more states follow this practice.

HARI OM GULATI

On July 29, 1985, a bench consisting of Chief Justice P.N. Bhagwati and Justice A.N. Sen directed that the case be the first one to be taken up after the formation of the constitution bench. In spite of this, today 14 months later, the case is yet to be heard.

Meanwhile the re-promulgation disease is spreading. While Bihar has merrily continued, Uttar Pradesh joined the bandwagon, and re-promulgation took place five times in Gujarat last year. In Kerala, the practice has now become a regular feature: currently, there are about 30 ordinances re-promulgated continuously over the last few years.

The judicial situation itself remains contradictory. The Patna High Court in the 1970s, while condemning the practice, judged that action lay with the Assembly and not with itself to curb it. But in neighbouring Uttar Pradesh, the Lucknow bench of the high court on April 6, 1984, ruled against this practice, saying that the Patna High Court had "taken an unduly restricted view of the scope of judicial scrutiny in regard to the power of the governor". In Kerala, Speaker V.M. Sudheeran has bitterly criticised the Government for its ordinance raj. And in Andhra Pradesh, in early 1985, a constitutional crisis developed when the then governor S. D. Sharma refused to re-promulgate three ordinances. Clearly, there is enormous confusion which only the Supreme Court can clear. Ironically, in a 1982 judgement, the Supreme Court had sarcastically commented on the Bihar practice. Says Wadhwa: "I am learning a lot. I thought the whole issue would be settled within six months. But it is satisfying to be involved in getting such an important issue settled."

The case is particularly crucial because it could also decide how far the courts can intervene in questioning the 'satisfaction' of the President or a governor. For if the eventual judgement goes far enough, it could mean that the next time President's Rule is declared, that decision too could be challenged. The judgement, if and when it comes, could well alter the face of Indian politics.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

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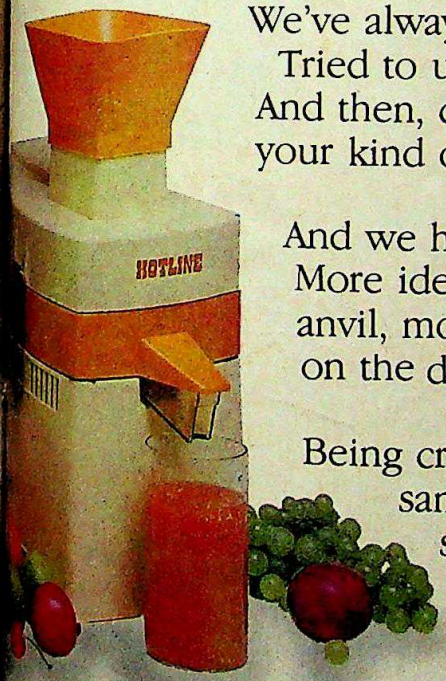

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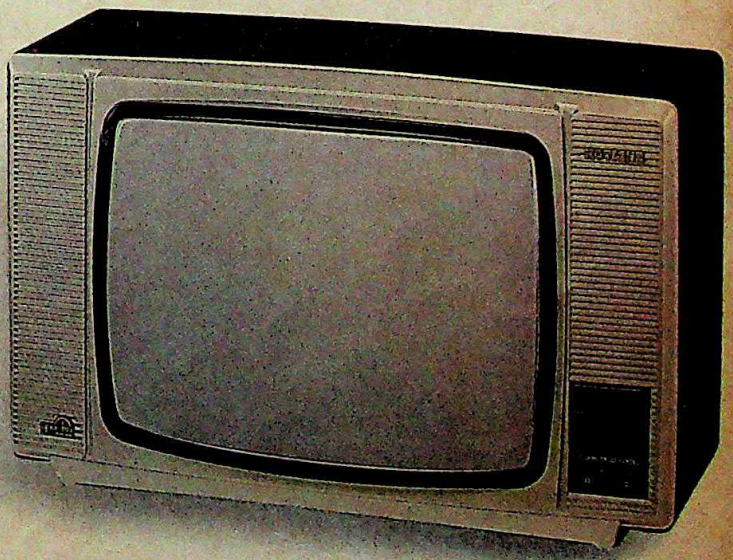

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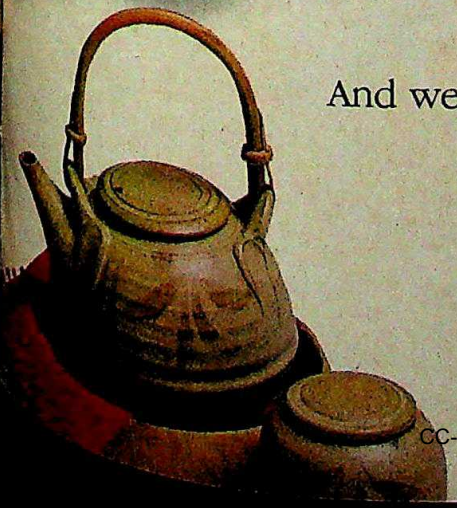

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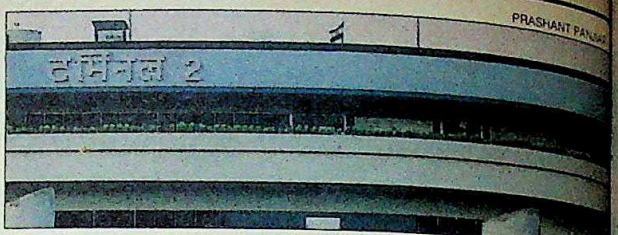
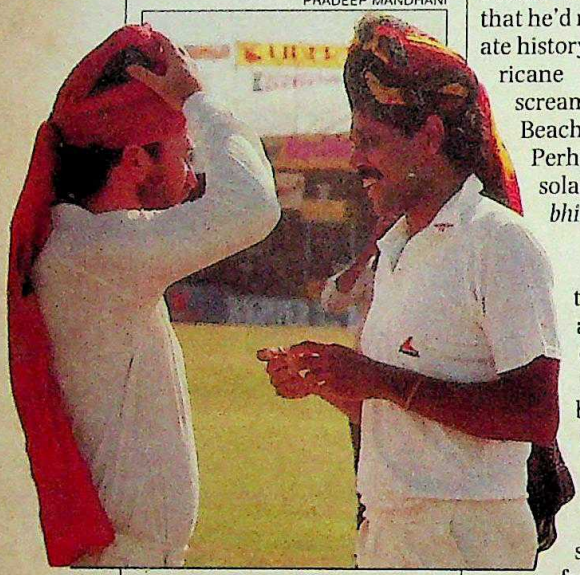


Indira Gandhi Airport then and now: missing name

◆ It was the tie to break all ties. It left the crowds reeling, sent **Allan Border** into a sulk and made **Kapil Dev** want to run amok on Marina Beach. As the first Test against Australia came to a nail-biting end in Madras last fortnight, India captain Kapil Dev mumbled awestruck: "It has never happened before, it has never happened before..." It had—at another place, another time; but Kapil was probably in dispers then. It was at the Australia vs West Indies in Brisbane in 1960. But history is for the books. While Border sulked that he'd rather win than create history, the Haryana hurricane wanted to run screaming on Marina Beach till he got over it. Perhaps the only consolation was: *"Cricket da bhi jawab nahin!"*

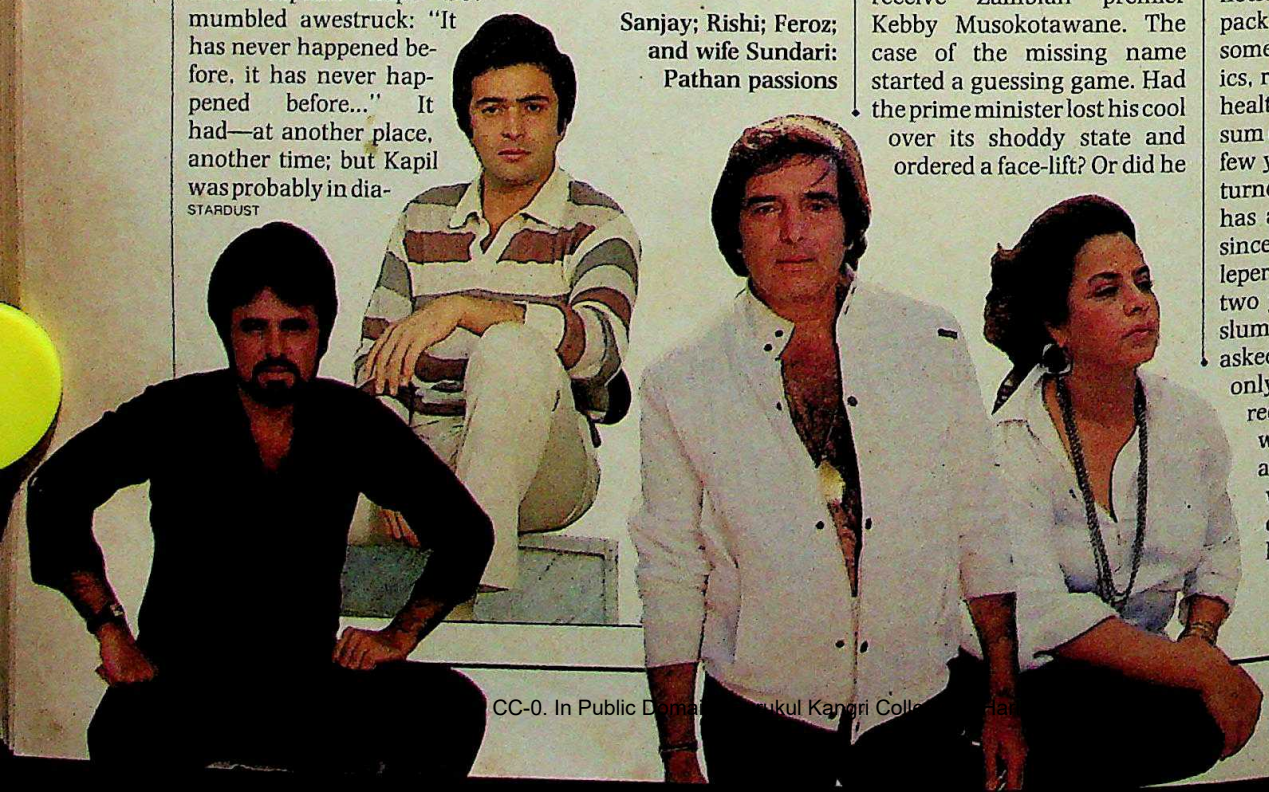
PRADEEP MANDHANI



Border and Kapil: dead heat

◆ The film industry has always been a *Kala Dhanda* of *Goray Log*, and the Khan-dons seem to be its living proof. Last fortnight, the proof took the shape of a glass of whiskey which shot out at a party from **Sanjay Khan's** hefty hand, cut a deep gash in **Rishi Kapoor's** cheek and very nearly mutilated his lollipop looks—and career—for good. The provocation: a compliment from Rishi to Sanjay on his *Kala Dhanda*..."It was an ugly incident. I won't like to meet him again," said the first victim of the Pathan passion. The second, **Feroz Khan's** wife **Sundari**, swore hell-fire and brimstone in *Stardust* at "his latest woman"—**Jyotika Dhanrajgir**, a former air hostess. "He likes to have a bitch on leash all the time and he has one now," Sundari spat. And Dhanrajgir sued—the magazine, editor, printing press and wife—demanding an apology, seizure of the issue and Rs 50 lakh in damages. Who's the victim now? Only God, or the Bombay High Court knows.

STARDUST

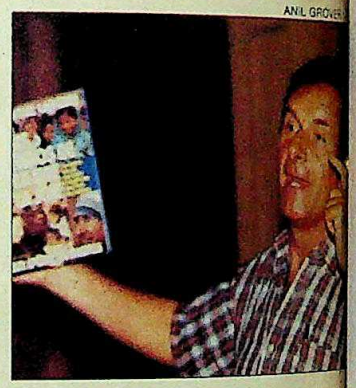


Sanjay; Rishi; Feroz; and wife Sundari: Pathan passions

◆ Missing : Indira Gandhi's name from the facade of **Indira Gandhi International Airport**. One day last fortnight, it just vanished. It happened when Rajiv Gandhi went there to receive Zambian premier Kebby Musokotawane. The case of the missing name started a guessing game. Had the prime minister lost his cool over its shoddy state and ordered a face-lift? Or did he not want his mother's name on shabbiness? The official answer: Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jagdish Tytler had already ordered repairs of the cracked facade. But the guessing game is still on.

◆ For the children of the *City of Joy*, there's also hope.

ANIL GROVER



Lapierre: city of hope

Dominique Lapierre, the author of the international chart-buster on Calcutta, has just pledged half of the book's royalties to the city's have-nots. As part of an Action Aid package, Lapierre will send to some of the city's private clinics, rehabilitation homes and health care centres, an annual sum of Rs 40 lakh for the next few years. The pop historian-turned-humanitarian writer has already sent Rs 50 lakh since 1980 to a home for lepers' children. "During our two years of research in the slums of Calcutta, we never asked for anything. We were only given. This is only a reciprocation," says the writer. "Calcutta is a homage to life. And we'll always devote a share of our lives to this city. Now, is Calcutta dying?"

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How Safe is the PM?

The attempt to assassinate the prime minister exposed the chinks in his security armour. More than anything, it showed up the security establishment as being overstrained, poorly motivated, badly organised and lacking in unified command.

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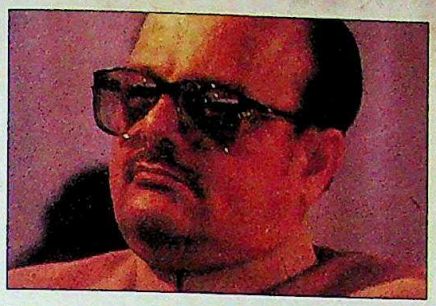

Promises, Promises

The Congress(I) has been repeatedly putting off its organisational elections for the last four years: and partymen wonder whether they will ever be held. Party Vice-President Arjun Singh, however, blames the delays on "genuine difficulties".

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Wild Goose Chase

The Uttar Pradesh Government has launched a census of the 6.5 lakh Sikhs in the Terai region, following reports of terrorist activity in the area. But so far the witch-hunt has yielded little apart from getting the community up in arms.

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The Golden Girl

P.T. Usha was the unquestioned queen of the track at the Asian Games and single-handedly saved India from ignominy after the country had sent a record 400-strong contingent to the games. Drastic steps are needed if India is to do better at Beijing in 1990.

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Taking a Pounding

Indo-British ties have been strained for some time. The recent election of Mohinder Pal Singh Bedi as chairman of the UK Anglo-Asian Conservative Society with the support of pro-Khalistan elements has only added to the friction.

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Rough Riding

The two-wheeler industry has hit a rough patch. Waiting lists are shrinking and premia on vehicles are fast disappearing. With companies switching production lines and jacking up advertisement budgets, the industry seems in for an overhaul.

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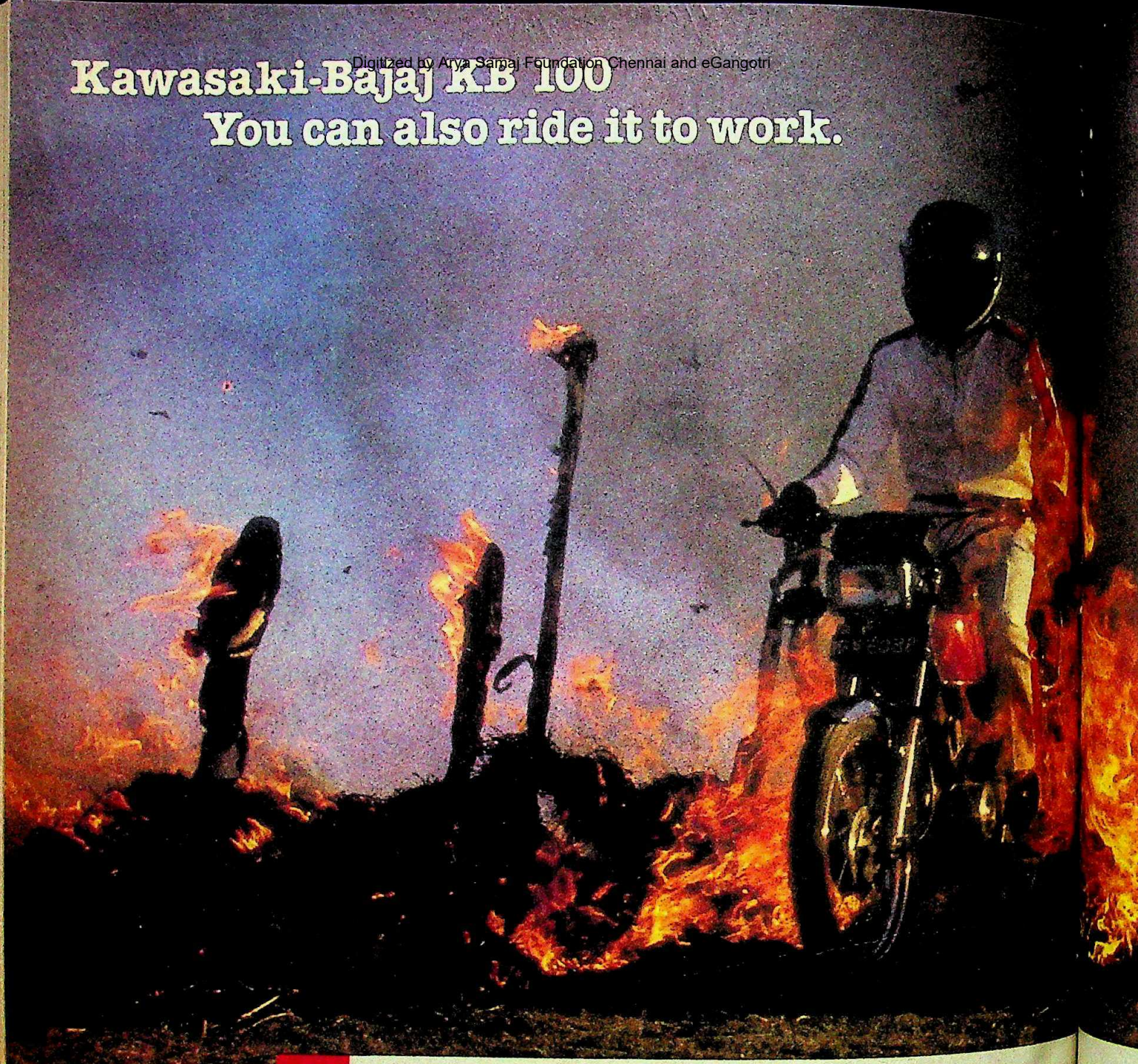

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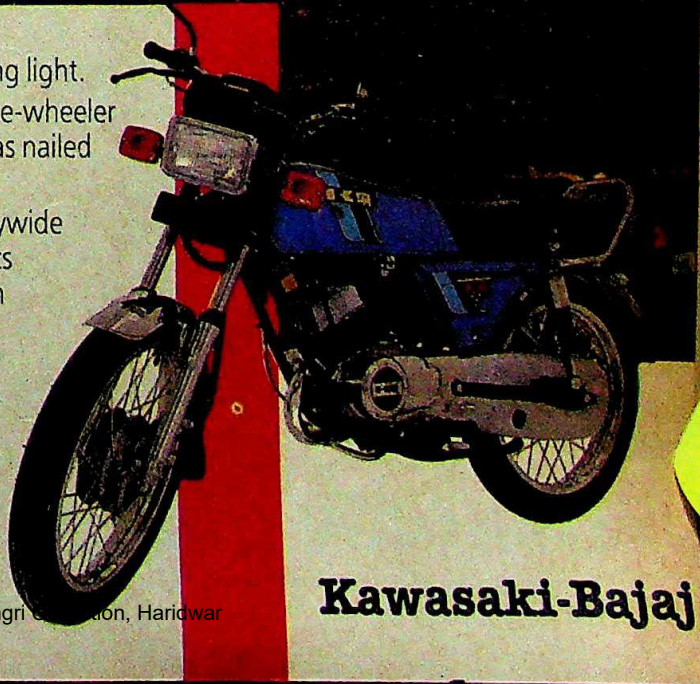

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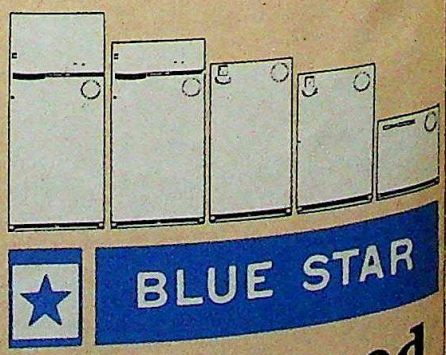

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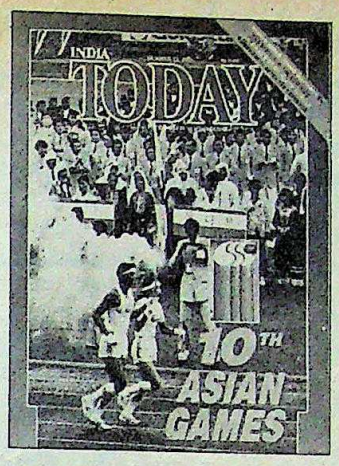

SAVING GRACE

The Seoul Asiad has, beyond a doubt, overshadowed all previous Asiads ("Record Breaking Games", October 15). The organisation was stupendous and records were shattered with incredible ease. But the Indians performed very poorly. But for P.T. Usha, the Indian performance would have been reduced to absurdity.

Bangalore **K. CHIDANAND KUMAR**

■ Kudos for presenting us with a delightful pictorial fiesta of the 10th Asian Games, along with all the relevant details. While we are really sad that Indian sportsmen did not perform as expected, at least INDIA TODAY did.

Pune **REKHA CHIMKOD**

■ Hats off to P.T. Usha, the country's track star for snatching away four gold medals and one silver in the Asiad. Her name has become synonymous with India in Seoul. For sheer modesty and unpretentious style of play also it is impossible for anyone to beat her.

Ahmedabad **D.V. CHANDRASHEKHAR**

■ "The gold-hunt is over." "The performance of our team was much lower than the expectations of the players and the people." I do not agree with such unhealthy remarks being hurled at the Indian participants in the 10th Asian Games. If anyone is to be blamed, it is the innumerable government bodies responsible for politicising the sports arena and making prejudiced selections.

Patna Saheb **JITENDER SINGH BHASIN**

UNEQUAL RIGHTS

In a country where equal rights and opportunities have been ensured for all in the Constitution, the kind of favouritism seen in the Maruti allotments ("Favoured Few", October 15) is an open attack on democratic rights. If the judges, politicians and bureaucrats who are supposed to uphold the sanctity of law themselves violate it in order to maintain their own interests, can we ever think that the Government's much-vaunted efforts to root out corruption and favouritism will succeed?

New Delhi **JAIDEEP MITTRA**

NEEDLESS ANGUISH

The presence of my name in the list of judges of high courts ("Favoured Few", October 15) has caused me needless embarrassment and anguish. On April 23, 1983, I booked for allotment of a Maruti car in the normal course by making an advance deposit of Rs 10,000. My turn through drawing of lots is at number 02-A-02729 as per the intimation slip sent by the company.

I was surprised to receive a letter from the company dated July 24, 1986, intimating that as per my request (which was never made), a vehicle had been allotted to me out of the manufacturer's quota. Although I do not have an official car, I never requested the company for an out of turn allotment and never intended 'to jump the customer's queue' to accept the allotment. In fact I promptly wrote to the company declining to accept the favour of an out-of-turn allotment and I continue to wait for my turn in the ordinary course.

New Delhi **S.A. HAKEEM**

The list of names we used appears in Maruti Udyog's records. We regret the embarrassment caused to Mr Hakeem.

Editor

PETTY GAINS

Your editorial ("Dodging the Issue", October 15) is an eye-opener to those who are out to make narrow political gains from the Gorkhaland agitation. Our esteemed prime minister has displayed astonishing ignorance of the real issues for which this agitation has been started by the hitherto unknown Subhash Ghising. The short-term gain of embarrassing the Left Front Government has made Rajiv Gandhi oblivious to the long-term effect of pampering the Gorkha National Liberation Front. As the leader of our country, he should display statesmanship, not brinkmanship, as he has done so far.

Patna **AJIT SINHA**

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K. Mohan & Co. (INT.), 78 – Jolly Maker Chambers No.II, Nariman Point, Bombay - 400 021.

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HUMANE NEED

Your photo feature ("The World of a Blind Man", October 15) was captivating. In India, handicapped people are not only subjected to immense problems in life but are often hurt by the attitude of normal beings. It is an eye-opener that what the blind need is not sympathy but simply treatment as normal humans.

Bangalore — MIDALATA RANI

VESTED INTERESTS

B.K. Nehru's guest column ("The Politics of Reservation", October 15) rightly asserts that our reservation policies need to be restructured to be more effective. The fact is that after two generations of reservations a new Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe elite has emerged. This "backward elite" has a vested interest in letting the real "backwards" remain backward.

Bangalore — K.K. BANERJEE

UNINTENDED PORTRAYAL

I was shocked to find a reference in your article to the effect that I am a lobbyist for certain hotel chains and the Tatas. ("The Hidden Persuaders", September 15). I find such description of a professional person as highly derogatory and defamatory. My association with the hotel industry has dated back to 1968 and I have since then specialised in the laws pertaining to the hotel and restaurant industry. I have been legal adviser to the Oberoi group of hotels and the Taj group of hotels. I have also been advising the Federation of Hotels and Restaurant Association of India. I have never tried to procure any favours from the Government for any of my clients including the hotel chains. Insofar as your reference to Tatas is concerned, I have no connection with them except that I am the legal adviser of the Indian Hotels Company (Taj group of hotels) which is one of the Tata companies.

Fair play demands that before any comments are made which may tend to give a poor impression about a person against whom the comments are made, the person concerned should be asked to give his side of the story.

It is an admitted and well-known position that I am an active Congress worker and I am proud of that. I believe that every intellectual should have political leanings and affiliations so that the right person should enter politics. However, my connections with the ruling party would not justify the remark that I am a lobbyist.

New Delhi — LALIT BHASIN

Our reference to Lalit Bhasin as a "lobbyist" who is politically active and "sought after" by the major hotel chains including the Tatas, was in no way intended to be a slur on him, his integrity or reputation. There is little doubt about the high professional regard in which he is held. We did not in any way attempt to condemn his political activism.

—Editor

DELAYED TRIAL

Had the Pakistani authorities not bungled ("Pakistan's Bloody Blunder", September 30) perhaps the loss of precious lives could have been avoided. It is true that Pakistan has delayed the trial of past hijackers caught there. But how prompt are we in the matter of dispensation of justice? Are we still not dragging our feet in the Indira Gandhi case, although the murder took place almost two years ago?

Bombay — P.G. MENON

■ The delayed assurance by President Zia that the hijackers will be hanged 'if found guilty' is nothing but eyewash. Having been caught red-handed, where is the need to prove that the hijackers are guilty or not?

Bombay — C.V. UNNIKRISHANAN

IMPOLITIC MOVE

I fully agree with Darbara Singh that the passing of the All India Gurudwara Act will be a dangerous move in the present critical juncture ("Dangerous Proposal", September 30). The mixing of politics with religion in Punjab has already spoiled the sanctity of the holy takhts. In the larger interest of Hindu-Sikh unity, which was the main purpose of the Punjab accord, it will be suicidal to pass the All India Gurudwara Act for any smaller cause.

Patna Saheb — MAJOR BALBIR SINGH

STRONG DENIAL

With reference to your article ("Terrorists: The Political Nexus", September 30) I would like to specifically deny links with alleged terrorists. I never made any recommendation to the police or anybody in the administration about any suspect whatsoever.

New Delhi — BHAI SHAMINDER SINGH

TALL CLAIMS

Your meticulously written ONGC story ("The Oil Mirage", September 30) made it clear to me that the high production rates, indigenisation and huge profits that ONGC boasts of are just due to their good luck, or are a gift of god! They are instead responsible for making the country dependent on imported oil and technology.

Bombay — POONAM VARMA

■ Your article is totally misleading. It is a known fact that oil exploration is a chancy game whose end-results cannot be guaranteed. Instead of giving due credit to our geo-scientists for their relentless efforts which resulted in the discovery of various hydrocarbon bearing structures including Bombay High, which saved our country from financial doom at a time when global oil prices were at a peak, the article has tried to hurt them.

Our geo-scientists have established the presence of hydrocarbons in areas like Kutch, Saurashtra, Cauvery etc. even where multinationals have failed.

Bombay — NIRMAL KUMAR
secretary, Association of Scientific and Technical Officers, ONGC

CLEAR ACCOUNTING

With reference to your article ("Dressing Up the Figures", August 31) we have been following the sum of digits method of accounting from the inception of the business because it clearly reflects the income that has been accrued. Several banks and financial institutions are following a similar method of accounting. If this method is not followed it may be disputed by tax authorities on the ground that there is understatement of lease rentals.

Bombay — H.D. MEHTA
director, Mazda Industries and Leasing Ltd

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

With reference to your article ("Travel Fraud: Passport to Easy Money", July 31) the Union Bank of India is in no way concerned with the travel fraud and no official of our bank has ever been arrested on this issue. Moreover, we have no branch at Jan Path as stated in the said article.

New Delhi — Manager, Union Bank of India

It was another bank that was involved. The error is regretted. —Editor

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POLL 5 RESULTS—ART & CULTURE

Divergent Views

IN the fifth opinion poll, INDIA TODAY invited its readers to nominate the person who, in their opinion, most deserved to get the Padma Vibhushan for achievements in art and culture, and to rank seven others in order of preference. Over 12,800 readers responded to the poll. For an independent assessment of the results, INDIA TODAY commissioned Dr V.L.Mote, a founder-professor of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, who also holds a doctorate in statistical methods from the State University of North Carolina in the US. His analysis:

THE accent on rapid economic development in India has not meant a neglect of art and culture. This has happened probably because of the Indian view that material and spiritual development are complementary. The 12,800 people who enthusiastically responded to this poll prove this, if such proof were needed. As Dr S. Radhakrishnan pointed out: "True art withdraws our thoughts from the mere machinery of life and lifts our souls above the meanness of it."

Unlike some of the earlier polls, opinions diverged sharply in this one on the top achievers in art and culture, and consensus

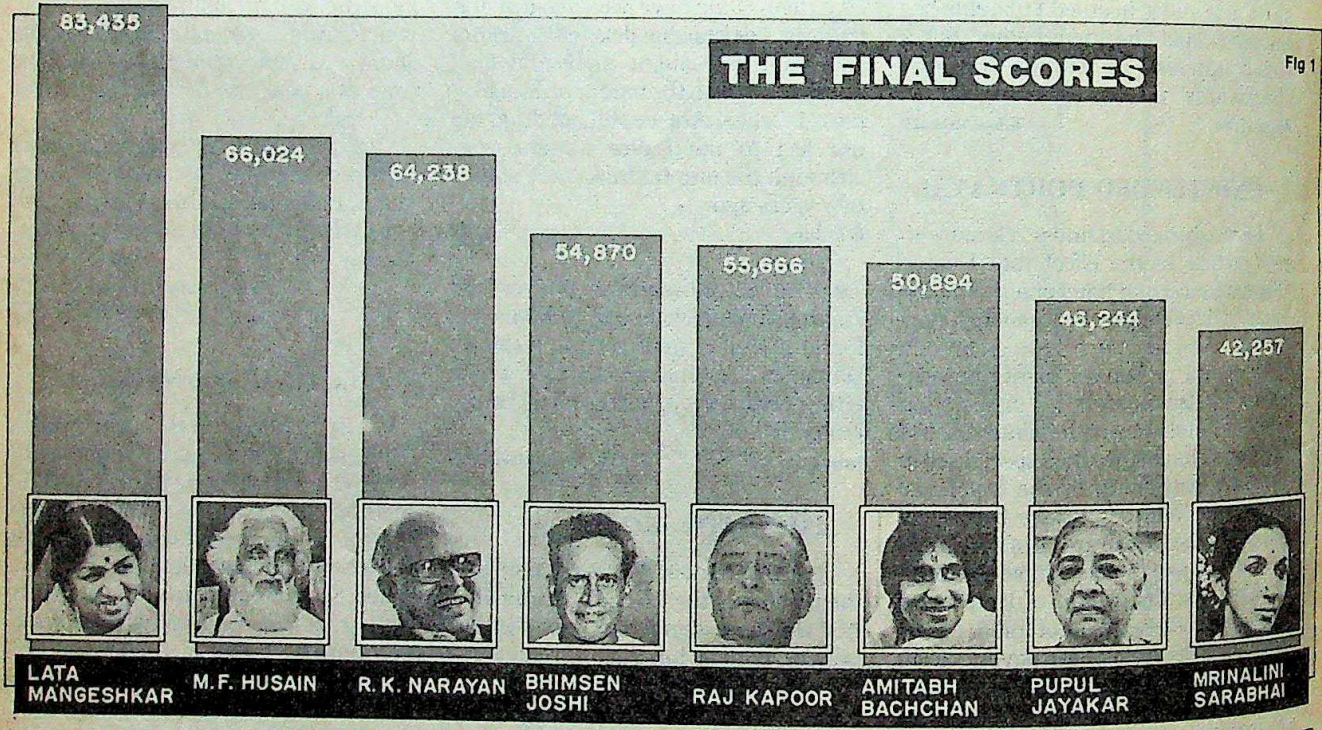

TABLE-1

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

The figures represent the percentage of total respondents who ranked each candidate at the various positions

Average Score*	Candidate	Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
6.51	Lata Mangeshkar	1	43.6	19.0	12.6	8.5	6.6	6.1	2.6	1.0	100.0
5.15	M.F. Husain	2	8.0	20.4	19.0	17.5	14.5	10.7	6.5	3.4	100.0
5.01	R.K.Narayan	3	12.6	16.0	15.9	15.9	13.8	11.8	8.3	5.7	100.0
4.28	Bhimsen Joshi	4	4.0	10.5	14.6	17.4	17.0	15.1	12.6	8.6	100.0
4.19	Raj Kapoor	5	5.6	11.9	14.0	13.0	13.8	13.8	16.8	11.0	100.0
3.97	Amitabh Bachchan	6	11.9	10.6	9.7	8.8	10.2	11.0	13.8	24.0	100.0
3.61	Pupul Jayakar	7	11.9	6.1	6.3	8.0	10.2	14.4	18.2	25.0	100.0
3.30	Mrinalini Sarabhai	8	2.4	5.4	7.9	11.0	13.9	17.1	21.1	21.2	100.0
		Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

*Maximum average score attainable is 8.

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was at a premium. Perhaps this shows that culture is a subjective matter, and more prone to personal tastes than other areas of human endeavour. This is also a field where analysis and measurement are more difficult than in most other cases. Thus, the 'coefficient of concordance' on an all-India basis is only 0.17 in this poll, as against the one in the case of achievers in business, which was 0.47. In Ahmedabad, the coefficient in the present poll is only 0.09.

Nevertheless, Lata Mangeshkar's clear lead over the other seven achievers in the field of art and culture shows that the love of music transcends all barriers: language, age, sex and class. The lady is almost a national symbol, and has sung songs for every taste: film fans, the spiritually inclined and also those who simply want light entertainment. And, of course, the country has been listening to her since Independence. So even in Tamil Nadu, where she got her lowest score, Mangeshkar got a better rating than R.K.Narayan (for whom Tamil Nadu has proved a strong wicket).

M.F. Husain's coming second is a significant point, especially in the context of the fact that two film personalities (Raj Kapoor and Amitabh Bachchan) rank lower than him as a painter, and also lower than R.K.Narayan as a writer and Bhimsen Joshi as a musician. Husain certainly has appeal as a signboard painter who has impressed the world and made millions, and who is a walking icon, someone who wears his personality on his person—and his flowing white beard.

DESPITE Mangeshkar's close association with the world of Hindi cinema, INDIA TODAY's readers don't seem too enamoured of the celluloid world. Even a classicist like Joshi ranks higher than the film stars, though both of them are living legends. To this extent, this poll reflects an upbeat readership with intimations of culture.

Interestingly enough, R.K.Narayan (who comes in third) does not have a mass readership in India, although he is taught in some university courses. As for Pupul Jayakar and Mrinalini Sarabhai, they are perhaps not as well known because they are essentially organisers of culture.

Nevertheless, the yardsticks that participants have used are universally accepted ones. Does the work of the artiste produce

DEVIATIONS FROM NATIONAL RANKING

TABLE 2

	FEMALE	STUDENTS	AGE ABOVE 60	BANGALORE	BOMBAY	CALCUTTA	DELHI	MADRAS
SAMPLE SIZE	1478	3438	363	722	1091	563	1392	488
LATA MANGESHKAR	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
M.F. HUSAIN	2	2	(3)	(3)	2	2	2	(3)
R.K. NARAYAN	3	3	(2)	(2)	3	(4)	3	2
BHIMSEN JOSHI	4	4	(8)	4	4	(3)	4	(6)
RAJ KAPOOR	5	(6)	(4)	5	5	5	(6)	(4)
AMITABH BACHCHAN	(8)	(5)	(7)	6	6	6	(7)	(5)
PUPUL JAYAKAR	(6)	7	(6)	(8)	7	7	(5)	(8)
MRINALINI SARABHAI	(7)	8	(5)	(7)	8	8	8	(7)
COEFFICIENT OF CONCORDANCE	0.13416	0.17950	0.11514	0.18723	0.14683	0.18062	0.16691	0.18460

Encircled numbers represent ranks different from the overall national ranks.

No more than four readers sent in entries that corresponded exactly with the final national score (compared to 90 all-correct entries in the last poll). To select the three winners, a panel of judges assessed the reasons they had given for ranking Lata Mangeshkar first.

First prize: Murali Vadakkemadhom
32 Kotnath Bhuvan,
Vithalbhai Patel Road,
Mulund-W,
Bombay.

Assessment: "No other artiste has acquired such a diverse following as she has. Her lifelong stint with her vocal chords certainly requires to be acknowledged with the highest awards of the land. She has immortalised music. Shouldn't she be immortalised too?"

Second prize: Dinesh Prasad Singh
Indian Rayon Corporation,
Veraval,
Gujarat.

Assessment: "Lata Mangeshkar's is a name synonymous with music. She has made a great contribution to cine music, and is popularly heard by all sections of society. Her voice continues to fascinate young and old alike even now."

Third prize: Surender Kumar Singh
245 LIC Colony,
Tagore Town, Allahabad.

Assessment: "My beloved elder sister Lata Mangeshkar has been singing songs for a long time. By her sweet songs children, the young, old and every type of man in society feels himself liberated from all worries and worldly affairs for some moments."

Consolation prize:
Baljinder Kumar Chauhan, Chandigarh

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freedom? Does the artiste set free the artiste in the audience, and merge his or her consciousness in the subject?

Several participants in the poll made the point that Lata Mangeshkar's songs have helped cross all barriers of class, creed, colour and language. Others have pointed out that she has reached, touched and moved the hearts of so many citizens of India. And in the case of Narayan, one participant observes that without dramatising his characters, he creates stories of unassuming simplicity and purity. As for Bachchan, it is said that he has an amazing intensity and the power to breathe conviction into his role.

Interestingly enough, Bachchan does not seem to have scored very well among the women, who have ranked him last. Even among the young (students), he comes no better than fifth. As for the old (those over 60), they have a preference for Narayan, whom they rank just behind Mangeshkar.

SAMPLES of respondents' comments on the seven candidates other than Lata Mangeshkar give an indication of the reasons why they rate some artistes ahead of others in terms of their contribution to Indian art and culture.

M.F.HUSAIN

The true artist is one who can not only develop but also popularise his unique style. M.F. Husain has no competitor.
New Delhi — Vivek Ram

● This eccentric genius has become a legend in his own lifetime. His masterpieces should not be kept in the living-rooms of some super-rich people but should be preserved in museums for posterity.
Bombay — Prashant Gawandalkar

● His series on the Mahabharata gives a new dimension to painting.
Chandigarh — Vikas Gupta

R.K. NARAYAN

The greatness of this man is his simple style of writing. He has enriched the world of English literature with a genius that is to be treasured.
Bombay — N.D. Dhondy

● Narayan through his writings has for once depicted India without any prejudices. Thus he has earned a real universal readership.
Hyderabad — Praveen Kumar

● Where other Indian writers have failed to make a lasting impression, R.K. Narayan alone holds the ground among the galaxy of English authors of the world.
Agra — Iqbal Singh

BHIMSEN JOSHI

I can flee from the daily tear with the help of the musical 'mantras' composed by him.
Calcutta — Indra Santanu

● He is the topmost classical singer of India and because of his efforts the youth of today are going towards the classical music of India. The taste for western music is declining in our youth today.
Amritsar — Vishal Bhardwaj

● His selfless dedication towards the perfection of his art has contributed immensely to enhancing the rich heritage of our traditional music.
Gulbarga — R. Kulkarni

RAJ KAPOOR

He has proved his mettle both as actor and director/producer. His earlier works had a touch of class.
Bhopal — A.K. Jain

● He was the first entertainer to try what is now called the 'middle cinema', but with a lavish canvas. He is also the first internationally famous Indian film maker.
Bangalore — Srinivasa Gowda

● Raj Kapoor has served Indian cinema for four decades. He has a creative mind, charming personality and the power to motivate new talent.
Ranchi — Rakesh Gupta

AMITABH BACHCHAN

Consider art as a form of entertainment for the majority of Indians and Amitabh ranks No. 1. He has brought such perfection to his acting that viewers literally laugh and cry with him.
Bombay — Bosco D'Silva

● He is the biggest entertainer—by the sheer strength of his audience. He is capable of superlative performances in the lousiest of films, and is adored by the masses as no one else is.
Delhi — Ravindra Saxena

● He has appealed to the 'masses' and the 'elite' alike. With his strong personality, he has convinced people that cinema is not all frivolity but a respectable art-form.
Delhi — A.K. Brahmo

PUPUL JAYAKAR

Pupul Jayakar may not be an artist or musician, but she has done more to put Indian culture on the world map than any other single individual in the country.
New Delhi — Jonathan Wade

● Her efforts to propagate India's cultural traditions abroad have earned India a prominent niche in the cultural show-case of the world. She has awakened a sense of pride in the people of this country about their own cultural heritage.
Bangalore — Ashok Ramakrishna

● Pupul Jayakar has led the renaissance in Indian art and culture. Her efforts have established India's position on the cultural map of the world.
Bombay — Panalal Kartik

MRINALINI SARABHAI

Mrinalini is not only a great artiste herself, she has also dedicated herself to the joyful cause of spreading art and culture in India and abroad.
Hyderabad — Kalpana Raman

● She has given Indian culture a new dimension and has established India in the forefront of world culture.
Calcutta — Shashikant Kanoi

● She has dedicated herself to art and culture while most of the others in the list have been influenced by the commercial aspects ruling over art.
Madras — S.B. Chandrasekaran

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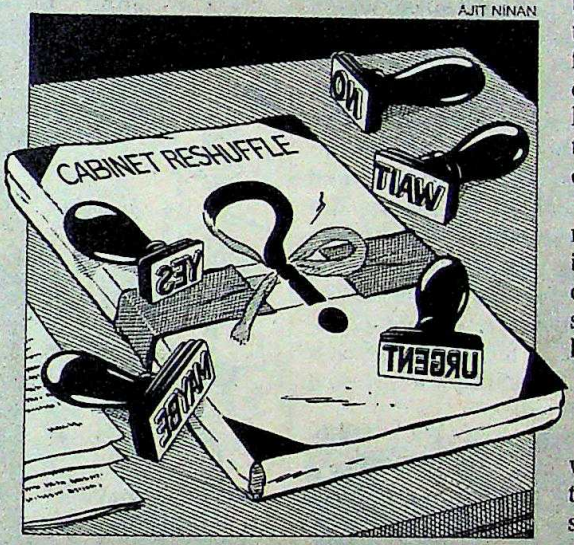
CABINET RESHUFFLE

Indecision and Uncertainty

PRIME Minister Rajiv Gandhi may have notched up many plus points in his now nearly two years in office, but cabinet-making is certainly not one of them. He has already had two major and two minor reshuffles of his council of ministers since January last year, but at almost no stage in this period has he had a complete team. At virtually every step, there has been a promise of another reshuffle to relieve ministers burdened with more than one ministry, and to induct new blood. And for the last month, despite all the evidence of yet another shake-up being in the works, the prime minister has been unable either to make up his mind or go through with what he has decided is necessary.

The last major reshuffle was on May 12, and a sequel was on the cards at the end of Parliament's monsoon session in August. A month after that, the President was asked to return to Delhi from Calcutta so that he could swear in new ministers. And now, yet another month later, the promised reshuffle is yet to materialise. Even though there has been a flurry of activity in this area (at least some ministers have been sounded about new portfolios, the prime minister has undertaken reviews of the work done in the ministries, and much paperwork has also been done for reorganising some of them), the uncertainty continues. This can hardly be conducive to proper functioning, for ministers must perennially be on tenterhooks. It also speaks poorly of a prime minister who started out by promising a government that 'works faster'.

AJIT NINAN



Cabinet government cannot work effectively without a proper cabinet. And the need for a reshuffle has never been more evident than now. The experiment of having the same man run the external affairs and commerce ministries clearly has not worked: P. Shiv Shankar is patently overloaded, and commerce needs full-time attention after the last financial year saw a 50 per cent increase in the trade deficit. Similarly, P.V. Narasimha Rao should have his hands full with human resource development and giving effect to the new education policy; yet he was first given additional charge of home affairs, to be replaced later with health and family welfare. Such examples can be multiplied: N.D. Tiwari has been holding additional charge of petroleum ever since Chandrashekhar Singh's death in July, with Sushila Rohatgi also holding additional charge of petroleum as minister of state. Like commerce, petroleum too is not a subject to be treated in this cavalier fashion. For good measure, there is the case of Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K.L. Bhagat looking after civil supplies as well (after earlier being in charge of tourism as an additional portfolio). But the biggest mess of all is in the Home Ministry, where the plethora of junior ministers and the chopping and changing of the functions of men like Arun Nehru and P. Chidambaram have left everyone confused.

If a reshuffle of the council of ministers is necessary to tidy up this messy picture and to enable attention to be focused where it is due, it is also urgently required because of the sense of drift that has unmistakably set in. Rajiv Gandhi's promise of a change and dramatic improvement in the functioning of government has all but faded, and his political initiatives (on Punjab, Assam and Mizoram, for instance) have not been matched by comparable action within the Government. Some of the ministries have been renamed, others reorganised, but to little apparent effect. Where initiative has been shown on the policy front (as with the new textile and education policy statements), there hasn't been enough follow-up action to register any noticeable change on the ground.

The experiment of giving young ministers direct charge of some ministries under the umbrella of senior cabinet ministers has worked well in some cases (railways), and should logically be followed up with a recognition of work well done. But this has been another casualty of the delayed reshuffle. Meanwhile, at the cabinet level itself, there are too few ministers with a sufficiently creditable record. Finance Minister V.P. Singh is one, but even his future has seemed uncertain in recent weeks. As for the passengers and outright failures in the council of ministers (Urban Development Minister Abdul Ghafoor being one example), Rajiv Gandhi seems to have more patience with them than does him credit.

With a third of his government's term over, the prime minister must ponder over the reasons for the increasing disillusionment that has set in after the high expectations that prevailed through most of 1985. The economy as a whole is functioning no better than before, chronic problems like housing get worse, and the Government has no coherent response to such threats as the resurgence of communalism on an altogether new scale. Indeed, the lack of momentum on several of these fronts has resulted in the total political situation deteriorating into a state of flux. The challenge that now faces Rajiv Gandhi is bigger and more complex than one of getting a proper cabinet into shape. But he cannot even begin to address some of the issues until the right men are in the right places. And, surely, he must make a determined effort now to separate the wheat from the chaff in his council of ministers, to drop the non-performers and reward those who have measured up to the responsibilities given to them. Without an effective and cohesive team, he stands little chance of regaining his earlier initiative, and of rekindling the hopes of change that had marked his first months in office.

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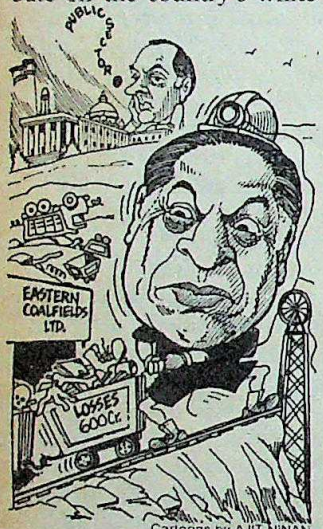
Elephantine Debate

● When Energy Minister Vasant Sathe fired a mutli-megaton salvo against the performance of the public sector in the form of a series of newspaper articles, he sparked off what has now become a continuing controversy on basic economic policy within ministerial circles. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, while not coming down squarely on either side of the issue, nonetheless supports a vigorous debate on the country's white



Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

elephant. Among the units that the energy minister blasted was the country's nationalised coal industry, which continues to sink deeper and deeper into the red. And now it seems that Sathe is about to receive some more statistical back-up from the Parliamentary Committee on Public Undertakings which has been probing the coal scene since 1984 and is expected to submit its report shortly. A sneak preview reveals that the final report will be devastating. For example, Eastern Coalfields Ltd, Coal India's largest subsidiary, has suffered cumulative losses of more than Rs 600 crore, wiping out its entire paid-up capital. It has not raised productivity or installed any major coal handling plant since 1975, and half-a-dozen major development projects have been abandoned. The committee is also planning to sock it to the fertiliser and food corporations.

The Sonia Touch

● People familiar with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's "inner circle" know that Sonia Gandhi plays a low-key but influential role in the affairs of state. Rajiv is said to trust and admire her judgement, especially about the motivation and loyalty of advisers and politicians. She has played a vital role in the selection of several important candidates both for party tickets as well as for ministerial appointments. But this political side of Sonia remains well-concealed from public view. What is less well hidden is the fact that she also advises her husband on foreign policy and protocol. In fact, Sonia has now established herself as the person who will give the final go-ahead on what gifts will be presented to visiting dignitaries. In fact, senior officials from the Ministry of External

Affairs often have to closet themselves with her before an impending state visit from a foreign plenipotentiary to mull over what would be the most suitable gift. Whether the visitor will receive a finely-woven Kashmiri carpet or a crudely-carved marble Taj Mahal—the choice is ultimately Sonia's.

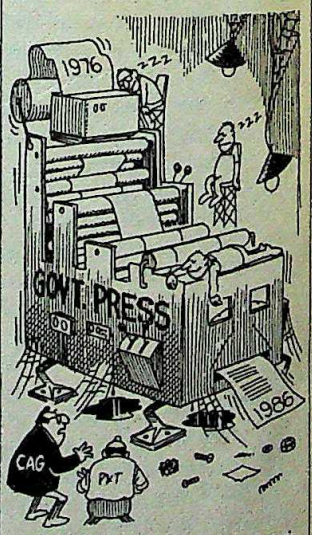
Staying Power

● Over the last several months, before the declaration of President's rule, the Centre received steady complaints from a lobby of Kashmiri politicians about the "high-handedness" of Governor Jagmohan's rule. They griped that Jagmohan's precipitous actions were allegedly "destroying" the local economy and causing much distress to the common people. But Jagmohan has informed the Centre that local

politicos were really upset at his vigorous pursuit of cases where the state's revenue had been blocked through judicial stay orders obtained by politicians who had been challenged by tax collectors. In order to give the Centre an idea of the magnitude of blocked revenue to the state, Jagmohan and his officials ordered concerned departments—cooperative, tourism, forest, transport, power development, housing, food and supplies, sales tax, and industries—to furnish details of the cases and amounts involved, including the loss of interest. About Rs 48 crore was blocked in 1,564 cases. The state's advocate general has repeatedly been moving the high court to conduct urgent hearings in many cases. And Jagmohan recently wrote to the President criticising the facility with which stay orders are given in revenue cases in the state. For his pains he has been accused by local politicians of contempt of court. And these politicians are also asking for the removal of tough, no-nonsense Advocate General Muzzaffar Baig.

Doomed Deadlines

● The operation of the government printing press at Mayapuri in Delhi is plagued with irksome delays and insufficiency. Among the victims of this mismanagement is the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), the watch-dog unit which monitors the functioning of various government departments and briefs Parliament on their performance. All CAG reports are printed at Mayapuri and it often takes as much as a year before they finally come off the press. And by then the information has often become outdated. The last CAG reports sent to the press six months ago have not been printed yet. Suggestions



that they be printed at a private press have been turned down on grounds of confidentiality. Also, the Posts Telegraph Department has been howling for years that its money orders take forever to print, and the Education Ministry has been waiting over a decade for the printing of Hindi and Sanskrit dictionaries.

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● *I heard what was clearly a gunshot before the prime minister arrived and thought it was fired to signify his arrival.*

■ ARJUN SINGH in *The Hindustan Times*

● *I am not a fixer. The law is the fixer. Either I fix the law or I fix the law-breakers. My option is very limited. And I have chosen the latter.*

■ V.P. SINGH in *Onlooker*

● *I am not a film star. Nowadays, we talk about film stars and charisma and all that. I have been a politician all my life and what charisma is I don't know. I don't depend on that.*

■ JYOTI BASU in *Sunday*

● *What is clean image with dirty people? The point is, what is clean image in politics? What is the yardstick....Are loyalty and sincerity unclean images? Did the people by going to jail to save Indira Gandhi earn a bad image? I feel he (Rajiv) will not realise this till...he becomes an ex-prime minister.*

■ GUNDU RAO in *Probe*

● *The attempt to impose Hindi is not part of national integration. It is, in fact, the enemy of integration, because it forces people to kick out against what they see as over-centralisation.*

■ MINOO MASANI in *The Sunday Observer*

● *I have not contributed anything to Parliament.*

■ SUNIL DUTT, MP, in *Probe*

● *I would certainly think I am one of the contributory factors in Zia's first public commitment to holding elections, however restricted they may have been.*

■ SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY in *Sunday Mail*

● *We are professional cricketers who earn our livelihood by playing. And if I do not play for two or three days my whole body starts aching.*

■ KAPIL DEV in *Sportsworld*

● *I will never fight in favour of the slum dwellers. Why can't they commute to work like everybody else instead of forcefully occupying government land? I have known poverty but I have no sympathy for these people.*

■ RAKHEE in *Filmfare*

● *Whenever we go for outdoor shooting to Kashmir, we see these devastating looking waiters in the hotels....While I am shooting, I even tell myself that I shouldn't be an actress, I should run away with one of the waiters.*

■ MEENAKSHI SESHADRI in *Sunday Review*

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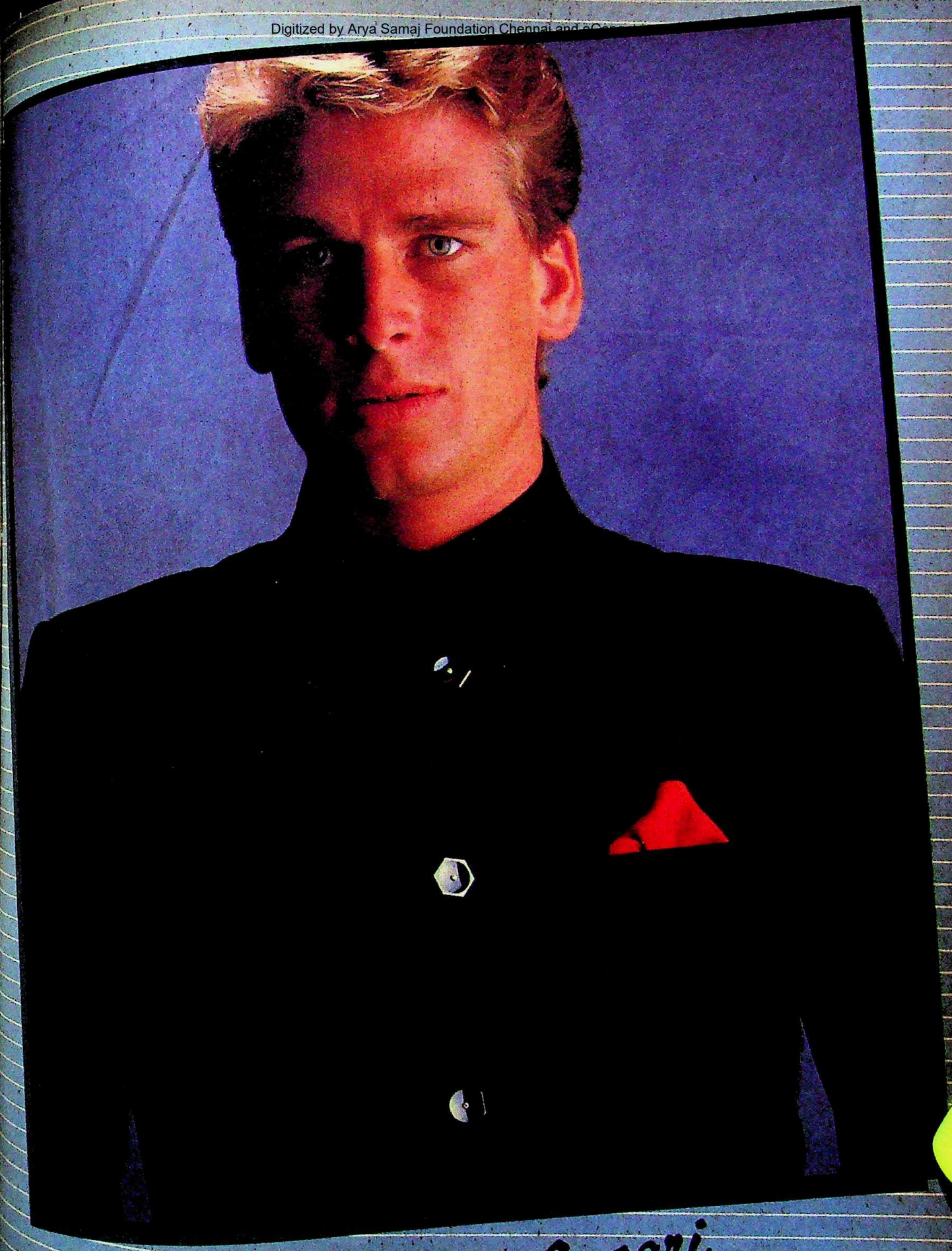

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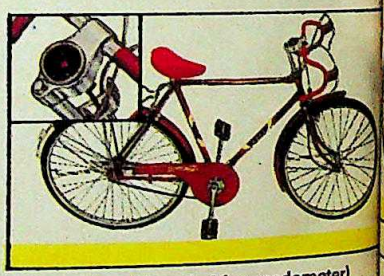

Hero Ergo (with speedometer)

Hero Hi Speed (Gents) – 3 Speed Freewhe

Hero Royal 55 cms (Lady) *

THE LARGEST SELLING

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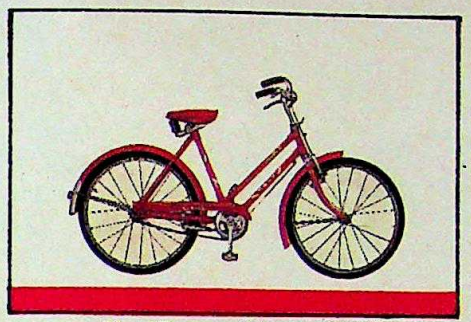
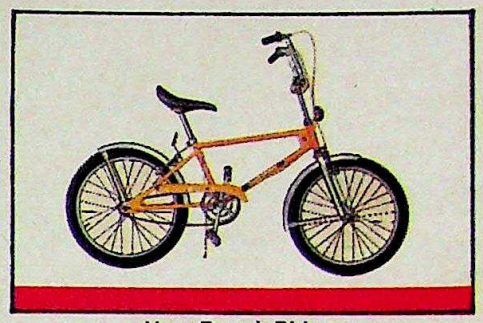
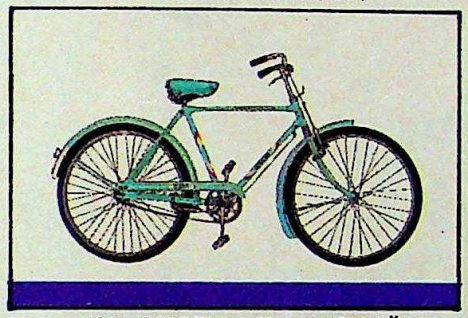
ALL YOUR'S TO EXPERIENCE.

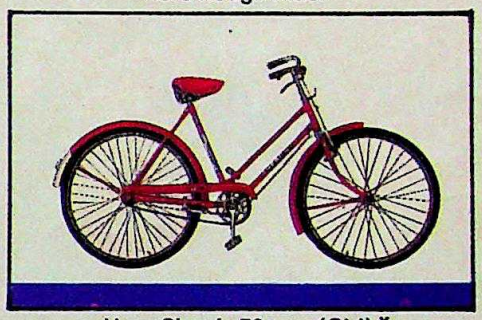
Hero Playway 35 cms (Boy) *


Hero Runner 40 cms (Girl) *

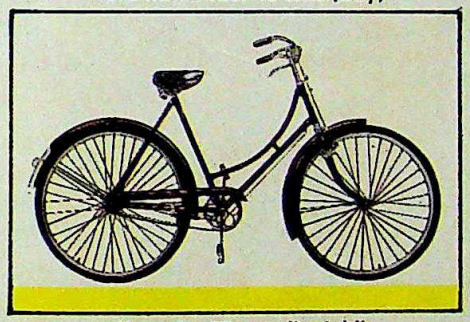

Hero Rough Rider

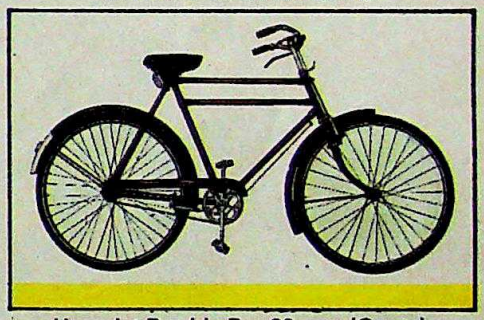
Hero Skipper Hi-Riser 40 cms


Hero Mini Rider 45 cms (Boy) *

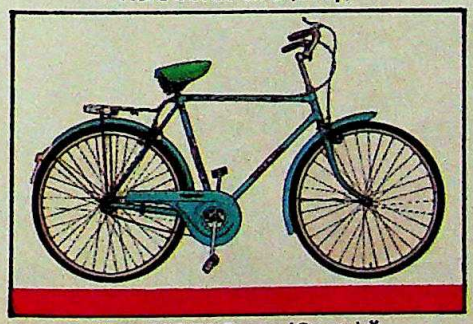

Hero Classic 50 cms (Girl) *

Hero Jet 60 cms (Gents) *


Hero Jet 55 cms (Lady) *


Hero Jet Double Bar 60 cms (Gents)

Hero Unibike 52.5 cms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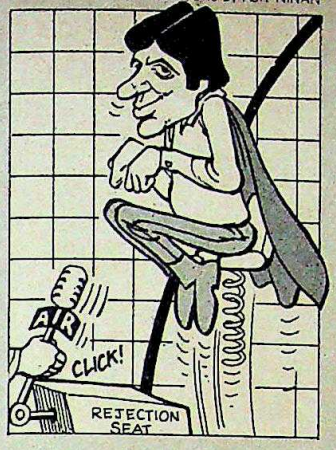
THE MASTER'S VOICE

■ Believe it or not but the Hindi film industry's leading actor for close to a decade was once dismissed as not fit to be a news-reader on All India Radio. "I failed in the audition test for the post," Amitabh Bachchan admitted to an incredulous audience at the 11th annual function of the Radio and Television Practitioners' Association in Bombay. Even as the audience wondered how anyone could summarily reject the unquestionably attractive golden voice, the superstar added: "However, I insisted on earning through my voice and later did radio spots for a livelihood."



The earnings, he told them, were a meagre Rs 50 for a spot—a pittance compared to the lakhs he raked in as a superstar for every film he magnanimously agreed to act in—and were quickly spent on wild nights at local discotheques, boogeying till the wee wee hours of the morning to the Beatles and Paul Anka. But as the star told the august gathering, the strobe lights and the music in the discotheques slowly faded off into reel life. Overnight he was catapulted into super stardom, helped by a voice that could be recognised anytime anywhere. AIR must have often wondered how they goofed up.

MERRY-GO-ROUND

■ Nothing happens in a logical fashion any more. A sub-inspector of police, bent on doing justice to his uniform, rounded up a group of 28 miscreants disturbing a public meeting and marched them to the local jail in Shimoga. En route, our hero even let himself dream of the awards he would receive for exemplary service. Considerably elated, he strode into the jail superintendent's office and told him to put his captives in the clinker. The jail superintendent, for reasons best known to him, refused to oblige. Rattled, our hero persisted, and it was then that things started moving quickly.

A clash of departments must end in an altercation. And the sub-inspector, without support on enemy territory, came out the worse for it. Actually he didn't come out at all, as he was locked up for disturbing the jail's peace.

Only then did the rearguard move in. A phone call and the sub-inspector was released after being detained for two hours. Now it was the jail superintendent who found himself under arrest. And when reports last came in, he was out on bail. What curiouser turn this story will take is anybody's guess.

BOWLED OVER

■ Jails suddenly seem to be the scene of all the action. Last fortnight, two cricketing legends—Sunil Gavaskar and Mohinder Amarnath—decided to spend some time in the capital's Tihar Jail. No, they had not been booked by the long arm of the law; they were there to play an unconventional benefit match. The match organised by former Test cricketer Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi, was held in connection with a reformatory programme run for juvenile delinquents by a couple of jail residents serving a term for espionage.

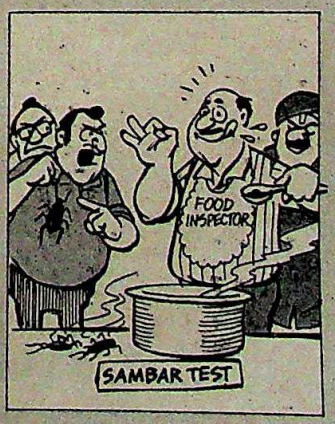
The teams, except for the star players, were chosen from amongst the young prisoners. Clad in spotless white, the two senior cricketers, hit boundaries and bowled adeptly to the wild cheering of the other inmates who had assembled to witness the match. Thrilled to be in a situation which would be the envy of any hero-worshipping schoolboy, the youngsters batted and streaked after the ball like they had seen others do. The bowlers from the home team even clean-bowled one of the two non-residents four times in successive deliveries. The two were perhaps so overawed by the unscaleable walls and the forbidding sentry posts, that they let things slip.

MISSED MEAL

■ Variety, they say, is the spice of life. But a certain reputed hotel in Secunderabad decided to take this adage to heart and serve sambar garnished with a few full-grown cockroaches in its "vegetarian food only" restaurant. Unfortunately for them, four regular customers settling down to lunch did not appreciate the change.

Recoiling in horror, they trooped into the hotel manager's office and complained, but to no avail. So both rushed to the office of the health inspector. The worthy washed his hands off the matter by directing them to the food and drug controller.

While the foursome ran around in circles, the restaurant continued to ladle out generous helpings of non-vegetarian sambar. But minutes before the food inspector arrived from Hyderabad, a fresh batch was prepared and samples handed over to him. Relieved, the hotel owner said that the customers were trouble-mongers and "it was their mischief". For all that, however, the hotel has been booked: not for the sambar, but for keeping eatables uncovered and not washing utensils properly.



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MODVAT, MMTC style, has meant a sea change for the ports at Vizag, Madras. By helping in deepening and modernising the facilities in these ports, MMTC has increased their capacity many times over.

MODVAT, MMTC style, has meant new employment opportunities to people in economically underdeveloped regions. For example, the proposed deepening of Paradip port would also spur the growth of related facilities including the railway lines. Generating employment for an additional 30,000 people in the mining regions of Orissa and Bihar.

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ONE MAN'S WORLD

by Dr. Karan Singh

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AROUND THE WORLD
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Amarnath
East and South India
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United States
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Extracts:

From essay on "Transition to the New Consciousness"

"This Earth, our mother, has nurtured consciouness from the slime of the primeval ocean billions of years ago, and sustained the human race for countless centuries. Will we repay our debt by converting her into a burnt-out cinder circling the sun into eternity?"

From essay on "Issues in the New Educational Policy"

"The creative reorientation of our Educational System, both its outer structure and its inner spirit, represents one of the most exciting challenges for the remainder of this decade. Indeed we should be able to provide an educational model not only for ourselves but for the entire developing world, which is desperately seeking a new synthesis between the traditional wisdom of the East and the technological progress of the West."

The Man:

From the "Preface" by Kishore Gandhi

"Karan Singh's perception of India extends beyond a geographical landscape to a kingdom of values which a Buddha, a Nanak, a Vivekananda, a Gandhi and a Sri Aurobindo were able to actualise. Such range and refinement is lacking on the contemporary intellectual landscape. He has merged himself completely in the spirit of India, and when he speaks of the India that matters, he is speaking of ageless and timeless insights which have kept the torch of human civilization creatively alive and the process of communication unblocked for several millennia. He believes that the passage to India is really the search for a lost language of wisdom, for a balance between life and soul, never made wholly real, but perhaps never more necessary than now. He firmly holds that India has a meaning and message for the fragmented human race, as she has always strived for humanity and not only for herself."

A selection of some of the finest writings of this great leader and thinker of modern India.

Gurukul Kangri University Haridwar

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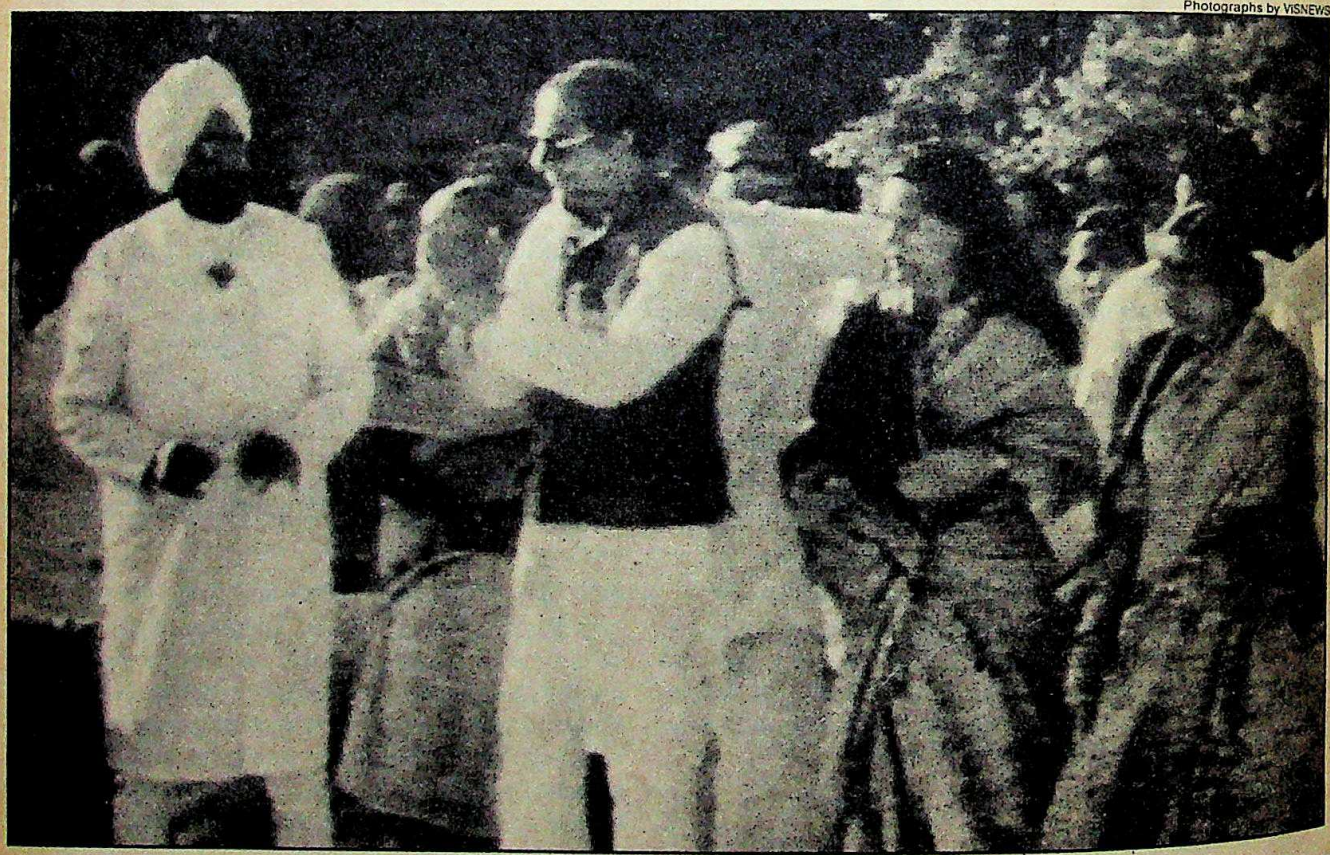
SECURITY

How safe is the P

IT was a day on which the entire country would be familiar with the prime minister's itinerary. A day on which Rajiv Gandhi should have been the most securely-guarded leader in the world. Had Karamjit Singh, the gunman, been armed with an automatic weapon or even a hand grenade instead of a crudely-manufactured *katta*—a sawed off .12 gauge shot-gun—Rajghat would have witnessed the greatest mass assassination of VIP's in terrorism's violent history. The symbolic sophistication of the time and place of the assassination attempt, and the penetration of the prime minister's elaborate security system by the would-be assassin, were all suggestive of a carefully conceived master plan. Yet the chosen weapon was the crudest imaginable, and didn't fit into the rest of the pattern.

The obvious question was immediately asked by intelligence officials investigating the assassination attempt: had Karamjit Singh's mission been deliberately planned in a manner that it would not succeed? But who would do that and why? Was Karamjit Singh a loner with a disturbed personal background, who simply did not know too much about weaponry, or had others put him up to a job with more complicated game plans in mind? Even as Rajiv Gandhi himself pointed at Pakistan, where people began asking about the assassination attempt24

Photographs by VISNEWS



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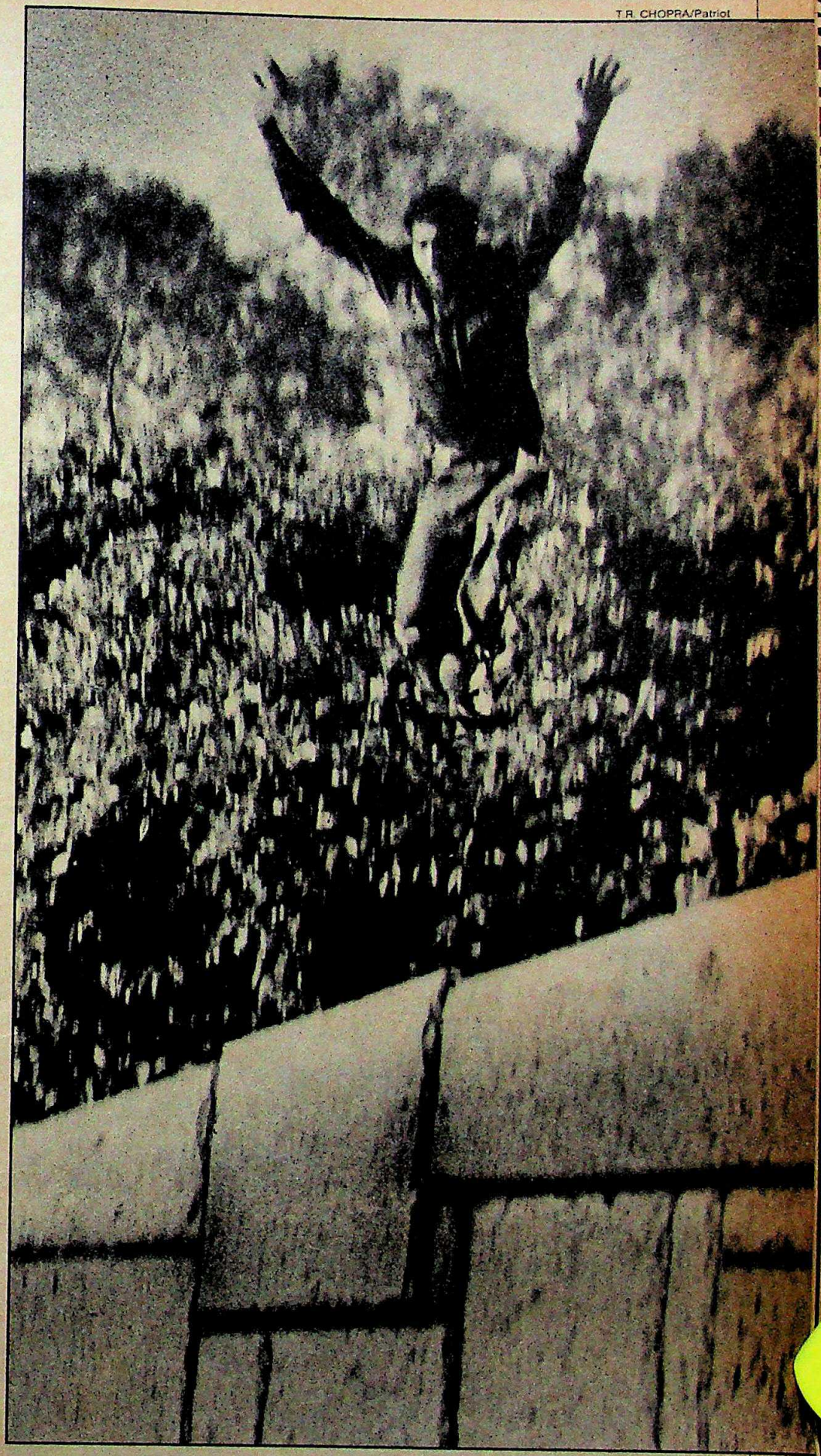
PM?

hours before it occurred, intelligence officials drew alternative scenarios. "The people behind the attempt made their point quite effectively with a loud bang and no blood," one senior official said. "The consequences and the nation-wide retaliation that would have followed an assassination would have been a totally unacceptable risk for the brains behind this plot. It is quite clear that the terrorists, who are under tremendous pressure, are using selective tactics to demonstrate to their followers that the targets on their hit-list have not been forgotten."

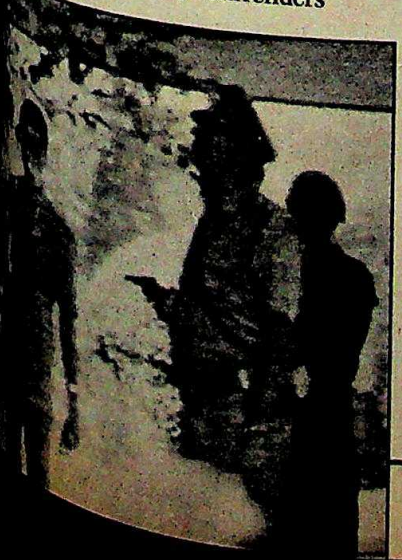
The Rajghat incident, officials said, could not be viewed in isolation from the attempt made the very next day on the life of Punjab's Director-General of Police Julio Francis Ribeiro (*see box*). "Once again," an official said, "the plan was to have maximum impact. Look at where they chose to hit him—not in Chandigarh, not in Amritsar, but in the heart of the Punjab Armed Police compound. Both attempts were clearly aimed at demoralising the bureaucracy and shaking the confidence of the nation in the system." If this were the purpose of the exercise, there is no doubt that it met with ample success as the nation shook its head in disbelief at the grave security lapses at Rajghat, and in Jalandhar.

The curtain went up on the drama at 6.55 a.m. on October 2. Rajiv Gandhi had just arrived at Rajghat and was walking to the Gandhi Samadhi when a sharp sound



T.R. CHOPRA/Patriot

News telecast in Europe showing Sonia, Rajiv and Zail Singh leaving before second gunshot; and (bottom left to right) plain clothesmen; NSG; and Delhi cops close in on gunman's hide-out; (right) Karamjit surrenders



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KARAMJIT SINGH

"A Quiet Boy"

KARAMJIT Singh, 25, comes from a broken home. His parents are estranged. He tried to make a life for himself by getting an engineering degree, but failed. He suffered another blow when a close friend was murdered during the November riots in Delhi, following Indira Gandhi's assassination. Karamjit and his Sikh friend had gone to a barber's shop to get their hair cut after the riots started; but the mob charged in and killed his friend.

His home town, Sunam, is a nondescript agricultural market town in southern Punjab. Its only claim to fame is that in 1940, Udham Singh, a youth from this town, shot dead Michael O'Dwyer, one-time governor of Punjab, in London, to avenge the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Statues of Shaheed Udham Singh dot the entrances to the town, and several institutions are named after him.

In fact, not many people in Sunam know Karamjit. Even in the bazaar where his father Amar Singh, 45, runs a small watch and radio repair shop, he is not very well known. "He was a quiet boy who sometimes attended to the shop," recalls a mechanic at the Guru Nanak Engineering Works opposite the shop. "Amar Singh is an honest God-fearing type. But his relations with his wife are strained. He mostly stays back at the shop and eats something around here. The poor fellow loves this son the most," adds Gurcharan Singh, who runs a machine shop close by.

By other accounts, Karamjit had been disowned by his father, and he seems to have been very close to his mother, Dayal Kaur. His parents have had property disputes, and the mother has accused the father of infidelity. His elder brother has a small provisions store but is barely able to manage it because he is mentally retarded. The youngest brother is learning masonry. The mother and her three sons live across Padshahi Pahli Gurudwara, a simple but imposing structure.

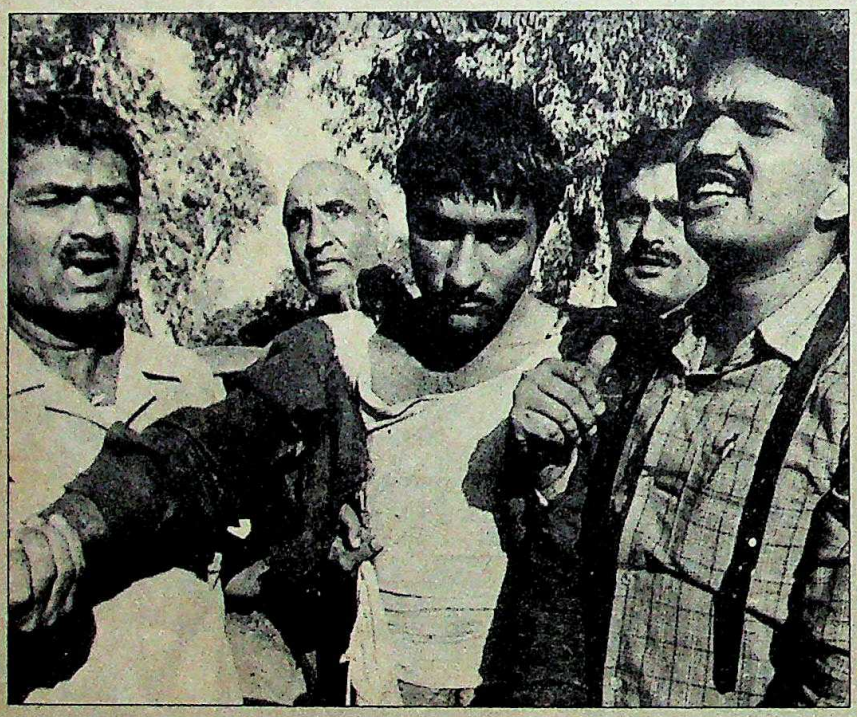
Most neighbours are scared to talk to outsiders and only whisper scanty details. The police and CBI had recently raided the shop and the house. "We discovered nothing incriminating and the family has no background to show any terrorist links," local police officials say. "Karamjit was away in Delhi for the past three months. Poor Amar Singh would not know what he was doing there. Karamjit had told him that he had got a job there." Former schoolmates said Karamjit was intelligent and always well-behaved, but his poverty always interfered with his studies. Most of his townsfolk were astonished at the news that he tried to kill the prime minister.

Lal Singh and Amar Singh, arrested by the CBI from Sunam, are Karamjit's maternal uncles. Lal Singh owns a small farm and Amar Singh works as an operator with the Punjab Tubewell Corporation, a state government undertaking. The *granthi* who was picked up from a gurudwara in Chhehata, an Amritsar industrial suburb, was released by the police as he was found to have no connection with Karamjit. Anyone even casually mentioned by Karamjit during his interrogation is being detained for questioning.

Punjab police officials in Chandigarh have been sending warning signals to Delhi that unknown individuals upset by the events of the past two years are bigger threats than the organised groups of terrorists. But there is no way of identifying such individuals, or of keeping them under surveillance.

—GOBIND THUKRAL in Sunam

Karamjit after arrest; and (bottom) his mother and brother: broken home



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was heard. The prime minister's security guards tightened their ring around him in reflex action, but Rajiv kept walking. President Zail Singh came shortly afterwards. Meanwhile, the men of the Special Protection Group (SPG), who were around Rajiv, as well as the Delhi police wondered whether the sound had been that of a scooter engine backfiring. The bullet—a crudely manufactured one-inch diameter ball—had fallen into a flower-bed behind the prime minister. The flower-bed had been repeatedly watered as a security precaution in case a detonator was buried underneath, and the bullet landed in soft mud, leaving a faint trail.

One of the policemen present soon noticed this, and the first surmise was that it might have been caused by a malfunctioning detonator underneath. Trained labradors were immediately brought in and special detonator detectors were also pressed into service. Both drew a blank, but then the bullet itself was found. Even as the prayer service went on, the security guards and the policemen now had no doubt that someone had fired at Rajiv.

FULLY alert to the danger now, the security officials first assumed that since the area immediately around the samadhi had already been security-cleared, the shot must have come from either side or from the rear. Policemen fanned out, checking the hedges and every tree on either side of the entrance (planted over the years by various visiting dignitaries). When this drew a blank, they checked the buildings across the road. Again they found nothing. But the most obvious spot they failed to check was precisely where Karamjit Singh lay waiting for his next opportunity. And the security officials and policemen have no explanation for ignoring the creeper-covered canopy, an obvious hiding spot.

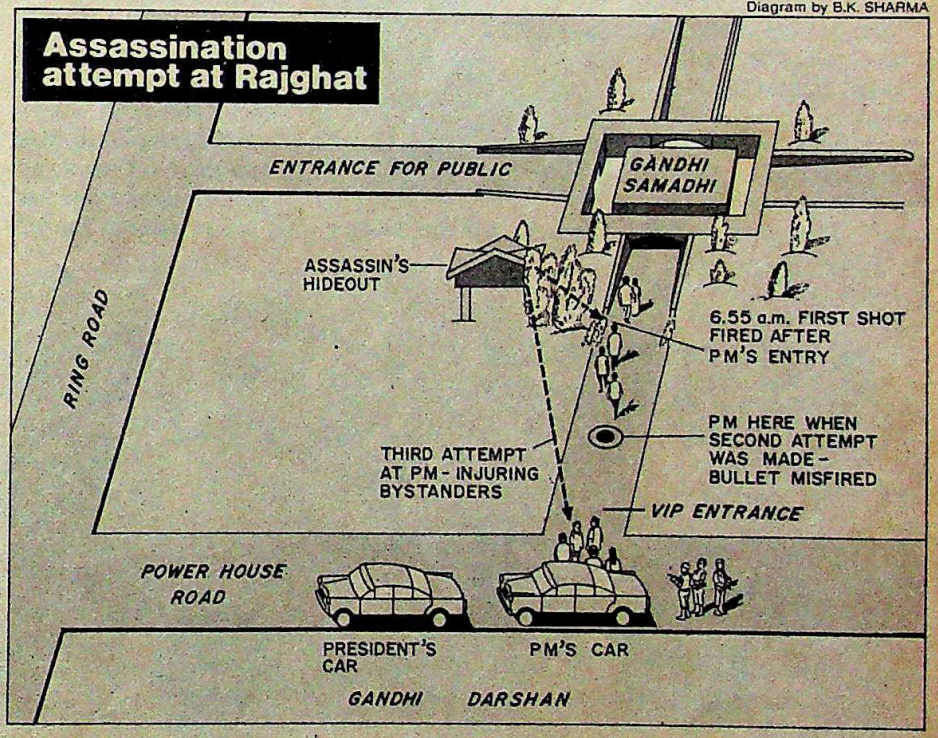
Having drawn a blank, Gautam Kaul, Delhi's additional commissioner of police (security), and SPG Deputy Director M.R. Reddy, huddled to debate whether the prime minister and other VIP's should be taken out of Rajghat from an alternative route. By one account, Reddy was keen that they do so, but Kaul said this meant a longer walk, that traffic arrangements at the other entrance may not be perfect, and that since the area had been fully checked again after the shot, they should stick to the initial route back. The possibility was also discussed that the initial shot may have been fired to decoy the prime minister into taking the alternative route, where other gunmen would be waiting.

It was finally decided that the VIP's would return along the route they had come. And when they did, shortly before 8 a.m., a second shot was heard. Guards ran towards the canopy and the samadhi, guns at the ready. The President and prime minister, meanwhile, were walking arm-in-arm to their waiting cars. Zail Singh heard the shot and asked Rajiv: *"Yeh kahan se hamla ho raha hai* (where is this attack coming from)?" The prime minister replied almost in jest: "This is the way they greeted me when I came. I suppose this is now their send-off." Rajiv escorted the President into his bullet-proof Mercedes, and then he and Sonia Gandhi turned to get into their own specially-fitted Ambassador when the third shot rang out. The shot went wide, hitting Brijender Singh Mowai, a

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Injured Mowai (above left); and Lal; and (bottom right) Buta Singh giving orders after third shot: slow reflexes

Diagram by B.K. SHARMA



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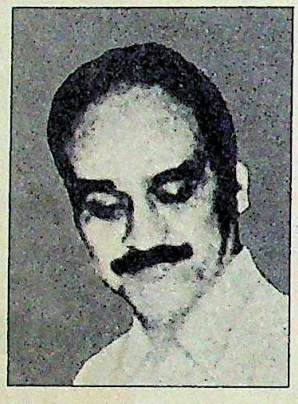
Congress(I) MLA, and Ram Charan Lal, ex-additional district judge from Bayana in Rajasthan, who were some distance behind the prime minister. Rajiv snapped at Sonia to get into the car and he followed suit. Immediately after the second shot, the guards had formed a tight, almost impenetrable ring around the prime minister. But even at this stage they did not do what they should have done: push Rajiv into the car as quickly as possible.

But the guards (including plain-clothesmen) had seen the puff of smoke from the canopy and shots were immediately fired into it with their 9mm German Mauser pistols. Suddenly, a young, sallow-complexioned, clean-shaven man in green stood up on the roof of the 10-foot high canopy alongside the VIP walkway. His hands above his head, he shouted: "*Main* surrender *karta hoon* (I am surrendering)." The securitymen including Black Cat commandos from the National Security Guard (NSG), quickly surrounded the canopy. Home Minister Buta Singh and Delhi Lt-Governor H.L. Kapur frantically asked the guards to shoot the man, but Gautam Kaul screamed out: "*Goli mat chalaiye, goli mat chalaiye* (don't shoot, don't shoot)." Kaul wanted the man taken alive. As Karamjit Singh scrambled down from the creeper-covered canopy, police officers surged towards him and stripped him naked, looking for possible weapons on his body. Suddenly everybody was everywhere and everyone had assumed command. The SPG, the NSG and the Delhi police were suddenly into top gear—after the action was over—revealing, sadly, the rust in their apparently well-oiled machinery.

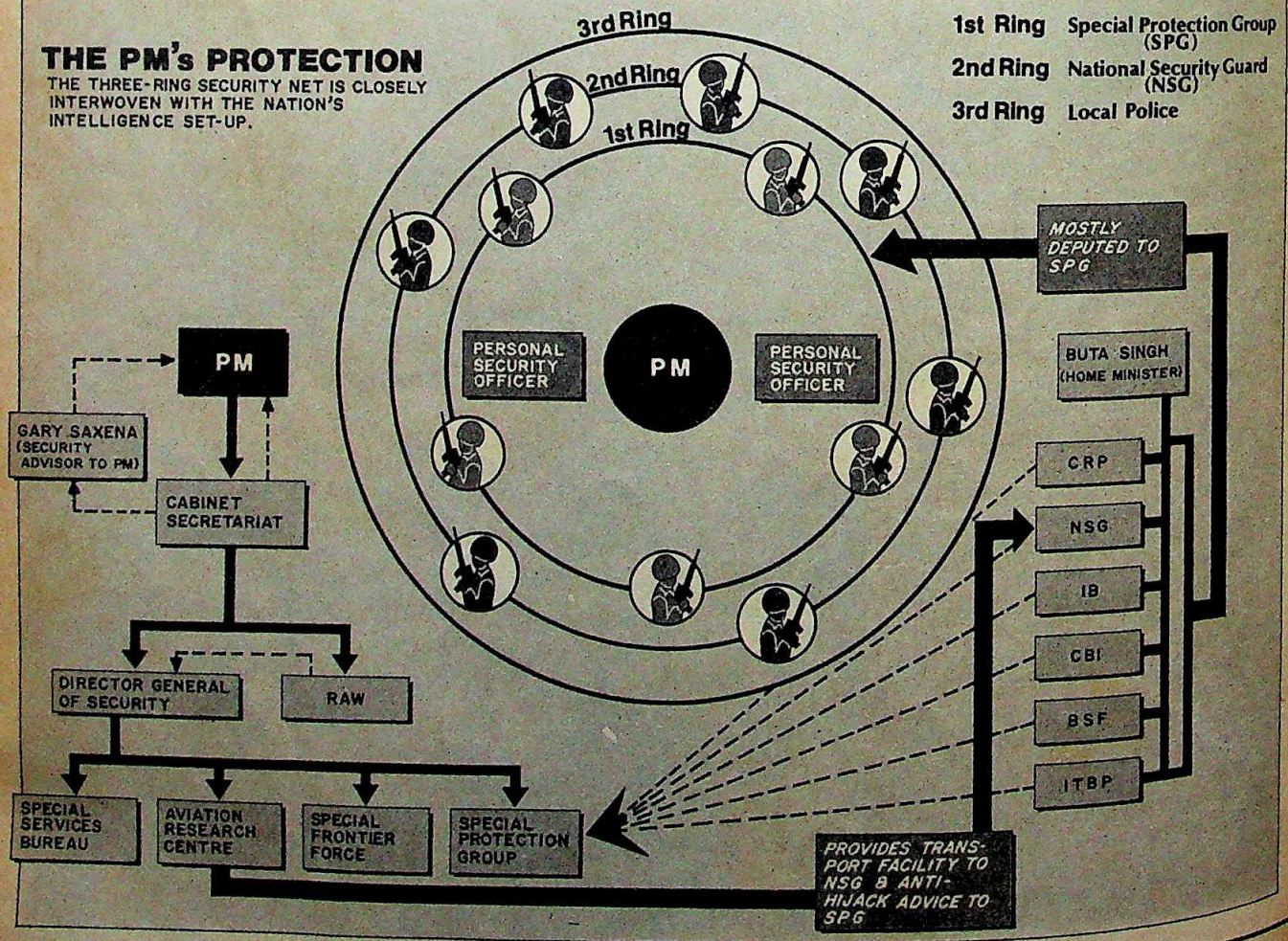

Security Adviser Saxena

If Rajiv and Zail Singh survived it was simply because Karamjit Singh had a poor weapon in his hands. A partially-spent, dented cartridge was found next to Karamjit's belongings on the canopy, including a large plastic sheet, roasted gram wrapped in a handkerchief, a large jerrycan of water, tablets of terramycin and pain-killers, a mosquito-repellant cream and a box of matches.

Karamjit had been camping on the canopy roof-top since September 25. He was sitting up there even when the security men came to comb the area the evening before. The dog squad sniffed suspiciously at the canopy, but the assailant was saved by a beehive that sent the policemen scurrying. The screening and combing operations—supposed to begin at least 24 hours before the scheduled function—were in effect started only around 4.00 p.m. the previous evening, which means that the security personnel entrusted with the search were left with only so many hours of daylight to scour the sprawling acres of Rajghat.

The security failure was all the more glaring because the Intelligence Bureau's Additional Director P.K. Mullick, had personally informed Gautam Kaul of an

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



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unusual tip-off from the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) about a possible assassination attempt. The secret information, obtained in Ludhiana, had been passed on by RAW Director Ranjan Roy, on September 27 to all groups—including the SPG—responsible for protecting the prime minister. It read: "According to an unverified report, an attempt would be made on the life of our prime minister when he goes to Rajghat on October 2, 1986, to lay a wreath on Gandhiji's samadhi. The would-be assassin, a clean-shaven Sikh, was victim of the Delhi riots. He is likely to approach the area in the guise of a *mali* (gardener) and would hide himself in the bushes nearby." Said a Delhi police official in defence: "These tip-offs from the Intelligence Bureau have come to be treated as routine warnings before every function the prime minister attends." He did admit, though, that there was no excuse for the exclusion from the search of the only possible hideout that could be used by a potential assassin, the canopy.

The SPG cannot shirk its share of the responsibility, either. Its members clearly failed to take action after the first shot was fired, and also failed to pay adequate heed to the RAW warning. Though the SPG's defence is that while the planning and the system could not be faulted, and it is the implementation that is to be blamed, there were certainly some failures of the system too. The VIP's would have to cover quite a distance on foot, from their cars to the main samadhi, and this area was left uncovered by metal detectors. Only one metal detector was positioned at the inside gate, and this served little useful purpose, as the turn of events eventually proved.

Soon after the incident, the prime minister summoned an emergency three-hour meeting at his official residence, 7 Race Course Road, and formed a crisis management committee. Its first action was to suspend Kaul and hand over the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Meanwhile, the finger-pointing started. RAW officials were quick to point out that their super-sleuthing had helped to alert other agencies in advance. The NSG's commandos came under fire for their poor marksmanship. But they criticised the SPG for its inability to respond quickly. SPG officers blamed the Delhi police for not having adequately secured the area the previous evening (which is undeniable), and Delhi police officers responded by saying that their force had been made the convenient scapegoat. Rank and file policemen see the suspension of Kaul as a humiliating blow to their morale. And an assistant commissioner of police in Delhi tersely pointed out: "Nothing will serve the terrorists better than a demoralised police force in the capital."

BUT the very fact that so many fingers were being pointed in so many directions is an indication that there may be too many fingers in the VIP security pie, and conflicting chains of command to boot. In its basic structure, the security around the prime minister appears to be simple and effective. He is surrounded by three security rings. The inner ring, consisting of a handful of armed men including his two personal security officers Ravi Nath and Mahendra Singh, is part of the 800-member SPG—a force created by Minister of State for Defence Arun Singh and the former security chief Dr S. Subramaniam, in the aftermath of Mrs Indira Gandhi's assassination. The SPG is made up of deputationists from the police and paramilitary forces.

The middle ring draws its dungareed Black Cats from the 5,000-man NSG, set up recently as an anti-terrorist force. Its normal function is not VIP protection, but it has been deputed for this task because of terrorist threats to them. This ring stays about 15 feet away from the prime minister, and its job is to pursue fleeing assassins and secure an entire VIP area after an alert is sounded. The third, outermost ring is composed of the local armed police, which is responsible for securing and flushing out sensitive areas at least 24 hours in advance of the prime minister's visit and manning outposts as well as strategic street locations in jeeps and other vehicles. The SPG is also responsible for coordinating security measures in advance when the prime minister leaves Delhi for domestic as well as foreign tours.

But these three rings are inextricably interwoven with the country's national security and intelligence operations (*see chart*). "The problem is that the entire set-up is a mishmash," one senior intelligence official said. "There are conflicting loyalties, jealousies, and divided commands. The three rings are, in effect, separate both at the operational as well as the headquarters level."

After Mrs Gandhi's assassination, the Government had decided to revamp the earlier security system, which had been almost entirely handled by the Delhi police and, for a brief period after Rajiv became prime minister, by the Special Frontier Force (SFF). But the SFF was relieved of this duty after it was decided that its men were not really trained for long hours of staying alert with nothing happening. It was also found that some of the force's guns had gone off accidentally and that officers in the force had been jockeying shamelessly for power within the set-up. In one instance, an officer tried to set-

INQUIRIES

Post Mortem Begins

A number of inquiries have predictably been sparked off following the assassination attempt on the prime minister. A panel under Cabinet Secretary B.G. Deshmukh has been charged with identifying dereliction of duty, lapses in security by the different agencies involved and recommending remedial measures. The panel is expected to submit its report by October 31.

The Delhi police began its own internal review after announcing, on the very first day, the suspension of Additional Commissioner of Police Gautam Kaul and some of his deputies, including Sub-Inspector Balwant Singh, who was stationed just below the canopy where Karamjit Singh hid, but who had wandered off from the point when the shots were fired.

The Special Protection Group and the National Security Guard have both been directed to assess their own lapses in the incident and the Intelligence Bureau—reduced to a mere intelligence-feeding agency of late—has been asked to actively oversee and prepare spot reports on the security arrangements at all prime ministerial engagements in Delhi.

But the main inquiry into the incident has been handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), in particular to the team that recently proved its acumen in investigating the Vaidya murder case. A week after they began investigations, the CBI sleuths are convinced that the murder was not a one-man plan. The CBI is expected to make a detailed report within the next few weeks.

—TANIA MIDHA

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tle scores with another by planting a hand grenade, but only managed to blow off his own arm. A court martial followed. Later, a crack army commando force was called in to do security duty. But suggestions that the security be handled exclusively by the army were rejected on the grounds that it would gain too much importance in an essentially civilian area, and because the intelligence community believed that VIP security as well as the fight against Sikh terrorism (in which civilian intelligence is more involved) should go hand in hand.

It was after all this chopping and changing that the final three-ring system (with the SPG, NSG and local police) was evolved. And certainly, the prime minister now lives and works in what are virtual fortresses. The road in front of his house is closed to traffic. His residence is equipped with the latest in communications equipment. The office as well as residence are surrounded by armed guards. Visitors are carefully frisked. And even ministers of state must leave their cars at the gate, enter through the formal reception area, and go through metal detectors. Cabinet ministers, who can bypass this area and enter directly, must

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

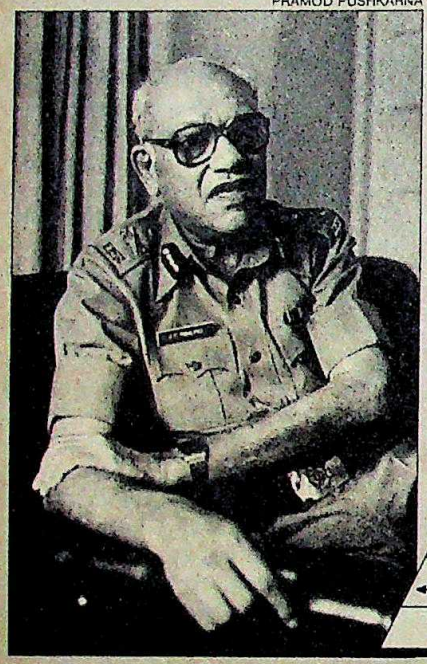
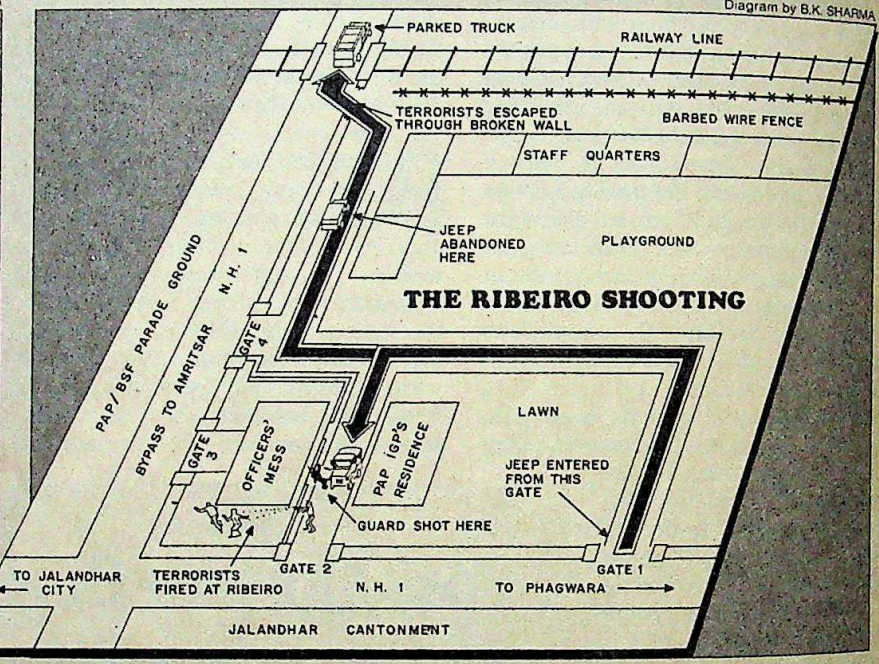


Diagram by B.K. SHARMA



ATTEMPT ON RIBEIRO

Hitting Deep

SIX jeep-borne terrorists who struck at the heavily protected Punjab Armed Police (PAP) headquarters on the Sher Shah Suri Marg in Jalandhar Cantonment and nearly killed the country's super-cop Julio Francis Ribeiro, dealt another blow last fortnight to the country's bloated security system. "They thought they'd killed me. My wife thought I was dead. It was only *waheguru* who protected me. He must be more happy with me as I am fighting to protect innocent lives. They must have done something to annoy him," said Ribeiro, showing a graze on his left arm.

Ribeiro and his wife Melba had been strolling on the left lawn of the officers' mess, when an olive green jeep emblazoned with the word 'POLICE' halted near the mess gates. One terrorist in the uniform of a police officer told PAP guard Kulwant Singh that he wanted to inspect his weapon. Obligingly, Kulwant took out the magazine from his Sten gun. Within moments three others alighted from the jeep, scaled a mound and climbed onto the boundary wall from where they began spraying bullets. "I just heard a shot, ducked like a football goalkeeper and lay on the ground. My wife also took cover," Ribeiro recalls.

Within two minutes the terrorists, all in perfect police gear, fled. They abandoned the jeep and escaped through a gap in the complex's perimeter wall. Next they climbed the railway over-bridge nearby and jumped onto a truck that was already in motion and disappeared swiftly.

In the 15-minute drama, they left behind one CRPF constable Kuldip Raj, 26, dead and two PAP and two CRPF jawans wounded. Melba Ribeiro was hit in her calf. The entire campus was left dazed by the deftness with which the mission was carried out. Not a single shot was fired in return and no policeman gave chase to the terrorists even though there were scores of vehicles, jeeps, cars and trucks in ready order. Some 50 police gunmen had been guarding the four gates and several residences of officers in this top security complex.

There had been repeated warnings from both the state intelligence and the Intelligence Bureau that the terrorists would come after Ribeiro, either in army or police disguise. And yet, the security measures failed when exactly this kind of assault was made. The terrorists were heavily armed with a Thomson machine-gun, a Sten gun, two self-loading rifles and a .455 revolver. The jeep entered through gate number one on the Jalandhar-Phagwara side of the national highway, though some dispute this and point to gate number four on the Jalandhar-Amritsar side as the place of entry. "Through this gate we do not allow any vehicles except those of the DGP or IGP," said a burly Sikh guard on duty at gate number one.

A week-long intensive interrogation of the guards and other suspected PAP men and officers has not, so far, led to any conclusive solution of the mystery of

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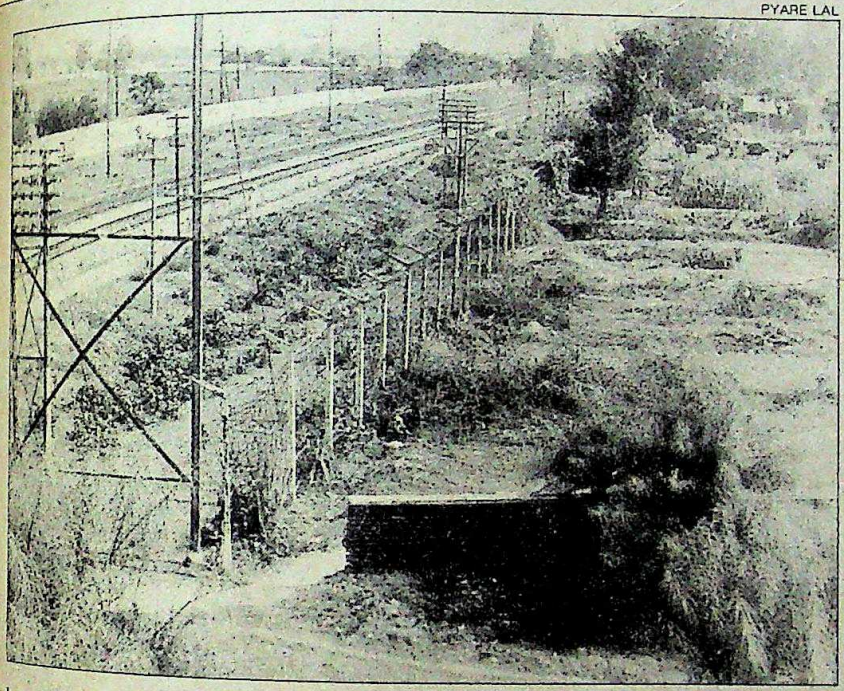
also leave their cars and personal staff outside, from where they are driven to the prime minister's residential office in separate cars deployed by the SPG. Other visitors are issued laminated passes that are required to be shown at three separate locations. The spacious lawns are fitted with hidden voice recorders. And from a special room fitted with closed-circuit TV, SPG guards monitor the movements of all the visitors being filmed by hidden cameras. The security operation in the complex is directed and supervised by Devender Singh, an IPS officer from the Rajasthan cadre, who has replaced Subramaniam and whose office at 9 Race Course Road is next to Rajiv's residence.

But the prime minister also moves out and travels a great deal. And this is where the security system's cracks begin to appear, partly because of the divided loyalties and lack of a unified chain of command. For one thing, there is an enormous difference in the working conditions and privileges of those in the SPG and those in the Delhi police (who had been doing the SPG's work earlier). The SPG as an elite force has not been subjected to any of the budgetary restrictions normal in the Government: it has had the latest

PYARE LAL



Terrorists' escape route: leaky system

how the jeep entered the complex. The timing chosen by the terrorists was perfect and had to be based on inside information. The morning hours are usually a time of relaxation, with most officers playing golf and jawans busy in the routine morning drills.

The terrorists missed their prime target because they anticipated immediate retaliatory fire from within the complex, and so gave themselves less time than they needed. "They overestimated the police readiness and reaction. If they had risked a little more, they would not only have killed our valued chief but upset all the achievements of the past six months. We were just lucky," says a senior intelligence officer.

The complex should have been the best protected place in Punjab. Says Chief Minister Surjit Singh Barnala: "There has been a definite, serious security lapse. The guards were not trained, they were not cautious. Somebody inside knew the entire set-up. The terrorists knew which side they should go, even the passage through the barbed wire. Since our increased onslaught on the terrorists, they have been eager for actions that will give them publicity mileage."

Meanwhile, the terrorists have repeatedly been able to pierce through the security system. On September 30, they successfully penetrated the frequency of the police wireless system, jamming it for half an hour, first in Amritsar district and later cutting off the whole state. The policemen manning the wireless system heard: "Khalistan, Khalistan and Khalistan zindabad". Army and police experts have so far not been able to locate the equipment or even pinpoint its direction. One opinion is that the jamming must have been done from across the border, in Pakistan. But a high-level intelligence source points to an earlier jamming and disturbance in the frequency after the Muktsar killings, and says that the terrorists could be having enough powerful equipment to disturb the communication network right inside the country. This is the third time, since April, that the police has had to change its internal wireless frequencies and establish new codes.

Most police officers are now wary of using the wireless network. But as one officer confided: "Even in the telephone exchanges, the terrorists have their sympathisers and valuable information gets leaked." Added another: "Sympathisers have penetrated everywhere and I have no doubt that they helped in the attack on Ribeiro."

As yet, it is mostly guesswork that is involved in identifying the terrorists who tried to kill Ribeiro. Some police sources were quick to announce that former policemen Sukha Sipahi, alias General Labh Singh of the Khalistan Commando Force, and a former head constable, Sewa Singh, were involved and that the gang was led by Panthic Committee member Dhanna Singh, who had announced the battle for Khalistan. Other intelligence sources say that Tarsem Singh, the dreaded terrorist, is back from Canada and could have been part of the gang.

But the only real clue so far is the truck in which the terrorists escaped and later tried to burn after abandoning it in Kapurthala district. The owners, Rajinder Kaur and her husband Karaj Singh of Amritsar, have admitted that Wassan Singh, another member of the Panthic Committee, had summoned the truck to Chowk Mehta—headquarters of the Damdami Taksal—a day earlier. But the driver, a nephew of the couple who is also known to acknowledge his closeness to the late Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, has been absconding.

The terrorists are keen to get Ribeiro because he has restored the sagging morale of the Punjab police, which is now taking the fight into the terrorists' camp. Ribeiro's new challenge will be to continue to boost the morale of his men, even in the face of such temporary, yet demoralising, set-backs.

—GOBIND THUKRAL in Jalandhar

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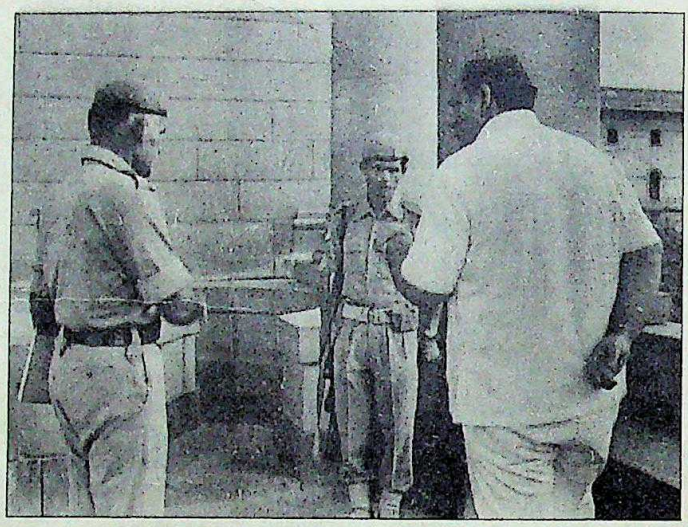
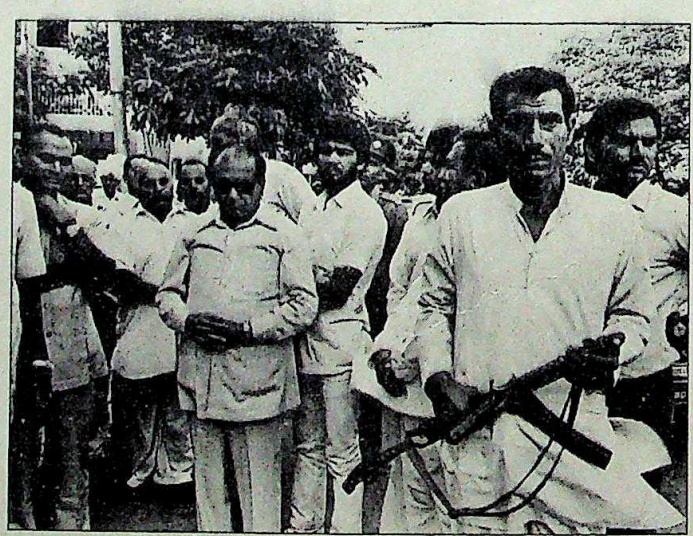
weapons and gadgetry imported, its men get 50 per cent extra pay as a special allowance, they are guaranteed government housing in a capital where this is in short supply, they get handsome kitting allowances, and they are insured for lakhs of rupees (depending on rank). They have inevitably got the privilege of travelling abroad with the prime minister, and there is resentment against them in the other agencies because of what is seen as their overbearing attitude and arrogance. Subramaniam, the founder-chief of the SPG, seems to have been an especially unpopular man because of his abrasiveness, though no one questions his ability.

Tensions have arisen because the SPG's special conditions of service have not been given to the others. Typically, a constable in the security division of the Delhi police gets none of the extra pay and allowances, he works longer hours, and he belongs to a force that is often at the receiving end of the SPG's displeasure. One day last fortnight, these constables were asked to assemble before dawn (they had to find their own transport, unlike the SPG), given their weapons and taken to the airport, from where the prime minister was taking off by helicopter to inspect the NSG's headquarters in nearby Gurgaon. They were on duty till close to 10 a.m., after the prime minister returned, and had to assemble again in less than two hours to man the area around Ashok Hotel, where Rajiv was hosting a lunch for King Hussein of Jordan. They were there till after 3 p.m., and were called upon to be present yet again at another hotel, for a wedding reception that the prime minister was attending. They got back to their homes around 10 p.m., and were told to reassemble the next morning at 6 a.m. Said a police officer: "They were not given lunch packets while they guarded the hotel, they must have been hungry at various times in the day, and they saw the SPG men being obviously much better looked after."

The result has been bad blood between the two main forces responsible for the prime minister's security. Inevitably, coordination and the issue of who is in charge has been a persistent and touchy question. At another level, meanwhile, there are even more cooks with their fingers in the security broth. Under the Cabinet Secretariat come the director-general of security (DGS) and RAW. Under the DGS are the Special Services Bureau (SSB), responsible for programmes in border areas, and the Aviation Research Centre (ARC), a crack outfit charged with transporting security personnel—in particular the NSG—at a moment's notice to trouble-spots. Among the forces that the Home Ministry controls are the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the NSG, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and the CBI, as well as the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).





Protected VIP's Nehru (top); and Bhagat: stretched security

In both subtle and obvious ways, all these groups are involved in VIP security and answer either to the Cabinet Secretariat or to Gary Saxena, the former RAW chief who, as security adviser to the prime minister, serves as a filter between all these agencies and Rajiv. The SPG depends on virtually all the other agencies for its recruits and their training. IB personnel are also members of SPG in order to keep a surveillance on recruits. The NSG is also trained by the army and depends on various paratrooper and infantry battalions for recruits, most of whom are under 35 years of age and after a period revert back to their parent organisations.

The NSG, an elite unit, reports both to its Home Ministry bosses as well as to the DGS because it depends on the ARC for logistical support. Even the men in the SPG continue to have special bonds with the paramilitary forces, each of which has its own bureaucratic hierarchy.

As one intelligence official put it: "Unified command may exist on paper, but in reality there are deep divisions. We really do not have any exclusively trained and raised internal security or intelligence operatives. Most of the agencies are made up of officials who have been trained as IPS officers." A former army intelligence officer added: "Just because a man wears black dungarees it does not mean he is a commando. One of the biggest mistakes people make is to refer to the people who protect the VIP's as commandos. The only specialised commandos in the country are in specially-trained army battalions. They have some interaction with the VIP security forces and even train them. But this training is haphazard and consists of a few crash courses. No real commando would ever mistake a gunshot for a scooter backfire. You've got to be in tune with the terrorists' psyche, and manning all the high points and vantage points should be second nature."

The men primarily responsible for the prime minister's security have

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time to redis
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honeymoon!

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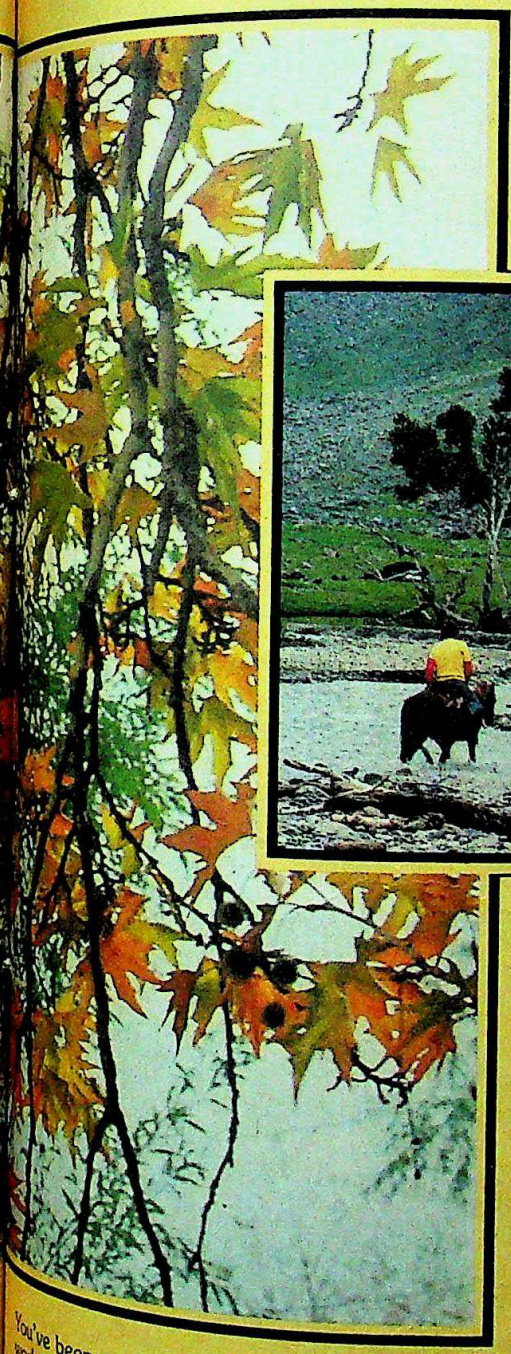

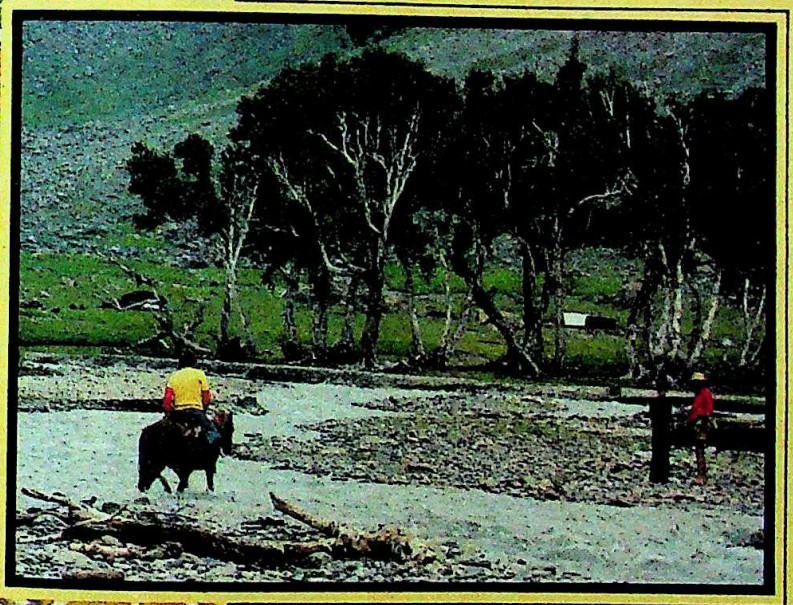

You've been going through life together, working, fulfilling duties – just following a routine. And somewhere along the way, you've lost that romantic edge. Now is the time to rediscover it. Make a trip to Kashmir this autumn and weave romance into your life. Bring alive the memories of your first honeymoon!

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received their basic training either in the ITBP or BSF, with a few special courses near Gurgaon and the army's pistol firing range in Khanpur, near Delhi. Even a Home Ministry official observed: "ITBP personnel are primarily trained in manning observation posts on the border, in areas under army control. The BSF has similar duties along with anti-smuggling chores on the Pakistan border. During emergencies, because they are not fully trained, they are only given soft core sectors to defend under army command. And one can certainly not call the Delhi Armed Police commandos. So the question is, what is so special about the Special Protection Group?"

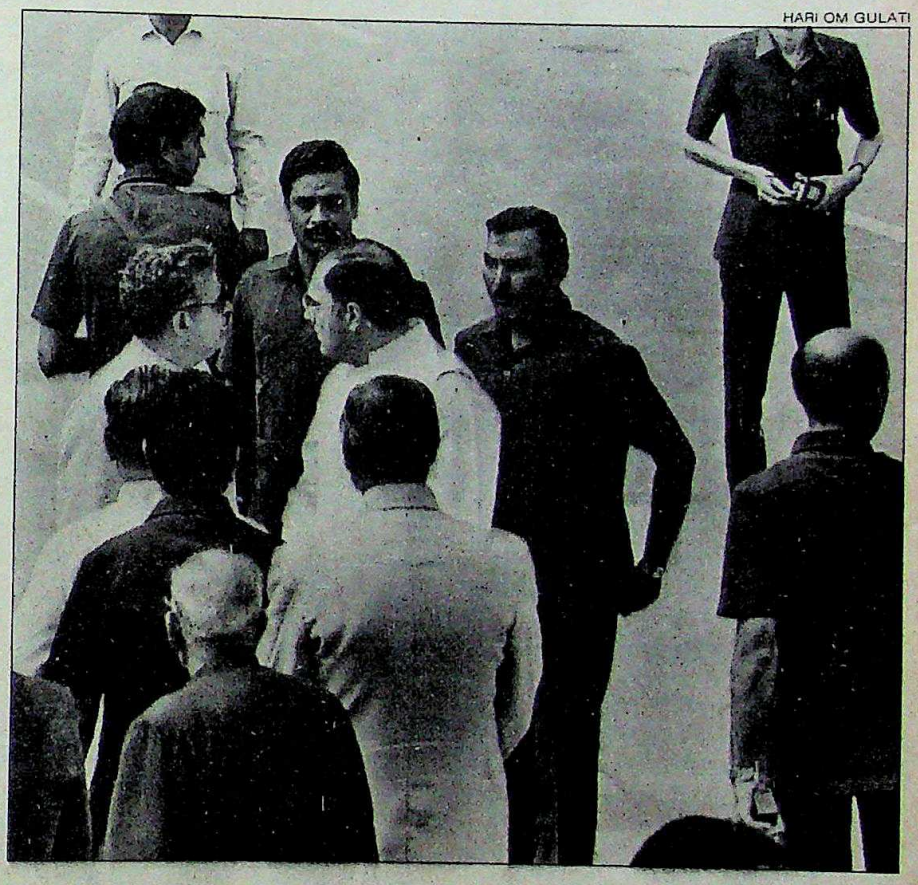
BUT whether it is the SPG or any of the other security agencies, life is not easy when you are trying to protect Rajiv Gandhi. The prime minister insists on driving his imported jeep at dangerously high speeds in Delhi and on his tours to places like the north-east and Andhra Pradesh. Recently, he drove his jeep so fast that one of the security cars behind him overturned in the effort to keep up with him on a curve. Earlier, an advance vehicle trying to keep a distance between itself and the jeep zipping along behind, hit a man on a scooter. As everyone braked, the car immediately behind Rajiv rammed into the rear of the jeep. The former SPG chief Subramaniam was a man given to plain speaking and had expressed his severe annoyance to Rajiv over some of these instances and his high-speed driving. Subramaniam was posted out to a diplomatic position in Bonn.

If all this makes life difficult for the securitymen, their resources are stretched to the full by the growing list of VIP's who have to be protected against terrorist attacks. The list in Delhi alone now totals 260, and apart from the President, vice-president and prime minister, includes ministers, politicians, defence officers, judges, civilian officers and journalists. And all this has to be done by some 2,000 men in the Delhi police security division, apart from some additional personal security guards drawn from other agencies. Each one of the men guarded has been given a list of do's and don'ts, including even special instructions on handling close relatives and personal staff. Among the VIP's who are protected by the Black Cats or a combination of securitymen are Congress(I) Vice-President Arjun Singh, Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jagdish Tytler, Buta Singh, Arun Nehru, Arun Singh, Amitabh Bachchan, Punjab Chief Minister S.S. Barnala and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K.L. Bhagat. President Zail Singh's inner ring of protection is provided by the Delhi police, which is answerable directly in this particular role to the military secretary to the President.

The nature and extent of security to be provided to an individual is determined by the Home Ministry and the Intelligence Bureau. VIP's are classified in three categories: maximum threat, medium threat and threat. NSG troopers are provided to people in the maximum threat category. The question about how safe these men really are seemed to have been answered at Rajghat by the 'scooter backfire' that was heard around the world. But Gautam Kaul insists that the incident should not be a cause for widespread pessimism: "They are absolutely safe from any threat from the known areas and people. Our intelligence agencies and security organisations are sufficiently equipped to perceive any threat and take preventive action. But no security system in the world is foolproof."

Nevertheless, the revamped, high-powered lavishly spending security system that has been in place for the last year was badly exposed with the Rajghat episode. With a committee having been appointed to go into the failures of both men and systems, yet another reorganisation can now be expected. Meanwhile, last fortnight more than 100 gun-toting securitymen along the capital's centrally located Sardar Patel Marg, a standard VIP route to and from the airport, were given high-powered battery-operated torches and categorical instructions to search all the trees in the vicinity every five minutes until a VIP who was expected shortly, had passed. The VIP happened to be none other than Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who was returning from his three-day tour of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.

HARI OM GULATI



Rajiv talking to Kaul within SPG "ring": flaws and failures

But these are essentially reactive measures—people becoming wiser after the event. And while there is no such thing as foolproof security, the major lesson of the Rajghat incident is that the VIP security system is overburdened, overstretched, poorly-coordinated, with no clear structure of accountability and responsibility. And it needs to be honed and re-fashioned in a way that will yield more security and less empire building.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR with PRABHU CHAWLA and TANIA MIDHA

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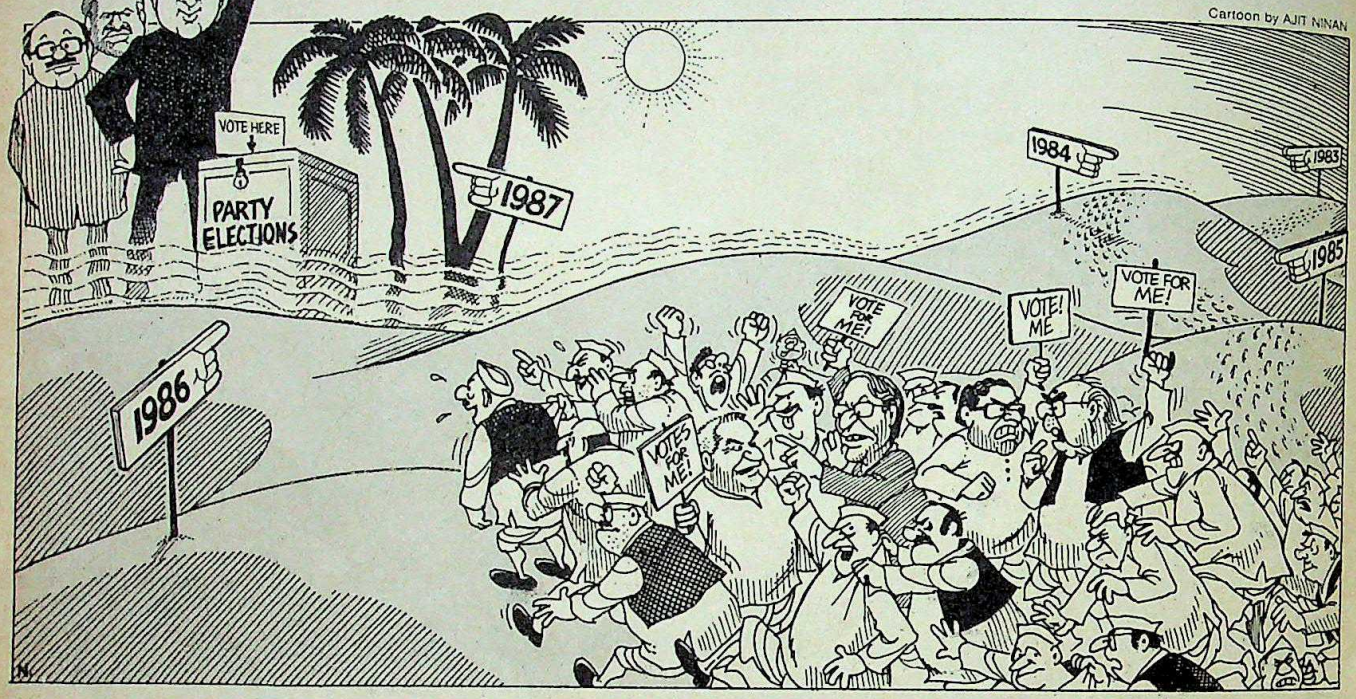
CONGRESS(I) ELECTIONS

Promises, Promises



"Party elections will be completed by January 20, 1983."
—G.K. Moopanar, AICC(I) General Secretary, October 6, 1982

"We will definitely hold the organisational elections by September 1983." —G.K. Moopanar, March 9, 1983

"We have taken steps to complete the elections before the AICC(I) session in December, 1985." —Rajiv Gandhi, May 5, 1985

"Elections to be held by July 1986"
—CWC resolution at Bombay session, 1985

"Party's organisational poll to take place in October."
—R.L. Bhatia, AICC(I) General Secretary, July 8, 1986

"Organisational elections due in October 1986 have been put off by a few months." —G.K. Moopanar, September 28, 1986.

POLITICAL parties are notorious for breaking promises made to the electorate. But hardly does any party take its own members and office-bearers for a ride as often as the ruling Congress (I) has done. For the last four years its leadership, including the prime minister, has been assuring its 1.5 crore members that party elections are round the corner. Over a dozen circulars and telegrams have been sent out from the party's New Delhi headquarters to the state units fixing specific time schedules for the poll. But each time, the promised elections, like the smile of the proverbial Cheshire Cat, mysteriously vanish into thin air. Party Vice-President Arjun Singh has a bland explanation: "We are committed to hold the elections but we have not been able to meet the deadlines due to genuine difficulties. It is the biggest democratic political party in the world and we have a very tall order to deliver and we will do it soon."

Singh probably means what he says but has been unable to control the circumstances behind the postponement. The promised process has been hamstrung not by any administrative problems as by the fierce political battle for control of party posts which has been raging within the party. The latest postponement, the fifth in as many years, was caused by a factional war over the validity of the membership lists. While dissidents bent upon challenging the high command's candidates want every third member currently enrolled to be struck off the rolls on grounds of ineligibility, the ruling establishment is not willing to drop more than 10 per cent. Said a dissident leader from Uttar Pradesh: "If we allow the elections to be held on the basis of bogus membership then we are taking the risk of ending up with bogus leadership as well." He said that the dissidents had challenged the membership list because hundreds of thousands of bogus members had bribed or manipulated their way into it.

The thorny issue of membership has also become the convenient excuse for the high command to postpone elections. According to middle ranking party workers neither the central leadership nor the nominated state-level office-bearers are interested in elections, as seen in the half-hearted attempts made so far to resolve the membership dispute. The controversy first surfaced in April when party Working President Kamalapati Tripathi publicly aired the phony membership issue and demanded corrective measures. The AICC(I) immediately appointed over 400 district-level scrutiny committees for verifying memberships. These committees comprising members representing various factions in each district submitted their reports to their PCC(I) headquarters by the end of July. But in more than 70 districts in the Hindi belt of Uttar Pradesh,

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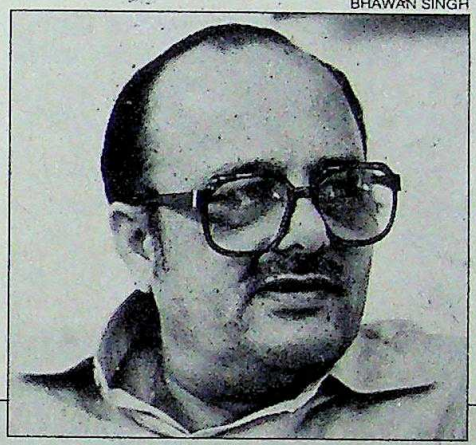
Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan, querulous party factions failed to reach a consensus. In Varanasi district, the Tripathi faction demanded the scrapping of the entire list of nine lakh members enrolled by their rivals. In other politically volatile districts like Allahabad, Sitapur, Lucknow, Ghaziabad and Gorakhpur the party was faced with the dilemma of cancelling the membership of almost 70 per cent of enrolled members. In Madhya Pradesh, similar battle lines were drawn between two factions, one led by Arjun Singh, and the other by former Union minister Vidya Charan Shukla. Both sides refused to surrender a single member to the benefit of the rival group. Initially Shukla suffered a temporary setback when the records of members enrolled by his supporters were burnt under mysterious circumstances. The question of bogus membership could have been solved more amicably, party insiders say, if the scrutiny panels and AICC(I) observers had shown greater impartiality. In Madhya Pradesh, for example, the Shukla faction accused AICC(I) observer Harish Rawat of packing scrutiny committees with Singh's men who rejected virtually all the objections raised by Shukla's supporters, approving "totally bogus" lists.

THE northern belt is politically most sensitive—whoever is able to capture it by election of sympathetic office-bearers will call the shots. The main reason for the high command's postponement of elections is its fear that its candidates will not be elected in sufficient numbers and it will thus lose control over the region. Unsure of whether the resolution of the bogus membership issue would be an advantage, the high command began dragging its feet. First, it took no follow-up action to ensure that the scrutiny committees completed their jobs in time. In addition, it failed to appoint any state-level scrutiny committees which were to be set up by July this year. Said Moopanar: "District committees have done their job. Now the PCC-level panels will submit their report to the AICC(I)." Added Singh: "I can only say that we have been able to finish the first stage of election process and soon the second stage will begin." Singh, however, was not willing to commit himself to any fixed date for elections.

The high command seems to fear that speedy elections might allow controversial politicians—Jagannath Mishra in Bihar, Tripathi in Uttar Pradesh, Jagannath Pahadia in Rajasthan, Bhajan Lal in Haryana, Madhavsinh Solanki in Gujarat and V.C. Shukla in Madhya Pradesh—to win decisively. Even more ominously, they could pose a challenge to the party leadership. Said a former chief minister of a northern state: "Rajiv is trapped in a circle from where he can't get out. Democratically elected people won't be subservient and if he cancels the election he will be accused of heading a party of nominated members."

The Congress(I) election fiasco, say Rajiv's critics, is squarely the outcome of the prime minister's inability to spare time for organisational matters. When he recruited Singh as the party's vice-president in January this year, Singh's immediate mission was to ensure that democratically elected party leaders with "clean images" would replace nominated office-bearers and that those whose loyalties to Rajiv were in doubt, were kept completely out of party offices.

BHAWAN SINGH



"We are committed to hold the elections but we have not been able to meet the deadline due to genuine difficulties.... We have a very tall order to deliver, we will do it soon."

ARJUN SINGH
vice-president, AICC(I)

Since the election machinery is controlled by the PCC(I) chiefs, Rajiv replaced the presidents of at least 12 states by personal loyalists. But as the election count-down began, the out-of-power factions, for their own political survival, instead of recruiting the dedicated new members prescribed by Rajiv, began to enrol hordes of proxy members who would vote for them. After the press started carrying reports on the swelling bogus members, the Prime Minister's Secretariat ordered an independent inquiry into the issue. Rajiv's aides concluded that if party elections were held on the basis of the existing enrolment, Congress(I) bosses with political bases of their own would take over the party structure and that the party organisation would become more powerful than the prime minister. Though the prime minister still favoured elections, threatened politicians virtually sabotaged the daily working of the AICC(I) headquarters which, instead of setting the stage for the party poll, has come close to becoming functionally paralysed. These same politicians then mooted the much-publicised proposal for holding the party's elections on the basis of a selective membership. This suggestion was deliberately leaked to selected journalists primarily to serve as a trial balloon to test the reaction of the party's rank and file. Curiously, this idea for "guided democracy" in the party became public soon after Tripathi's recent demand for elections and his threat to convene a meeting of the AICC(I) to finalise the new poll schedule.

While the party's top brass is involved in a slanging match over the elections Rajiv has not made any public statement recently. Even if he decides to fulfil the promise he made as the party's general secretary in 1982, it will still be impossible to hold the elections till the end of next year. To begin with, the AICC(I) has to appoint the state-level scrutiny committees which will take at least two months to verify the membership reports filed by the district-level committees. Once the final membership list is published, a notice of at least six weeks is mandatory. And for this a special AICC(I) session will have to be convened. But in view of Rajiv's tight schedule of impending foreign jaunts and the winter session of Parliament round the corner, none of these steps can be taken for the next three months. And after that the party will be under pressure to prepare itself for the coming assembly elections in the states of Haryana, Kerala, Tripura and West Bengal and the high command is unlikely to take the risk of vertical divisions within the party cropping up, as they well might when the organisational elections are underway. And so it appears, at least for the foreseeable future, that Rajiv will continue to function as the unelected president of the largest political party in the nation.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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MAHILA CONGRESS

Nobody's Baby

THE functioning of the All India Mahila Congress (AIMC)—the women's arm of the All India Congress (I) Committee which is now supposed to enjoy a status equal to that of other front organisations like the Youth Congress—has been badly hit by demoralisation of workers, lack of adequate funds, and political infighting between its chairperson Begum Abida Ahmed, and its convenor, Minister of Youth Affairs, Sports and Women's Welfare Margaret Alva.

Mid-1984 was a high-point for the organisation when it held a successful convention in Bangalore attended by both Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv and 30,000 delegates. Said one who attended: "Rajiv really seemed to care about our organisation then. He promised the moon. But since then, everything went downhill. Rajiv doesn't even come to our meetings any more. And from day-to-day the Mahila Congress has to beg for funds."

What bothers party workers is not just the treatment of their organisation as a second class outfit, but also a split leadership which sometimes paralyses the work. On paper, Begum Abida, as chairperson, is head of AIMC. But in practice, Alva, as convenor, continues to exercise considerable authority. Since Alva became minister, party sources say, she has not even visited the AIMC's dilapidated barrack-like headquarters at New Delhi's 1, Talkatora Road. But backers of Alva say her presence there is unnecessary because she can attend to the same work from elsewhere.

Alva, according to AIMC sources, keeps a tight grip over certain affairs of the organisation much to the discomfiture of Begum Abida, the MP from Bareilly and wife of the late president Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed. Alva, for example, still countersigns cheques and travel vouchers of the AIMC. During one recent occasion she refused to approve the air fare charged by Begum Abida for an official trip to Assam on the suspicion that it was a junket. The bill was finally paid by the AICC(I). In addition, party sources say, Alva patronises a small group of AIMC state convenors who, on their visits to Delhi, closet themselves with the minister at her residence or office rather than meet with AIMC workers and officials at 1, Talkatora Road. And Alva, according to inside reports, has at least once appointed an official to AIMC's legal cell—from outside the organisation—without consulting Begum Abida.

The clash between the two women, sources say, was predictable. Begum Abida was Mrs Gandhi's choice as head of AIMC. But Rajiv favoured Alva. When the latter's name was first suggested for a senior post in AIMC, several party members raised objections on the ground that Alva had earlier deserted the Congress(I) and joined the Devraj Urs group, critical of Mrs Gandhi. But under a consensus, the post of convenor was specially created for Alva. The fur began to fly during the Bangalore convention. Alva belongs to the city and took aggressive charge of the convention and virtually excluded Begum Abida from important decisions. As one senior delegate put it: "It was clearly Margaret's show and she thoroughly impressed Rajiv as the real go-getter. Begum Sahiba was neglected during the framing of important resolutions. And she was not even given a car for her travel in the city. It was only later that Jaffar Sharif, the PCC(I) president, provided her with conveyance."

But Begum Abida was deeply hurt, sources say, at the way she was treated by Rajiv himself during the party's centenary celebrations in Bombay a year ago. Without warning, Rajiv asked all of the AICC(I) front organisations to prepare written plans for what they proposed to do in 1986. Begum Abida jotted down a few points which were handed to Rajiv. But the prime minister gave the memo to Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, an Uttar Pradesh MP, and asked her to get Alva's signature of approval on it. Alva could not be found. And later, Rajiv made a small statement that it appeared to him that the Mahila Congress had no concrete programme. According to reliable sources, Begum Abida sent Rajiv a letter of resignation which has still not been accepted and she continues to head the organisation in a state of limbo.

A new organisational constitution, adopted at the Bangalore convention and approved by the party's parliamentary board which abolishes the post of convenor and includes, instead, positions for a president, a general secretary and four zonal secretaries, has still not been implemented despite repeated reminders to party Vice-President, Arjun Singh. AIMC has no formalised budgetary allocation, and not a single vehicle. Most state convenors are without offices and pay their own way when they travel for conferences. And following a new membership drive launched last year about half the membership forms distributed haven't so far been returned. "This is supposed to be the key organisation responsible for bringing women into politics and raising their social awareness," lamented one senior member. "But when we compare our position with that of other organisations we have to conclude that we are treated like a step-child."

—INDERJIT BADHWAR

PRASHANT PANJIAR

Begum Abida

Party workers are bothered not just by the second class treatment of the Mahila Congress, but also a split leadership which paralyses work. On paper Begum Abida as chairperson is head, but in practice, Alva as convenor continues to exercise considerable authority.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Margaret Alva

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JAMMU & KASHMIR

Rapid Reforms

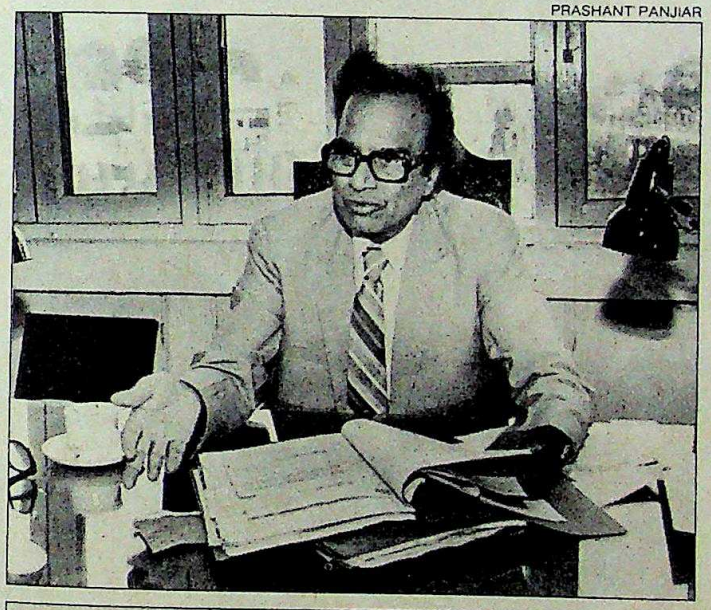
THE recent spurt of mayhem and violence in Jammu and Kashmir was not entirely unexpected. For more than seven months, politicians—devalued under Governor's Rule—and vested interests who had held free rein in the state, had been reeling under the onslaught of Governor Jagmohan's rapid-fire reforms aimed at the judiciary, the bureaucracy, and institutionalised patronage. Seeing in the recently-declared President's Rule in the state, a new opportunity for militant opposition, the formerly stricken struck back with a time-tested method of gaining mob sympathy—an appeal to communal passions on grounds of preserving the Kashmiri identity. An initial call for a campaign against the "markazi sarkar" (Central Government), issued by fundamentalist parties as well as by elements of the National Conference, failed to arouse the expected mass support. So the leaders resorted to hit-and-run tactics to signal their militant presence.

For starters, saboteurs burned the old Mahjoor Bridge in Srinagar early one morning. Later, a few houses belonging to the minority community were set ablaze in places like Sopore, known for their communal harmony. Notwithstanding the noise made by the media over the incidents, Jagmohan declared: "The state Government is determined to isolate those who don't want peace in the valley. And the fight against these people will continue till they either surrender or reform themselves." The reference, partly, was to the recent detention of some rabid fundamentalist leaders in the valley under the Public Safety Act. Added a senior government official of the state: "Only corrupt elements who have lost their clout are encouraging violence so that poor people lose their business during the tourist season."

The selection of places and causes for inciting violence, sources in Kashmir said, was designed to have the maximum impact on the media. In reality, the cases of violence in the state were isolated. But they were blown out of proportion by a section of the press in Delhi. Predictably, the Central Government pressed the panic button. Jagmohan was summoned by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi for a detailed explanation of the situation. According to sources in the Prime Minister's Secretariat, Jagmohan and his advisors convinced Rajiv, with documentary evidence, that the reports of violence were quite exaggerated. Jagmohan also made it clear that the violence was the handiwork of disgruntled politicians who had made common cause with the local timber and liquor mafias. He pointed out that his efforts had drawn volatile opposition from communal elements, who had profited politically and economically from the status quo. It is not difficult to gauge, from the following handful of examples out of the 37 major legislative amendments made by him, why Jagmohan's initiatives have provoked such bitter opposition from entrenched power groups.

The state had its own civil service cadres manned by officials of known communal as well as anti-national sympathies. All-India services like the IAS, IPS and the Indian Forest Service were virtually excluded from the state bureaucracy, which hired and promoted from within. Under the new orders, officers from the all-India services are being increasingly inducted into key positions. In addition, the allotment of commercial land and plots, formerly in the hands of local politicians and bureaucrats who looked after their friends and relatives, has been thrown open to public auction conducted by impartial tribunals. Appointments and promotions in local government posts, formerly in the hands of ministers, are now performed by statutory service selection boards under a new merit system of examinations. Government doctors have been prohibited from private practice, and, for the first time under the Advocate Act of 1961, lawyers from outside the state are being allowed to practise at the state bar. Wildlife laws have been made more stringent to prevent poaching and several cases have been registered against powerful interests involved in the illegal felling of timber, the smuggling of pine resin and the illicit bottling of liquor.

PRASHANT PANJIAR



> "The Government is determined to isolate those who don't want peace. And the fight will continue till they surrender or reform."
>
> JAGMOHAN
> *governor, Jammu and Kashmir*

Perhaps the most sensitive reform under Jagmohan was the extension of the merit system to engineering colleges which, under a powerful system of patronage in which mostly friends and relatives of the powerful could get admission, hitherto excluded not only the minorities but also the sons and daughters of middle class and poorer Muslim families. The governor's office had received widespread reports that this de facto quota system was enforced through the manipulation of marks at the interviews which followed the entrance examination. Under the new legislation, an independent board now conducts the interviews, which are tape-recorded. Politicians and civil servants whose children stood to gain exclusively from the old admissions rackets backed a protest movement which dubbed the admissions reforms "anti-Muslim", thereby trying to taint them with a communal brush. But a call for a statewide bandh on the subject managed to

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elicit only a limited response.

The state's politicians have been spreading the belief that Jagmohan's reforms are violative of Article 370 of the Constitution, which gives Kashmir its special status in the Indian Union. But Jagmohan's simple and reasoned response to this has been: "Article 370 does not say anywhere that the rich will be protected to the disadvantage of the poor." Perhaps one reason that the bandh calls, even in the name of communalism, have had a limited response is that some of Jagmohan's reforms have begun to produce results the state hasn't seen in decades. More than 1,000 new schools have been opened in villages throughout the state where none existed. Two women's colleges have started in places as far away as Ladakh and Kargil. The Dal Lake, which was dying of pollution, has been cleared of 5,000 tonnes of weed. And the state's 20 point programme, which had hit rock-bottom before Governor's Rule, has exceeded targets in many areas. State government officials now like to boast that the new projects have been implemented without the state's having to ask for any new finances from the Centre.

Jagmohan has now made it abundantly clear to the Centre that a large part of the violent disruptions in the state is but a new manifestation of the resistance he has been facing from vested interests all along. Following his hour-long meeting with Jagmohan in Delhi, the prime minister directed him to put down violence with a firm hand and assured him full Central support in dealing with the situation. Jagmohan was also told to take leading politicians into confidence before embarking upon any major administrative offensive.

Even though the Centre believes that the situation in the state is under control, it is not willing to take the risk of continuing President's Rule for too long. The Congress(I) high command believes that once the state is handed over to local politicians, they will no longer be able to mobilise Kashmiri wrath against Rajiv and his party. But the main question being asked by ordinary Kashmiris today is: with the return of popular rule to the state, will matters revert to politics as usual or will the new government do something to fulfil the rising local expectations, fuelled by what some term as Jagmohan's undemocratic raj? Whether these are valid fears or mere gut feelings, only time will tell.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR and PRABHU CHAWLA

YOUTH CONGRESS(I)/SEVA DAL

Open Discord

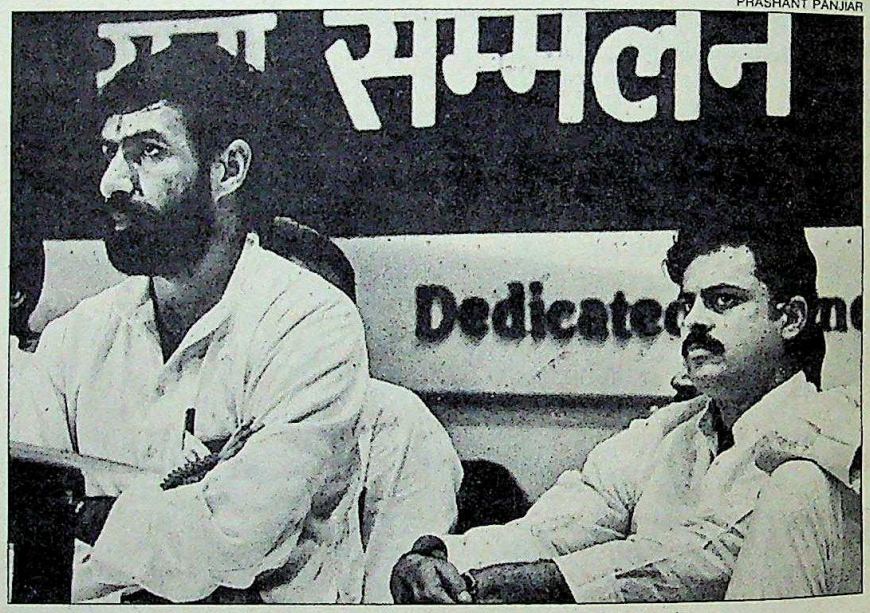
RELATIONS between the Youth Congress(I) and the Seva Dal, the two front organisations of the party being used by Rajiv Gandhi for training talent within the Congress(I), have never been cordial. But the simmering differences between Anand Sharma and Tariq Anwar, heads of the YC(I) and Seva Dal respectively, came into the open last fortnight when charges were traded in a manner that clearly revealed their mutual hostility. Said Anwar, who led YC(I) before Sharma: "I am not in competition with Anand, so I do not understand why he is so opposed to me." Retorted Sharma: "I am not opposed to Tariq; I only feel bad about anti-Youth Congress stories being planted in the media by those who have had their stint here and are jittery with our success."

The immediate provocation for the charges was a memorandum submitted to party President Rajiv Gandhi by 25 Bihar MLA's. The memorandum, apparently masterminded by Shyam Sunder Singh Dheeraj, Bihar YC(I) chief, levelled charges of corruption against Anwar. Anwar responded by shooting off a letter to Rajiv, asking for a thorough probe into the charges.

Shortly afterwards, it became apparent that the Anwar group was taking the fight into the rival camp when some Anwar-supporters in the Delhi Pradesh Youth Congress(I) submitted a memo against Sharma accusing him of reducing the organisation to inactivity. Said an Anwar supporter: "If Sharma wants to do negative politics, we want to show him that we can play dirty too."

Anwar's group alleges that Sharma is using Dheeraj to run down Anwar in his home state. Sharma's ire, says Anwar, is directly related to the growing importance of the Seva Dal. Says Anwar: "Earlier, the Seva Dal was a defunct organisation. Now it is being given equal importance by the party president. Naturally, those who are not confident of their own position are feeling insecure."

PRASHANT PANJIAR



Sharma (left) and Anwar: trading charges

Sharma denied that he had any hand in the Dheeraj-inspired memorandum, saying: "This is a purely Bihar affair; I have not taken any sides." On the contrary, said sources close to Sharma, the new thrust Sharma had given to the YC(I), which was attracting a "more respectable" set, had made Anwar jealous. Added Sharma: "Rajivji's bid to revive inactive bodies like the Seva Dal is being deliberately misinterpreted as getting preferential treatment from him. This just shows their own insecurity."

To a great extent, Rajiv himself is to blame for this discord. Earlier, the YC(I) was the only front organisation orchestrating youth activities. Now, the Seva Dal has also been given an overlapping role; as, for instance, in training young MP's. Realising the unhappiness this was causing, Rajiv has now asked party Vice-President Arjun Singh to demarcate the activities of the party's front organisations on the basis of age.

—AJAY KUMAR

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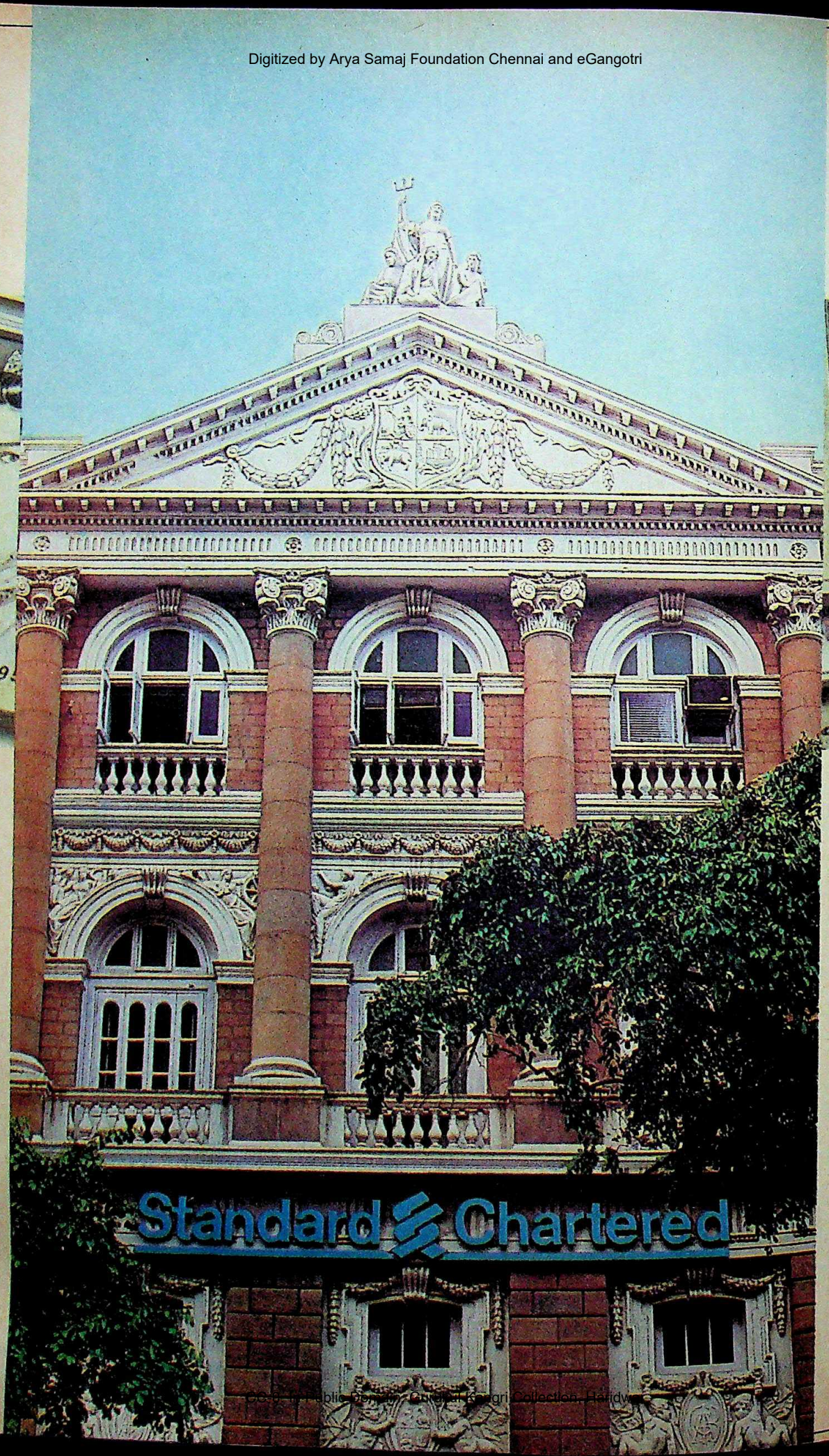

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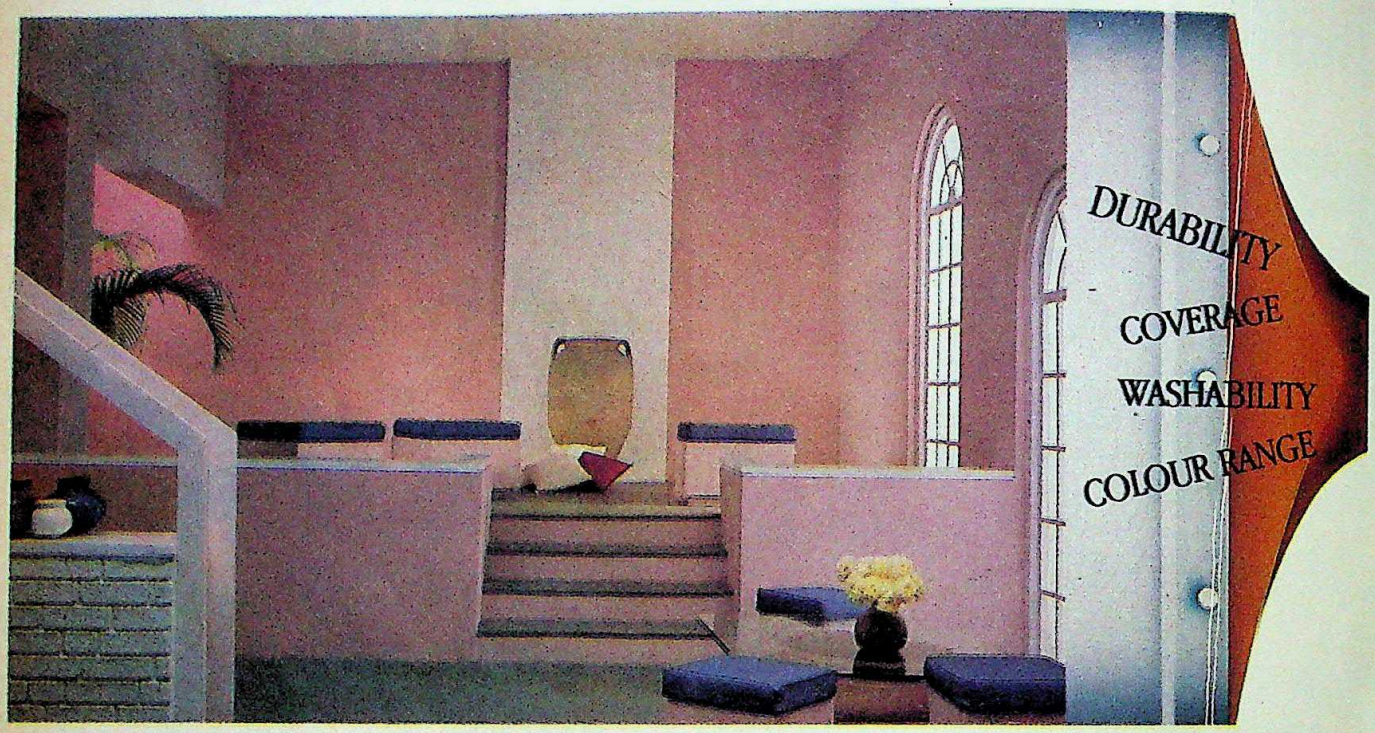

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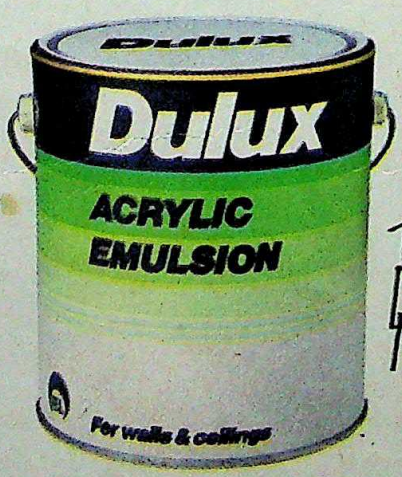

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TAMIL NADU

Empty Benches

AFTER Delhi's lawyers, it was the turn of Tamil Nadu's advocates to boycott the courts last fortnight. Incensed by what they claimed was a deliberate design by the state Government to leave judicial vacancies unfilled and subsequently pack them with nominees drawn from the state secretariat, all 20,000 lawyers of the state stayed away from the courts for 12 days. The simmering resentment among lawyers spilled over when the state Government showed no signs of complying with a Supreme Court directive in August that judicial vacancies should be filled up by this month.

Although the boycott was subsequently called off after an assurance from Chief Justice M.N. Chandurkar of the Madras High Court, it is clear that Tamil Nadu's lawyers are determined to fight the state Government on a sensitive issue. Said R. Gandhi, president of the Bar Federation of Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry: "The common man will lose faith in the judiciary if this trend of allowing judicial posts to remain unfilled continues."

The list of vacancies in Tamil Nadu's courts is truly staggering. Out of 25 sanctioned posts of high court judges, there has been an average of five vacancies over the last five years. The high court has one of the highest percentage of vacancies in the country. Of 60 district court judges, nine posts have yet to be filled. And four posts of district judges have yet to be sanctioned for four new districts created recently. Similarly, vacancies exist for eight sub-judges, 120 district munsiffs and 195 posts of judicial first and second class magistrates.

The blame for this sorry state of affairs, according to the lawyers, rests with the state Government. Appointments below district judges are entirely the state Government's responsibility, and are supposed to be done through the state public service commission. Even for district judges, it is the state Government which has to take the initiative. Instead, it has been adopting dilatory tactics. The Madras High Court had recommended the names of five sub-judges for promotion as district judges, but the state Government has been delaying the matter by asking the high court for the personal files of all the sub-judges. Even for the high court, the Government has recommended only two names against the five vacancies.

To add insult to injury, charged the lawyers, the state Government has been trying to pack the subordinate judiciary with secretariat staff. Of the 144 posts of judicial second class magistrates, 133 have been filled by temporary magistrates drawn from the secretariat and the remaining 11 are vacant. Similarly, of the 58 posts of judicial first class magistrates, 37 are manned by temporary secretariat hands, 14 are vacant and only seven have permanent appointees. Laments a high court judge: "Earlier there was a system whereby one-third of the posts of district judges were filled up by practising lawyers. Now, this convention has been given a go-by."

Worse, say the lawyers, the Government is now trying to introduce this deplorable practice in the high court also. One of the two names that the state Government has recommended to the Centre for appointment to the high court is of the state Law Secretary S. Vadivelu. Fumes Gandhi: "This move is highly improper because Vadivelu does not have the prescribed period of experience in the bar." The Vadivelu proposal, it is learnt, is the Government's counter to Chief Justice Chandurkar's recommendation that a senior advocate, G. Subramaniam, be elevated to the bench.

But the state Government says its hands are clean. Law Minister C. Ponnaiyan argued that "both in the promotion of sub-judges and in the screening of temporary magistrates for regularisation of service, it is for the Madras High Court to take the next step". However, Justice Chandurkar said: "It is not fair of the law minister to blame the high court for the delay. But this wrangle cannot continue and I intend to put a stop to this."

Till that is done, however, litigants continue to suffer, especially with regard to habeas corpus petitions which can only be heard by a division bench of the high court. There are some 500 such petitions waiting to be heard in Tamil Nadu; often these come up for hearing after the detenus have already completed their jail terms.

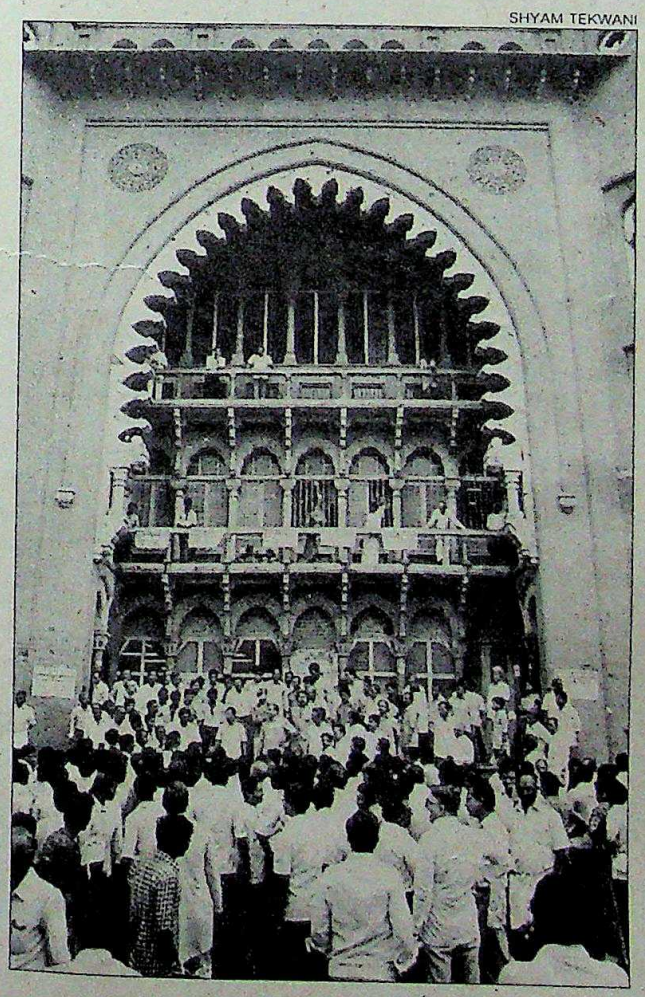
Though the advocates agreed to lift the boycott on October 15 when Justice Chandurkar promised that he would look into the matter, the Government's actions have already sown the seeds of mistrust between the executive and the judiciary.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

"The common man will lose faith in the judiciary if judicial posts remain unfilled."

R. GANDHI
president, Bar Federation of Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry

SHYAM TEKWANI



Advocates on strike at Madras High Court

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PUNJAB

Red Targets

COMMUNISTS, particularly those belonging to the Communist Party of India (CPI), are reaping a bitter harvest of death for their strident public campaign against terrorism. With the killing last fortnight of Darshan Singh Canadian, 68, former secretary of the state unit of the CPI, and Naxalite leader Baldev Singh Maan, 17 communist leaders have been killed by terrorists in the last two years. Of these, 15 belonged to the CPI and two to the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). But the killings have only made the communists more determined. Perhaps nobody symbolised this more heroically than Canadian's widow, Balbir Kaur, who shouted even as her husband's body was being prepared for the pyre: "We are neither Hindus nor Sikhs but Indians. Down with terrorism. Long live India."

Canadian knew he was a marked man. Barely a week before he was shot, he had told INDIA TODAY: "People are our best protection. Death cannot deter us." And just the previous day, Canadian had told large gatherings in Tarn Taran and Raiya: "We shall never run away. We shall fight these cowards who love neither Sikhism nor India." Himself a scholar of Sikhism and Indian philosophy, Canadian would always convincingly quote from the Sikh gurus to prove that the terrorists did not even understand Sikhism. The next day terrorists gunned him down as he was cycling to his village Langeri and left a message on a slip of paper next to his body, saying: "We are silencing this voice opposed to Khalistan. It is a lesson for others."

In a spontaneous response, hundreds of his admirers rushed to block the traffic on the Chandigarh-Pathankot Road and did not let the police, whom they accused of laxity in chasing the killers, touch the body for six hours. His funeral the next day was attended by 20,000 people. Said a Chandigarh-based news photographer who has seen much blood and gore in the last few years: "I have not seen such genuine love for any political leader."

The communists, whom the late Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale always referred to as the "arch enemies of the panth," have been publicly opposing the politics of violence ever since the extremist problem surfaced in Punjab. Veteran trade union couple Satya Pal Dang and Vimla Dang, Marxist leader Dalip Singh Tapiala and left-wing dramatist Gursharan Singh have, for the last three years, held innumerable public rallies and meetings in which they have openly lashed out at terrorists. "We cannot be cowed down by the bullets of these cowards and must live and struggle among the people," say the Dangs, who live in tension-ridden Amritsar.

The killing of communist leaders by terrorists has only made the Left parties more determined to oppose terrorism.

Widow Balbir Kaur raising slogans at Canadian's funeral

The terrorists have responded by systematically annihilating—and often cruelly so—the more effective among the communists. Their targets have been either the forceful orators among the leftists—like Canadian—or those who provided crucial information against the terrorists to the police. Former CPI legislator Arjun Singh Mastana had raised armed resistance squads in several villages. In March, the terrorists lured him out by staging the beating up of a 'peasant' by some 'policemen'—and then shot him in cold blood. But perhaps the most cruel was the killing of Subhas Chandra Bose-associate and CPI leader Parswarath Nath, 65, his brother, Babu Ram, 75, and sister-in-law Bibi Guro, 77, who were all shot dead in their small provision store in Buanangali village in Amritsar district.

Following Canadian's killing, the communist parties have stepped up the holding of joint rallies and public meetings even in the worst terrorist-infested areas of Fatehgarh Churian and Dera Baba Nanak. But there is some disagreement among them on whether they should launch an armed counter-offensive. State CPI secretary Avtar Singh Malhotra says: "Let the state do its job and we do ours"; but many in the CPI argue for the harder option. The Marxist-Leninists have already announced that they will repay blood with blood. Warns Naxalite leader Darshan Singh Khatkar: "We cannot watch our comrades getting mowed down like fodder."

The communists are also keen on addressing joint public meetings with other political parties but are wary of the Akali Dal. Says Malhotra: "Badal and his followers are siding with the terrorists and Barnala always shies away from commitments." Another CPI leader, Joginder Bhasin, points out that though Barnala had announced that self-defence squads would be formed six months ago, the plan remains on paper. Says Bhasin: "We had suggested that committed political cadres opposed to terrorism should be supplied with good arms and ammunition and we had even provided several lists to the Government but Barnala has just sat on them." To all this, Barnala has a terse reply: "We are considering all these steps. We cannot afford to lose leaders like Canadian." But clearly, a well-defined political offensive against the terrorists is still very far away. Till then, the communists, among the political parties, will continue to bear the brunt of the terrorists' wrath.

—GOBIND THUKRAL in Amritsar

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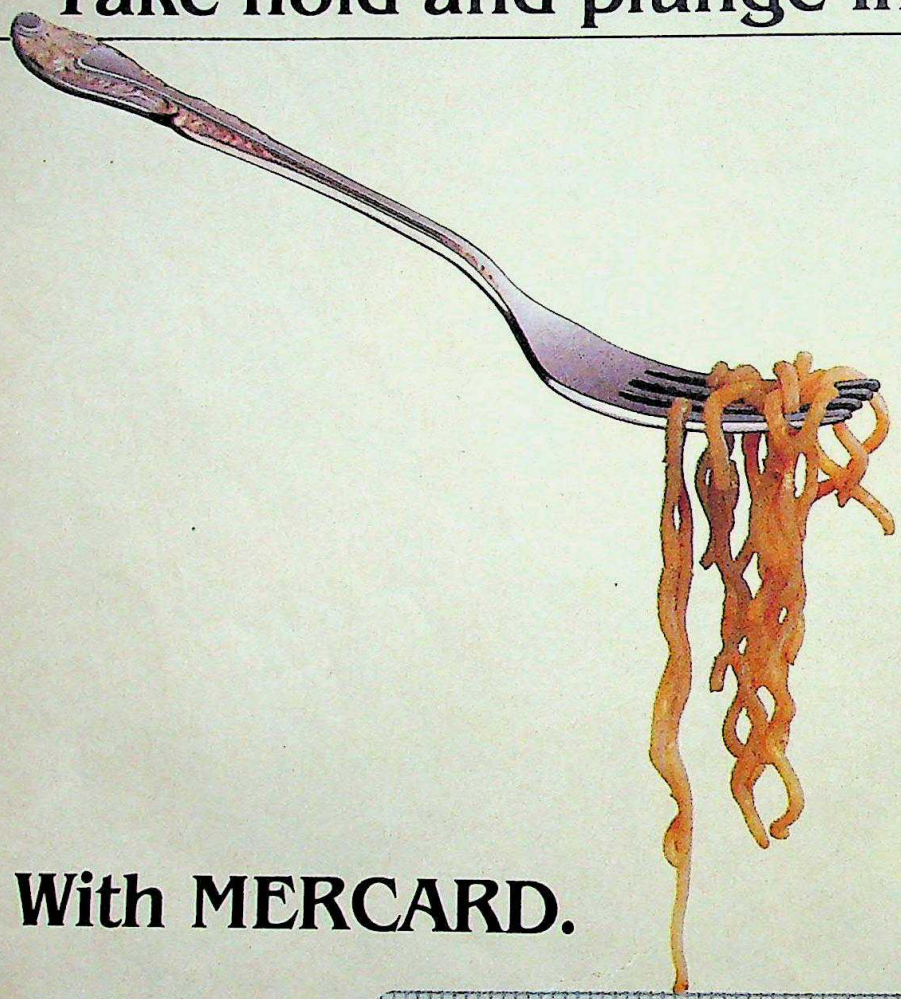

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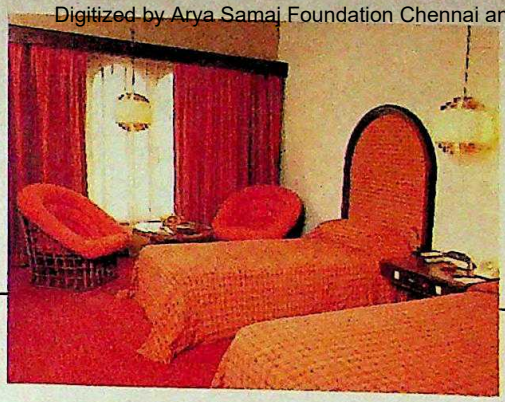

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KARNATAKA

Publicity Ploys

Karnataka Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde can be depended upon to be dramatic and unpredictable. With elections to the state's local bodies round the corner, the image-conscious Hegde is all set to unveil two unique publicity ploys calculated to impress the voters and to gauge their attitudes to his government. The first, is an opinion poll on the Government's performance, to be conducted by the Bangalore University. And the second is a series of 20 films showing the Government's developmental efforts in the districts.

The opinion poll was first suggested six months ago by the Jana Samparka Samithi (committee on contact with the people), a five-member official panel headed by Hegde which functions as the expert body on public relations for the Government. But the proposal crystallised only last fortnight, the delay being caused by the inability of the state's Information and Publicity Department to decide on which agency to use for the job. After approaching various professional pollsters and going into the costs involved, S. Krishnamurthy, the department's director and the samithi's secretary, came up with the solution. Krishnamurthy, an IPS officer who was once Bangalore University's registrar, decided that the university could do the job at the lowest possible cost: Rs 1.5 lakh.

But till late last fortnight, officials of the university, which has never undertaken such an exercise before, were racking their brains on how to go about their task. Said a university spokesman: "We will talk to statisticians and find out how to conduct an opinion poll in a scientific manner." The university's Journalism Department, which has been entrusted with the job, is also undecided on whether it should conduct the poll by itself or involve two more universities. And Vice-Chancellor D. Shankaranarayan refused to comment on the poll, calling it a "research project".

Nevertheless, the indications are that the university will appoint 19 field investigators (one for each district, excluding Bangalore) who will go around the villages and gather responses for their list of around 30 questions. The questionnaire will be given to a few thousand select people, "representing a cross-section" of the state's 38-million population. The field investigators will ask respondents if they have benefited from the Government's various welfare programmes; if not, why, and whether they have any suggestions on the present schemes or for the introduction of new ones. Vehemently denying that the exercise is an opinion poll on Hegde's image, a senior official said: "We are concentrating on the Government's programmes and nothing else."

Though Krishnamurthy denies that the poll is politically motivated, there is little doubt that Hegde is anxious to know its results before the elections to the zilla parishads and mandal panchayats, planned to be held next month. Said state Janata Party chief M. Chandrashekhar: "Perhaps the chief minister's idea is to gauge the people's mood before the zilla parishad elections."

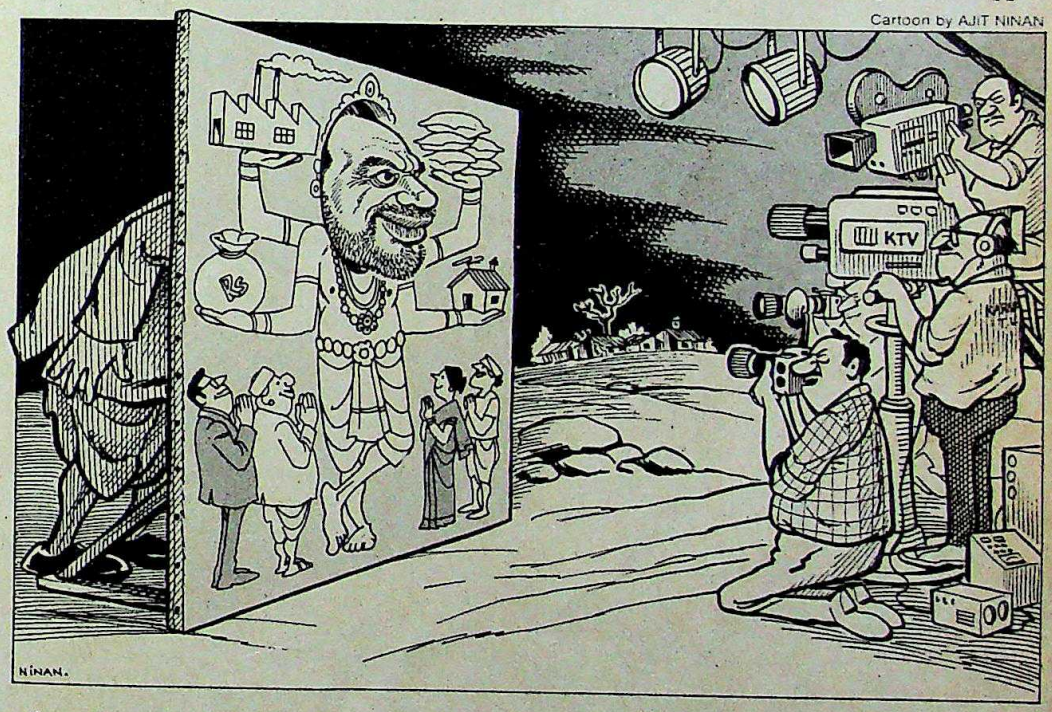
Hegde's Government was also busy last fortnight finalising 19 documentaries, one on each district (again, excluding Bangalore urban district), eulogising the Government's welfare schemes. The 10-minute documentaries being produced at a total cost of Rs 22.8 lakh will be shown in the state's 1,210 cinema halls. These district-wise documentaries will be topped by a state-wide documentary (cost: Rs 2.4 lakh) to be directed by well-known actor-director Shankar Nag, a staunch Janata sympathiser, and will not only be shown in the cinema halls but also be submitted, somewhat optimistically, to Doordarshan as well.

That's not all. Hegde is even considering a Rs 6-crore plan to produce video films of his government's activities and to show them to the rural masses in 300 roving jeeps equipped with projectors. While this particular project is unlikely to materialise before the local body polls are held, the chief minister continues with his flurry of glossy publications on all and sundry issues. There have been about 20 so far, at an estimated cost of about Rs 50 lakh. The latest is a booklet entitled *Judiciary Today*, a strongly-worded critique of the Centre's policy on the appointment of judges.

Predictably, Hegde's publicity drive has drawn flak from his political opponents. Says Congress(I) leader M. Veerappa Moily: "All this is a colossal waste of public money. The idea of the opinion poll proves that Hegde is unsure of his performance." Janata leaders counter with the argument that while books reach the elite, films are necessary to reach the masses. And the expenditure on them is insignificant. Says Revenue Minister S.R. Bommai: "Publicity is not the Centre's monopoly. The whole lot of books and documentaries we produce in a year might cost what a minute of publicity for Rajiv Gandhi on Doordarshan would cost." Still, the conclusion seems inescapable that Hegde's opinion poll is a pre-election assessment being paid for by the state.

—SRINIVASA PRASAD

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



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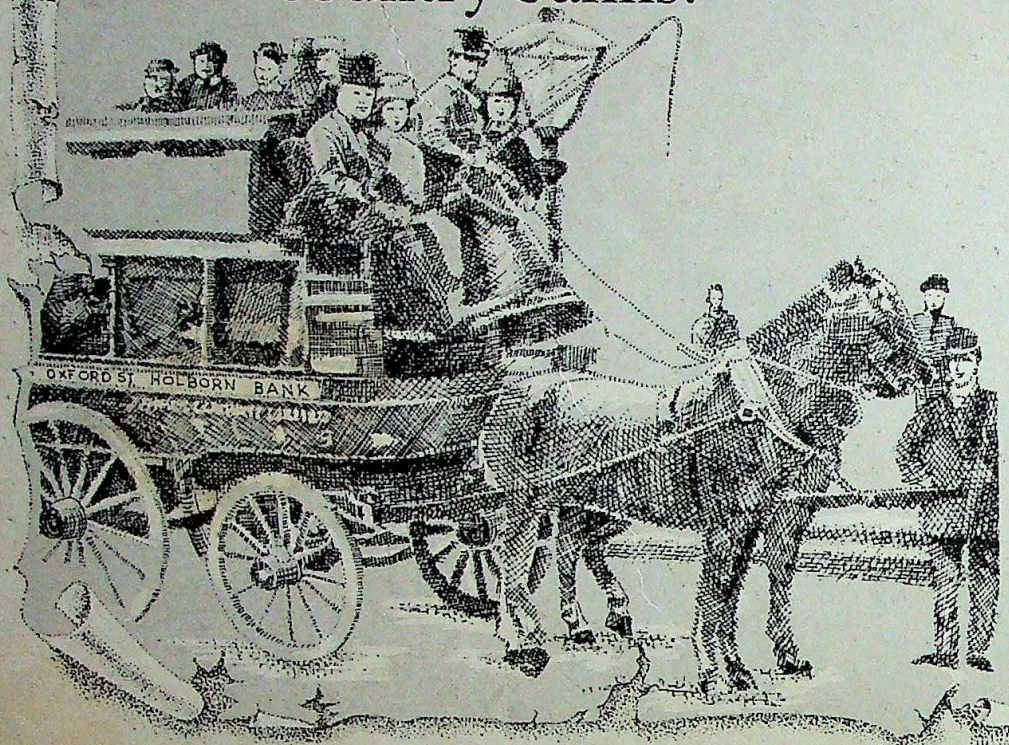

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KARNATAKA

Quick Fix

IF you can't lick them, join them. Clearly, Karnataka's Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde is the latest convert to this age-old dictum. Cornered by the caste-based agitation that had snowballed after the publication of the report of the Venkataswamy Commission on backward classes, and confronted by the crisis in his Janata Party over the same issue, Hegde finally chose the easy way out. He took those parts of the Venkataswamy report and the earlier Havanur Commission report which suited him, made a few additions and finally decided that under the new formula 92 per cent of the state's population would be deemed backward. Commented an amused Janata Party MLA: "Going by this, Karnataka must be the most backward state in the country."

Hegde hastily clarified that the fact that 92 per cent of the population was eligible for reservations did not mean that all of them were backward, since only those with annual incomes less than Rs 10,000 could take advantage of the reservations. "We all know that 92 per cent of the people are certainly not backward," he said somewhat sheepishly. But the ludicrousness of the situation was not lost on Law Minister A. Lakshmisagar, who opposed the move during the cabinet meeting last fortnight when the decision was taken. Asked which castes were not being given the backward tag, Lakshmisagar chuckled: "Well, not many."

Except for the Brahmins and a handful of other communities, all others have been embraced in the new reservation policy. But even those belonging to these castes are eligible for 5 per cent reservations as a backward special group (BSG), who are only covered by the occupation-cum-income criterion. Claimed an exultant senior minister: "Actually, we have covered 100 per cent of the population under reservations."

Most of the pressure that forced Hegde to capitulate was brought by the Vokkaligas, who were excluded from the list of the backwards by Venkataswamy, and the Lingayats, who were not included by the Havanur Commission. With 101 of the ruling party's 136 MLA's belonging to these two communities, it was always on the cards that Hegde would buy peace with both of them. And eventually, he included both the communities in the new formula, even ignoring a six-page note submitted by a senior minister arguing that there should be less emphasis on caste and more on occupation and income. Admitted a senior minister: "It was impossible for Hegde to deny backward status to any of these communities."

But for the Brahmins and some other communities, all others are included in the new reservation policy now covering 92 per cent of the population.

Photographs by MUSHTAQ AHMED

Hegde also could not afford to ignore the other backward communities, in view of the impending elections to the local bodies. So the new formula takes in its sweep 221 other communities, comprising 46 per cent of the population. This, coupled with the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (18 per cent of the population) and the Vokkaligas and Lingayats (28 per cent), take the total under the reservations umbrella to 92 per cent. The percentage of reserved jobs and seats in educational institutions has been retained at 68 per cent, against 45 per cent recommended by Venkataswamy.

Asked to comment on the new policy, T. Venkataswamy, a former secretary of the state legislature said laconically: "It is the sweet will of the Government." But most leaders of the two dominant communities are clearly pleased. Said K.S. Rame Gowda, the Vokkaliga chairman of the Central Agitation Committee against the Venkataswamy Commission report: "Now there will be a cordial atmosphere in the state." Former chief minister R. Gundu Rao, who had launched a satyagraha against the report, admitted: "I am very happy." But the state's Congress(I) leaders, who were caught unawares by the sweep of reservations, argued that the inclusion of a large number of castes would deny benefits to the really backward people. Said state party President Oscar Fernandes: "This is a highly retrograde step."

The new reservation formula will be in force for three years, after which the policy will be reviewed on the basis of the report of yet another commission which is to be set up—the third to go into this vexatious issue in the last 14 years. Hegde had earlier ruled out the possibility of a fresh commission, saying that the Cabinet itself would take a decision. The change in the Government's stand suggests that there is no unanimity among his colleagues on the new formula. Admitted Hegde: "I cannot claim that this is the most scientific formula."

One problem that Hegde could face is in finding someone to head such a commission. Says Venkataswamy: "No sane person will accept the job." But only the naive would take a wager on Venkataswamy's claim. Given Hegde's record, most people think he will find a way out.

—SRINIVASA PRASAD

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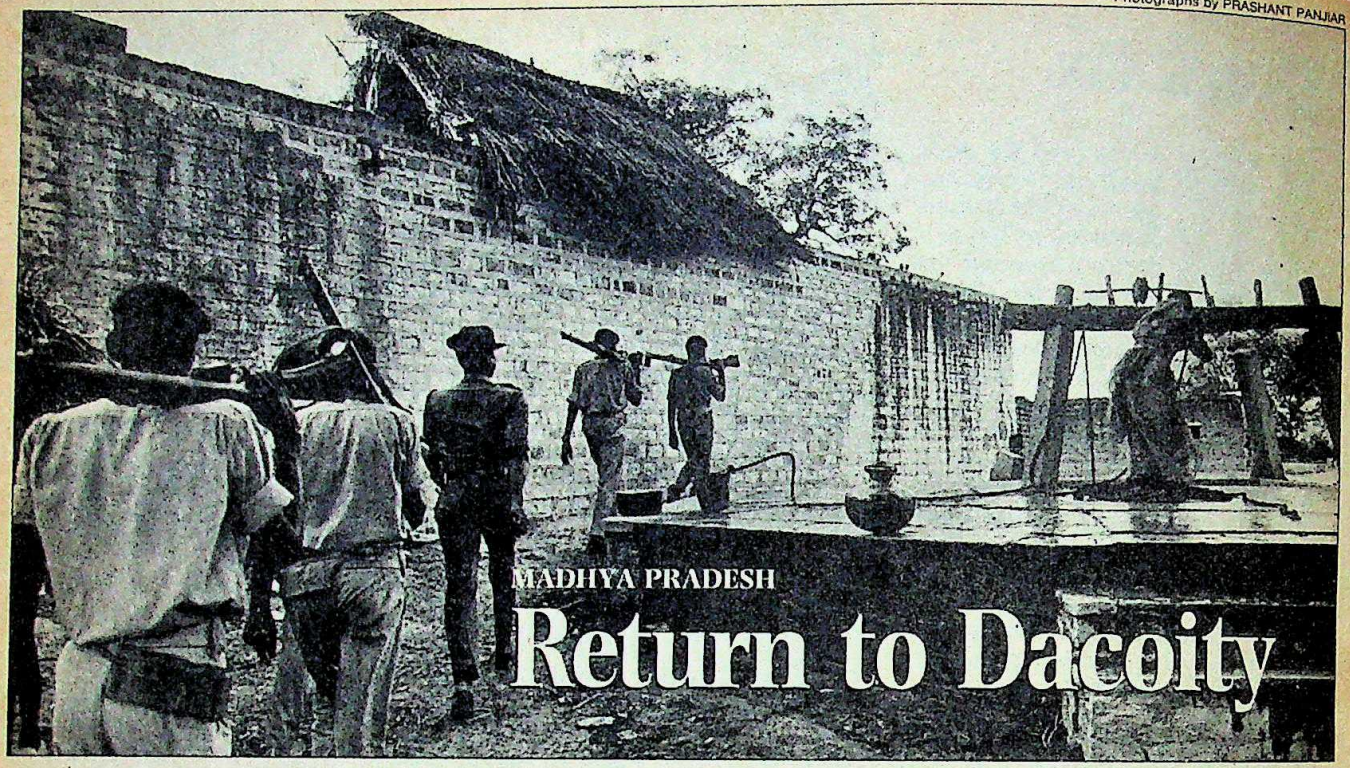
Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR



MADHYA PRADESH

Return to Dacoity

LIKE nature, the Chambal valley abhors a vacuum. After a brief lull following the surrenders of the gangs of Malkhan Singh and Ramesh Sikarwar, the menace of dacoity is again witnessing a resurgence in the area. The two listed gangs of Bhind and Morena districts, dormant till six months ago, are again active. Acknowledging the renewed threat, the Madhya Pradesh police last month doubled the prize money on the heads of the two gangs' chiefs and despatched two more companies of the Special Armed Force to track down the gangs. Said state police chief B.K. Mukherjee: "The growing menace has compelled us to launch a special operation to track them."

Police operations in a Chambal village

But much has changed in the nature of the dacoit gangs since the days of the last *dasyu samrat* (king of the dacoits) Malkhan Singh. They are smaller—between five and 10 people—and hence

CHAMBAL OUTLAWS

Winning Move

HOW Chambal's outlaws win the support of the poor in the area was amply demonstrated recently by bandit Vidya Gadariya, with a reward of Rs 10,000 on his head. Gadariya rescued Rampyari, 40, of Bichi village in Shivpuri district, from flesh traders, had her taken to the nearest police station and wrote a letter to the police asking them to provide her with security. Ironically, the police had earlier tried to rescue her but failed.

Rampyari and her family members are naturally effusive in their expressions of gratitude to the bandit chief. Says Ayodhi Bai, her aged mother: "For us, he was like an incarnation of god." And Rampyari remembers: "He gave a good thrashing to my tormentors and while parting, gave me a blanket and 20 rupees." She proudly displays the new plastic chappals she bought with them.

After her husband's death seven years ago, Rampyari started living with her brother-in-law, a common practice in her Gujar community. The brother-in-law, now in jail, allegedly sold her last year for Rs 25,000 to Laxman Gujar of Dongri village. "I was kidnapped and taken forcibly to his village and kept there against my will," says Rampyari.

Rampyari

In August a police party on a complaint filed by her brother tried to rescue her. But Shivpuri Police Superintendent B. Handa admitted that the policemen were attacked by Laxman's relatives and friends, and outnumbered, had to flee for their lives.

But an unnerved Laxman decided to sell her. He set off with two friends through the Shivpuri forests to find a customer. They ran into the Vidya Gadariya gang on the second day, and Rampyari told him her tale of woe. He summarily dealt with Laxman and his friends and handed her over to a shepherd with instructions to take her to the nearest police station. "I was shaking with fear but the bearded bandit told me that I was a sister to him," she recalls.

Back in Bichi and reunited with her three children, Rampyari wants police help to reclaim her late husband's property. After all, it is not every time that a bandit chief will come to her rescue.

—N.K. SINGH in Shivpuri

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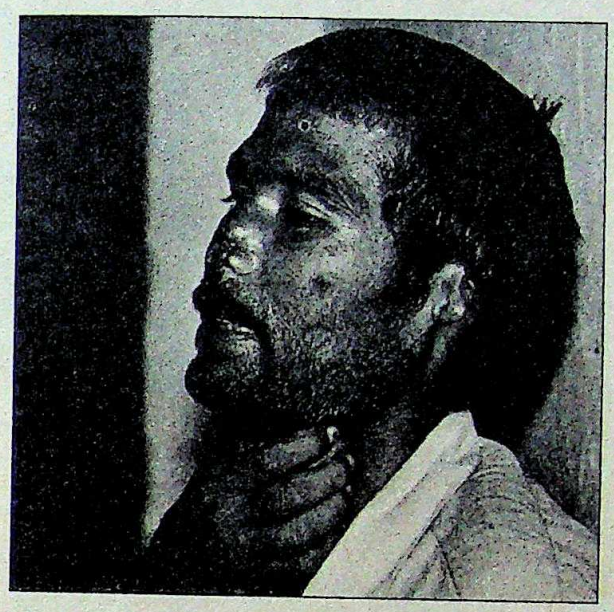
more mobile. But they are no longer politically influential since, unlike bigger gangs, they cannot influence the vote in their area. They also do not have as good firearms. Said a senior police officer: "Ever since terrorist activities have picked up in Punjab, the Chambal dacoits are not getting a sufficient supply of arms."

However, they are no less deadly. Raghuraj Singh Sikarwar, whose seven-member gang has committed nine murders in the last one year, has created a reign of terror in Morena district. He has earned the distinction of being the first to have his gang listed without having committed a single kidnapping or dacoity: he specialises in murders and extorting protection money.

Still, the most significant change is the induction of women into the gangs. After Phoolan, all gangs have begun keeping at least one girl. Says Chambal Deputy Inspector General (DIG) D.K. Jugran: "Women dacoits are the in thing now."

Chambal now has two new women dacoits apart from Kusuma Nain (she is believed to be in the ravines but has been lying low). Ramkatari, 35, who the police say is a good-looking washerwoman from Purawas village in Morena district, left her husband last month to join the unlisted Bengali gang. She believes her husband has wronged her, and is after his life.

The other newcomer Ganga Devi, 27, dark-complexioned and khaki-attired, became the fifth member of the Vidya Gadariya gang two months ago. Her husband, from Bhind district, allegedly sold her to Gujars who were trying to resell her when Vidya snatched her and made her his keep. Ganga, with Vidya's help, reportedly beat the Gujars up.



Badri Dhakad: no protection

But the police's real worries are the Sikarwar and Gadariya gangs. In July, Sikarwar's gang, as hired assassins, gunned down five persons in Mewada village. And he cut off the nose and ears of Badri Dhakad of Hatipura village when the man told him he was too poor to pay Rs 50,000 as protection money. Recalls a shaken Dhakad: "Sikarwar also told me that he would not spare a single dhakad (a backward community) in the area."

Sikarwar is a hunted man today. The police believe he was badly wounded in an encounter in Morena district in September—his second in the month—and may never be the same again. Interestingly, among the objects abandoned by the gang after the last encounter were love letters written to Sikarwar by an old girl-friend.

The bearded Gadariya, 25, who ties his long hair like a Sikh, has been active for the last two-and-a-half years. His gang has committed four kidnappings and a couple of murders. The police say he has survived so far because of the support he gets from his community of shepherds. He has already had two encounters with the police and although one of his gang members was killed and four have been arrested, he escaped on both occasions.

Gadariya and Sikarwar bear no comparison with the major dacoits of earlier times, but there is no guarantee that they will not become as deadly. Predicts Gwalior DIG A.N. Pathak: "Within a couple of years, a new crop of big dacoits will be ready." If that happens, old Chambal hands will surely say that the Chambal valley is living up to its reputation.

—N.K. SINGH in Gwalior

PHOOLAN DEVI

Trial Trouble

BANDIT queen Phoolan Devi, 24, continues to attract media attention. Last month, Phoolan made news when it was revealed that the Madhya Pradesh Government had issued an order that she would not be removed from the Gwalior Central Jail in "the public interest" because of a "likelihood of disturbance of public order" if she was.

A visibly-embarrassed Madhya Pradesh Home Secretary Vinay Shankar refused to divulge the reasons for the order, but it is obviously to prevent her being taken to Uttar Pradesh for trial in 74 cases of murder, dacoity and kidnapping. Since her surrender in February 1983, the Uttar Pradesh Government and courts have been asking for her to stand trial.

Madhya Pradesh's stock reply is that she will be sent after her cases there are over. Only three minor cases remain. Two have been dealt with. Phoolan did file an affidavit that she feared mental and physical torture in Uttar Pradesh as the administration was "hostile". She even moved the Supreme Court for transfer of her cases to Madhya Pradesh. "They can take only my dead body to Uttar Pradesh," she once told INDIA TODAY. But the petition was rejected and the Madhya Pradesh Government instructed to hand her over to Uttar Pradesh after her trial.

Phoolan Devi

Since the Madhya Pradesh authorities could not defy court summons from Uttar Pradesh, they seem to have resorted to a rarely-used provision of the Criminal Penal Code, Section 268, which empowers state governments to exclude certain persons from obeying judicial orders for appearing in court. It is also believed that the order is due to a commitment made to Phoolan by the Arjun Singh government that she would not be sent to Uttar Pradesh.

The order rules out the possibility of Phoolan ever standing trial in Uttar Pradesh. So far, Uttar Pradesh has not made an issue. But if it does, Phoolan will be even more in the news. For the moment, she is out of bounds for newsmen: after the order, the Madhya Pradesh Government has imposed a blanket ban on journalists meeting her.

—N.K. SINGH

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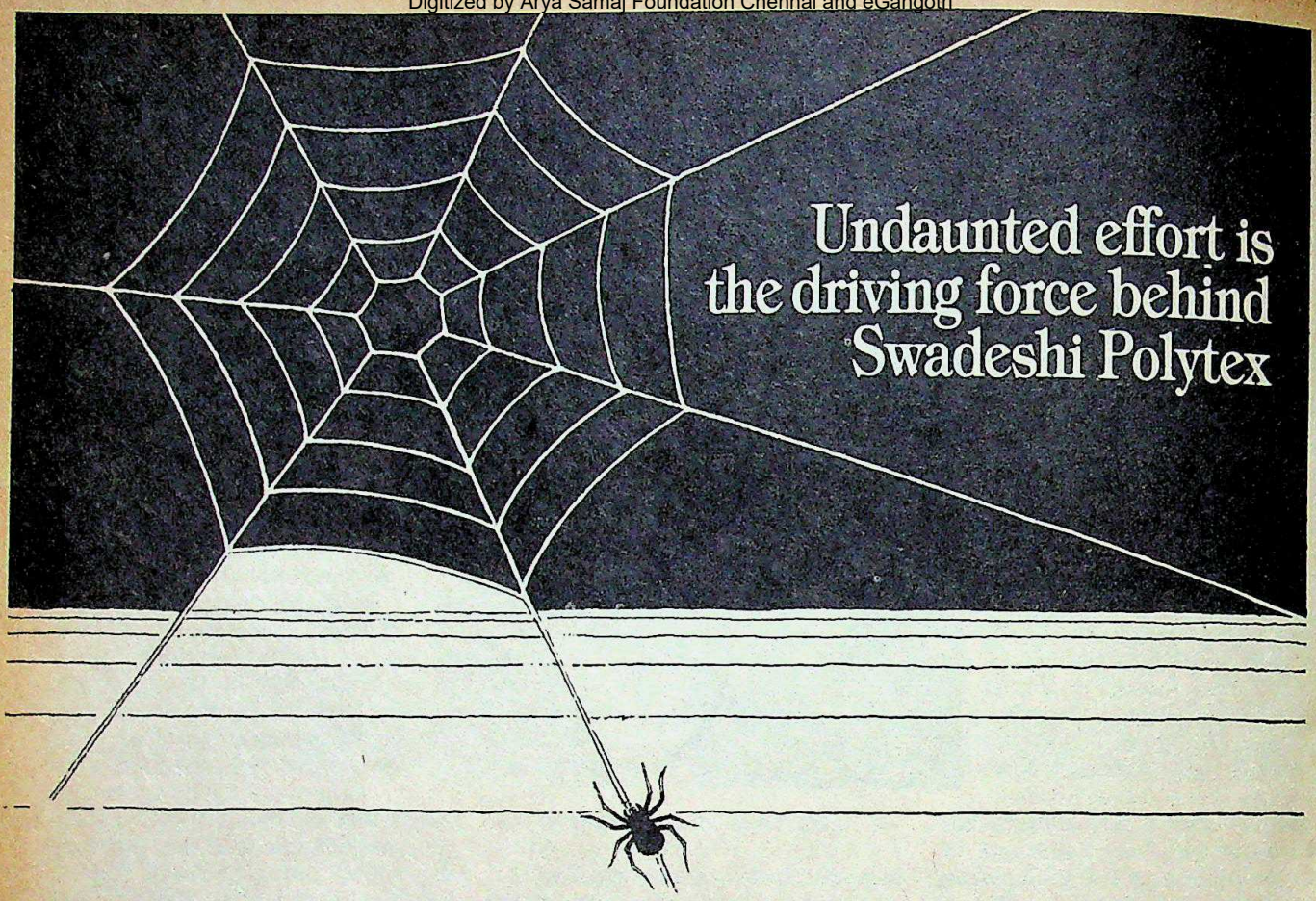

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ANDHRA PRADESH

Police Raj

THE image of the Andhra Pradesh police touched a new low last month when five persons died in police custody. The chain of gruesome tragedies, two of which were particularly horrifying, has sent shock-waves through the state as among the dead were those picked up for either petty offences or no offences at all. Though the resulting public furore compelled Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao to take the unprecedented step of ordering a judicial inquiry into each death, the sudden show of conscience was unconvincing. For, the state Government has in the past been lackadaisical in such cases, and the law is such that erring policemen are rarely brought to book.

The policemen's culpability was apparent in their own contradictory versions of the recent lock-up deaths. T. Muralidharan, a sailor with the Indian Navy, was handed over to the Vijayawada police after he was found wandering aimlessly and wanting to go to his mother. He was found dead the next day. The police first said that Muralidharan, a "mentally unsound man", had "collapsed when he was being taken to hospital". Later, they changed it to say that he had "committed suicide in the police lock-up".

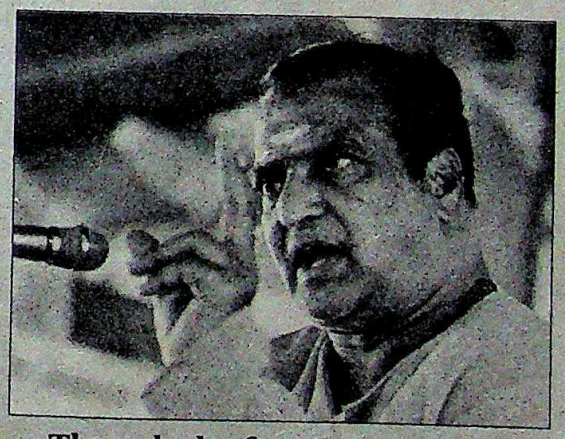
Even more shocking was the case of the missing corpse. Devara Nagulu, Dasari Venkateswarlu and Kalluri Narayana—three petty thieves—were illegally confined by the police in Macherla, a small town in Guntur district. On September 15, the police announced that Devara Nagulu had died in custody. Suspecting foul play, the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC) decided to investigate the issue and its lawyer, Y. Venkatesarlu, moved the court to have the body exhumed. This was scheduled for September 24, but when the grave was dug up, the body inside was missing—only the mat in which the body had been wrapped was found.

Dogged investigation by the APCLC soon revealed that the dead man was not Nagulu—he was still in jail—but Dasari Venkateswarlu. The APCLC says that the police deliberately identified the dead man as Nagulu so that they could later produce him dramatically in court and show up the accusation of lock-up deaths as a false alarm.

The two episodes—the other three deaths were almost routine in comparison—led to protests and bandhs in Vijayawada and Macherla. The BJP sponsored a dharna in front of the secretariat in Hyderabad, and the Congress(I) accused the Telugu Desam of bringing about a "police raj". Sufficiently shaken by the public uproar, Rama Rao ordered judicial inquiries into all the deaths and the Director-General of Police, Clifford Saldanha, instructed the force to set free any detenu who may be detained illegally, and to give up "rough methods". In effect, the police chief admitted that many in his force were open to the charge of prosecution for torture and illegal confinement under Sections 330 and 348 of the Indian Penal Code.

Muralidharan: innocent victim

K. MARUTI



Though the furore compelled N.T. Rama Rao to take the unprecedented step of ordering a judicial inquiry into each death, the sudden show of conscience was unconvincing.

But policemen are rarely taken to court. Of the 59 deaths in custody since January 1984, the only case that has made it to the courts is of the alleged murder—by the police—of ENT specialist Rammohan Gupta in Vizianagram in June 1985. The trial in this case will begin now on October 27, thanks to the tactics of the 10 accused cops. The police were also indicted by two judicial commissions appointed by the Telugu Desam Government but Rama Rao is yet to act on them.

The only other way in which errant policemen can be brought to book is by initiation of private prosecution. Here also, the presentation of evidence becomes a problem because the only possible eyewitnesses, apart from the policemen themselves, are the other detainees. They, not surprisingly, ar reluctant to give evidence against the police for fear of reprisals. Admitting this problem, the retired chief justice of the Supreme Court, Y.V. Chandrachud, had pointed out in the course of a judgement against a Haryana officer last year how policemen band together to save their colleagues or even "pervert the truth" in such cases. The result, said Chandrachud, was that "persons on whom atrocities are perpetrated in the sanctum sanctorum of the police station are left without any evidence to prove who the offenders are".

The five judicial commissions notwithstanding, the policemen responsible for the latest rash of lock-up deaths in Andhra Pradesh will probably go scot-free unless, as the APCLC General Secretary K. Balagopal suggests, "the burden of proof, like in the cases of custodial rapes, is placed on the errant police". But till this happens, the police may well continue to get away with a transfer to another police station for the offence of murder.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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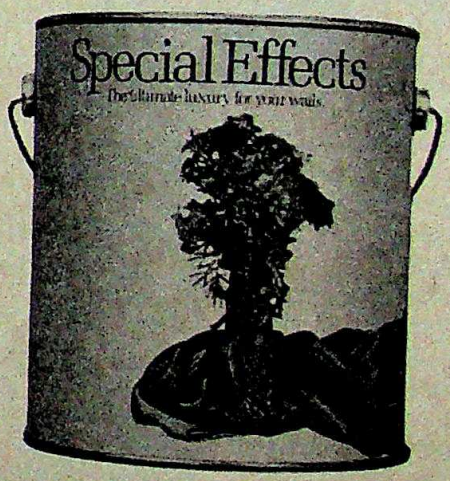

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DIWALI

Fiery Danger

WITHIN the coming fortnight Doordarshan will prominently feature actor Om Puri on a regular basis—not as a film star but as a man with a brief but serious message about the dangers posed by Diwali fireworks. In particular, Puri will warn viewers about conical *anars* (roman candles) which inflict a lethal toll of injuries during the two days of the festival. And Puri will be followed by Dr H. Keswani, secretary of the Burns Association of India, who will offer the advice that contrary to popular teaching, cold water—the colder the better—and not any ointment, is the best first aid after burns.

Says Keswani: "It is generally believed that water should never be poured on a burnt part because it produces blisters on the burnt skin. It surely does so. But a blister is a desirable indication of the depth of a burn. It is not the flame but the heat which damages the skin. Where the heat is allowed to stay in the skin for a long time, then it is well and truly cooked." A bucket of cold water, he advises, must be kept handy when playing with fireworks.

Doordarshan's media campaign for Diwali reflects for the first time the Government's response to consumer groups demanding new regulations on the manufacture of fireworks.

Doordarshan's media campaign during the Diwali season reflects for the first time the Government's response to a three-year-long campaign by consumer groups which have been petitioning state chief ministers as well as Central departments for new regulation on the manufacture and distribution of fireworks. The Government publicity campaign is also the result of the keen interest which has been taken by the Supreme Court in this issue. The court has accepted a writ petition filed by Professor Dinesh Mohan, a biomedical engineer in Delhi's Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), requesting not just tighter controls but an outright ban on the manufacture of conical *anars* which, the petition says, cause the maximum damage.

In response to the petition, the Supreme Court appointed a four-member expert committee to examine whether the conical *anars*, about 7.5 crore of which are sold during the annual Diwali season throughout the country, "should be banned in the larger interest of the consuming public". The committee has submitted an interim report to the court which, while not recommending a "complete ban" on the firework, suggests that the *anar* be made safer by increasing its size and thereby rendering it difficult to be held in the hand while being lit, placing prominent warning labels in different languages on fireworks, and the launching of a "vigorous campaign to educate the public by all means of media available". But the consumer groups which have been invited by the court to respond to the draft recommendations of the expert committee are not satisfied and have criticised its report in new arguments presented to the court.

Scarred by conical *anar*: lethal toll

According to studies conducted in several cities during Diwali by Professor Mohan, along with Sunil Kumar and K.P. Kothial also, of IIT Delhi, and Dr Mathew Verghese of Delhi's Maulana Azad Medical College, the two days in which the entire nation plays with fireworks turn into a frightening medical epidemic. According to projections made by them, burns occur in about two of every hundred households in the country, with hundreds of thousands of people, mostly teenagers, suffering serious injuries to their eyes and hands. The largest number of burns, almost 60 per cent, are caused by conical *anars*, followed by bombs and bangers, extracted powders, rockets, and *phooljadis* (sparklers).

The majority of the burn cases—many of them resulting in blindness—involve the conical paper-bound type *anars* which flare up early. The old fashioned *anars* with a baked earth container are involved in far fewer accidents. The expert committee's recommendations for more stringent standards, in terms of public education campaigns and improving the quality of the *anar*, will not solve the problem says the reply filed in the Supreme Court. The writ notes: "No quality control procedures in the world are hundred per cent efficient. As a matter of fact in India we can only assume low efficiency rates." The setting of new standards, the writ says, will "only give the manufacturers a license to keep producing a product that will burn and maim thousands of Indian citizens".

Educational campaigns against hazards, while certainly a help, the writ says, are no panacea especially when they concern teenagers "who are naturally inclined toward performing risky actions". For example, even though safety helmets have been proven to be effective in preventing head injuries, teenagers typically refuse to wear them while riding motorcycles and health warnings on cigarette packets have made no dent on teenage smoking.

While the fireworks safety debate is relatively new in India, many other countries, have over the last two decades taken strict measures to ensure safety. Canada, Japan, New Zealand, France, Italy as well as Eastern Bloc countries have not only banned hazardous fireworks but restricted their sale to only people over the age of 18 on the grounds that freedom to purchase explosive devices is not a fundamental right guaranteed by their constitutions. Nor does such a right exist in India.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR

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GORKHAS

Growing Violence

DARJEELING is burning. But Subhas Ghising, the man who ignited the Gorkhaland agitation in this pine-clad hill district of north Bengal, has moved into the shadows, his iron grip on the movement loosening for the first time since its eruption in April this year. Last fortnight, while incidents of murder, arson, inter-party clashes and panic swept the hill district, Ghising remained cloistered in his party office in Darjeeling town. "I am trying to keep the agitation on a low key," says Ghising. "I want to cool tempers." But instead of dousing passions, Ghising's retreat—which has coincided with a belated political offensive by the local units of the ruling Communist Party of India (Marxist)—has only allowed his supporters to resort to new levels of violence.

The agitation's leadership in the tea gardens and district towns appears to have passed into the hands of freely roaming bands of Ghising's party, the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF). Even in the heart of Darjeeling town, District Commissioner G. Balagopal's personal bodyguard was divested of his service revolver. A few days later, a police jeep was stopped by GNLF supporters and set ablaze. The next day, three jawans of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) narrowly escaped when their jeep was attacked. Marxist MP Ananda Mohan Pathak was injured when GNLF supporters attacked the party office in Darjeeling town with stones and petrol bombs. Admits Ghising: "The decisions to retaliate or take any action will be taken by local convenors and committees at the lowest levels. This power has been given so that local units can take decisions in time. I can only advise."

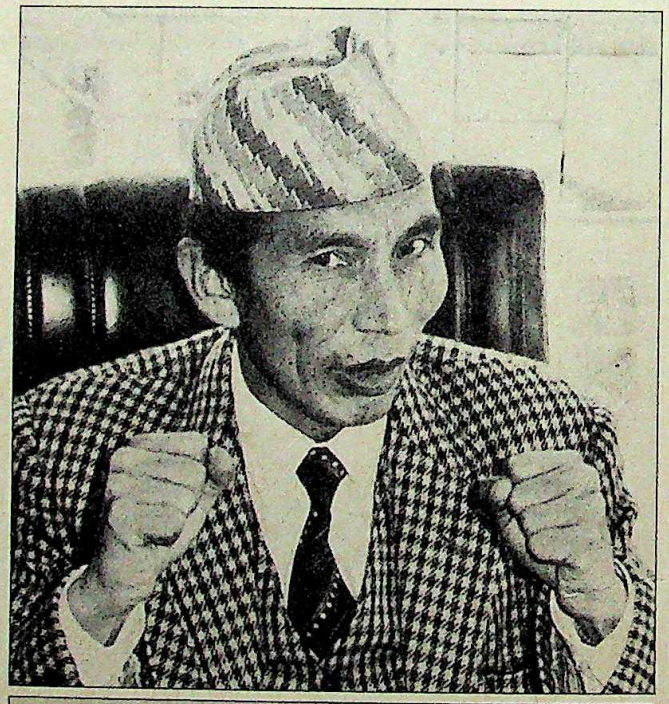
Flush with this power, the party's second-line leaders are openly defiant of Ghising. On September 25, Ghising convened a party executive committee meeting where he advocated avoidance of a head-on collision with the CPI(M). Reacting to this, GNLF branch leader, K.N. Subba, angrily remarked: "I am tired of talks. Now it is time to fight the armed police and the CRPF." In several places, the GNLF is already resisting police action. In Patharjora, an old man was killed and several policemen injured when their attempt to pick up GNLF extremists was resisted by local GNLF supporters. One policeman later died in hospital. "We have to resist," says R.M. Darnal, GNLF branch leader at Panighata: "The police under the Marxist Government has become inhuman."

Whereas Ghising now talks like a moderate—"Since we want to remain in India why should we unnecessarily go in for confrontation and violence?"—GNLF supporters are more militant than ever before. Their new strategy is to impose blockades on Marxist strongholds in the tea gardens, preventing people from buying essential goods and children from going to school in Darjeeling town. Only those with small chits rubber stamped by the GNLF are allowed to draw rations and buy food from shops belonging to GNLF supporters. The police steps in when specific complaints reach them, but often the besieged settle matters themselves. Some Marxists broke out of such a blockade on Tukvar tea estate on October 3, armed with kukris and spears, killing one GNLF supporter and seriously injuring another. The police had to fire, killing one of them.

Progressively, it is the GNLF youth and the militant women's wing that is taking charge of the agitation. Intelligence sources claim that Ghising is under great pressure to include hard liners in the upper echelons of his party. Kuver Kharga, said to be a hard liner, was appointed vice-president a month ago and though Ghising denies it, it is reported that moves have been initiated to elevate other hard liners like Ganga Rao and S.B. Lama to the executive. Claims Ghising: "I know there are many people

PRASHANT PANJIAR

GNLF graffiti: spreading the message



"I am trying to keep the agitation on a low key," says Ghising. But instead of dousing passions, Ghising's retreat has only kindled his supporters to new heights of violence.

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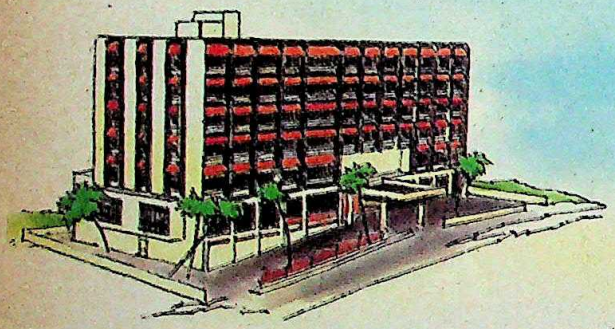

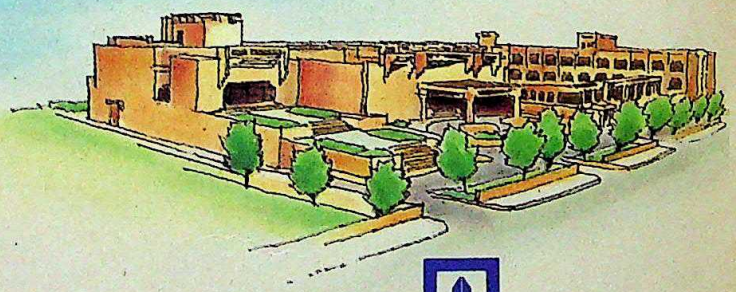

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who want to kill in revenge, but I am keeping them out and politically and psychologically controlling the movement."

But for all that, the GNLF is now up against the CPI(M), which until last month did little in reaction to GNLF activity. Though Pathak denies that the CPI(M) has formally decided to strike back it is obvious the CPI(M) is going to fight fire with fire. Says local CPI(M) leader Bhim Yonzan: "All over the district, CPI(M) leaders are being harassed and forced to support the GNLF. But Marxists like me can never give up our faith in the ideology or the party, and the more we are pushed into a corner the more we will resist."

Following the burning of Pathak's home in Sonada, near Darjeeling, on September 7, Marxist supporters set ablaze several houses of GNLF supporters in Pechong Bazar, below Sonada. In the last month, GNLF and CPI(M) supporters have clashed almost daily in which six people have been killed in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts.

Pathak: victim of GNLF attack

Ghising wanted to avoid a head-on collision with the CPI(M) but GNLF men have openly clashed with Marxist supporters. And now the CPI(M) has decided to fight fire with fire.

THE attitude of GNLF supporters has further hardened because of what they say is the partiality of the district administration towards the Marxists. Lawyers in Darjeeling point out that whereas over 500 GNLF supporters have been picked up by the police so far, only about 35 Marxist supporters have been arrested. The Darjeeling Bar Association, which has mostly Nepali members, sent a telegram to Rajiv Gandhi last month seeking immediate Central intervention to prevent "further deterioration of law and order caused by the partisan attitude of the local administration."

The lawyers' initiative is symptomatic of another phenomenon which poses a threat to Ghising's leadership: the increasing role of the educated people of Darjeeling in the Gorkhaland agitation. Its 'intellectuals' have formed a 'study group' and have become active. Led by Darjeeling Municipality Chairman Vijay Kumar Pradhan and Nepali Bhasha Samiti General Secretary Enos Das Pradhan, they shot off a memorandum last month to the Centre arguing that the "demand for Gorkhaland is a natural product of the democratic process in India".

Security forces on guard in Darjeeling

Understandably, this sudden move has anything but pleased Ghising. When some study group leaders approached him for positions in the GNLF executive, they were rebuffed in no uncertain terms. Says Ghising: "These people cannot lead movements; they are chicken-hearted cowards."

Despite his protestations, Ghising is increasingly becoming a prisoner of his own words. Today, he emphatically denies saying that "the Centre only understands the language of agitations," and says instead: "The Centre has promised negotiations and we should discuss our problems across the table." But hard liners use such statements—and his decision not to participate in bandhs—to support their contention that Ghising is going back on his commitment to pursue the demand for Gorkhaland.

For a while—especially when Home Minister Buta Singh invited him for talks—it seemed that the Centre would bail him out. But after Buta Singh's acquiescence to state Chief Minister Jyoti Basu's demand that no meeting should be held with Ghising without his concurrence, Ghising again seems to have been put in a corner. Basu's Government insists that the movement is anti-national and has to be fought. Should Basu succeed in severing Ghising's line with the Centre, the agitation and its leadership is bound to swing towards extremism.

As it is, beleaguered Darjeeling Superintendent of Police, R.P. Singh, is busy coping with panic calls and stray violence. Hamstrung by a force not equipped to operate effectively in the hills—as the state armed police comprises mostly plainsmen unused to the cold climate and food—and which is riddled with GNLF supporters, the police barely have the situation under control. "If the blockades continue to tighten, even worse violence than we have so far witnessed could break out," says a worried Singh.

Presently, the agitation is headed towards anything but resolution. The loosening hold of a now moderate Ghising, contradictory attitudes of the state Congress(I) and the Centre, Buta Singh's vacillation on meeting Ghising and the state Government's unyielding posture have created a witch's brew in Darjeeling. And the man who stands to lose the most is none other than Ghising who set the cauldron boiling.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE in Darjeeling

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PARKASH SINGH BADAL

"Ribeiro is creating terrorism"

THERE was a time when Parkash Singh Badal was considered among the most moderate of Akali politicians. Not any more. He has broken with Barnala, opposed the Punjab accord, attended meetings organised by outfits close to extremists and the funerals of people the police have killed as terrorists. Badal does not seem a moderate any longer, whether out of political conviction, or ambition to replace Barnala or out of fear of the extremists, who in the past have had him on their hit list.

Freelance journalist TAVLEEN SINGH interviewed Badal on behalf of INDIA TODAY last fortnight. The former Punjab chief minister often answered reluctantly, taking objection to some of the questions. But what he said, and did not say, were revealing. Excerpts:

> "The meeting where resolutions praising the killers of Longowal and Vaidya were passed wasn't ours. A guest speaker is not responsible for all the things that are being done there."

Q. How would you solve the Punjab problem?

A. First we have to sort out why this problem has been created. Because the Central Government and the then Congress(I) state government are responsible for all this.

Q. How?

A. Had they solved the problem earlier, this problem would not have existed now.

Q. You have always been considered a leader of the Hindus and Sikhs in Punjab. Do you still consider yourself as such?

A. My views are the same, but whether others like me depends on them. There are three reasons why some people call me a hard liner. One is that at the time of the accord, I was against it. Because I thought then that this accord will fail and the Central Government will not be sincere in solving the problem. Also there were more serious and important problems during this period. First was the release of military personnel, then the release of youth detained all over the country, and of course that the problem of the Punjab should be solved to the satisfaction of Punjabis.

Q. What were the other reasons?

A. The other thing is that I have condemned this commando action by Barnala (in the Golden Temple). I had warned him earlier during the sarbat khalsa that if he sent paramilitary forces into the Golden Temple our party will be finished, because this is a fundamental issue.

Q. What could he have done instead?

A. There was no problem there.

Q. There was a declaration of Khalistan....

A. Declaration doesn't mean....The only problem was that they wanted to arrest those persons, but when they were sure that they were not there and there were no arms inside....

Q. But they had challenged the Government, it was an act of treason.

A. But they weren't there, even the administration told them that.

Q. Why do you consider it such a serious matter that they should have gone into the Golden Temple?

A. It's very serious, you cannot imagine....

Q. Isn't it equally serious to spread hatred from the Golden Temple?

A. No this is not very serious....

Q. It's not equally serious.

A. No, whatever it is one can't go by only reasoning, it is a matter of feeling. People can sacrifice their whole families for this. It's an emotional thing. Earlier there was Bluestar, and look at the reaction. Sikhs can't digest this that a ruler, whoever he or she may be, should do this....

Q. Don't you think Bluestar was different?

A. This was as objectionable because this time there was no problem at all.

Q. If it was as objectionable why hasn't there been a massive reaction like after Bluestar?

A. There has been, there's been a split in the party.

Q. But the people haven't reacted.

A. They will. When the time comes you will see that nobody will vote for Barnala.

Q. You have been attending the funerals of some alleged terrorists, and you attended a meeting at the Golden Temple where resolutions were passed praising the killers of Sant Longowal and General Vaidya.

A. We went to attend the *bhogs* of those people who were innocent and killed in false encounters. Is it not my duty to go if someone innocent is killed in a false encounter?

Q. In the past year there have been over 500 innocent Hindus killed in Punjab, people who did not even have a gun in their hands. Have you gone to any of their funerals?

A. No I didn't go because the atmosphere was such....I tried to go to one or two places, but it wasn't safe.

Q. Did you write to them?

A. No. I'll ask you another question. Everybody expects us (Sikhs) to do everything but these 10 people killed in Gurdaspur recently. Has any party in India condemned this?

> "If we say we want autonomy, they say we are asking for Khalistan; if Jyoti Basu or the Andhra people say this they are very great nationalists."

Q. At one of the meetings you attended there was an open demand for a Sikh homeland.

A. What is there in saying Sikh homeland? Everybody says Punjab is the homeland of the Sikhs. Actually the situation is that anybody can say what they want except us. If we say we want autonomy, they say we are asking for Khalistan; if Jyoti Basu or the Andhra people say this they are very great nationalists.

Q. Nobody else is asking for a homeland for a specific religious

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community.

A. This is a very big subject which I can explain to you some other time. Our party is for the Anandpur Sahib resolution.

Q. *What about the meeting where they passed resolutions praising the killers of Sant Longowal and General Vaidya?*

A. It wasn't our meeting, we just attended it. A guest speaker is not responsible for all the things that are being done there.

Q. *But do you support these resolutions?*

A. It's their thing.

Q. *Do you support the resolutions?*

A. No, no, I've given the resolutions of my party. There are some points on which every Sikh party is saying the same thing, that there should be no killing of innocents, that there should be no security belt....

Q. *But here you have a specific resolution saying these killers were heroes.*

A. No, this is their separate meeting, I was not there at the time.

Q. *Do you consider the resolutions a good thing?*

A. No, why should I say anything?

Q. *You have no objection to going to meetings where such resolutions are passed.*

A. Look, there are certain points on which we have a common, joint programme. Supposing we fought for the farmers. The CPI or CPI(M) could have a joint front with us. But this does not mean we are following all the principles of the communist party.

Q. *Who do you feel the youth of Punjab currently support?*

A. They are with us, not with this Barnala. No Sikh is with Barnala.

Q. *How would you solve the problems of Punjab?*

A. The main problems have to be solved by the Centre. They should release military personnel (deserters detained after Bluestar), because a few hundred are still in jail and this agitates the minds of the people. The second thing is the detention of youngsters, then the killing of innocent youngsters in fake encounters. Then the various Punjab problems.

Q. *The Centre's case is that when Barnala released about 2,000 people after becoming chief minister, immediately there was a rise in terrorism.*

A. You read the statement Barnala made today, in which he says that none of the released detainees have participated in any acts of terrorism.

Q. *But the police say something else.*

A. Either the police is the head of the state or it's the chief minister.

Q. *So you feel everybody should be released, even the people arrested from the Golden Temple after Operation Bluestar?*

A. Yes there should be general amnesty. When one has to solve a problem then one has to take bold steps and not look at every little detail minutely. Why don't you look at it another way? Why don't you ask why nobody has been punished or arrested although 25,000 Sikhs have been killed (after the assassination of Indira Gandhi)?

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Q. *Do you feel that after a general amnesty there will be peace?*

A. Yes, 90 per cent of the problem will be solved. In Mizoram, Laldenga has given general amnesty, so that even those people accused of killing military personnel have been freed.

Q. *You have been talking about false encounters. But when you were chief minister you were accused of doing the same with the Naxalites.*

A. One cannot say that there were a lot of false encounters then. This problem is different from that.

Q. *In what way?*

A. What should I say? Why are you asking me these questions?

Q. *We want to know how you would have dealt with it.*

A. You are asking me these questions just to put me in the wrong.

Q. *When you are up against a man with a Sten gun, what do you do?*

A. The question is, why did he come to have a Sten gun? Why have they become violent? Now look at these 10 boys they have killed in Gurdaspur. They say they were terrorists but in fact they were all innocent.

Q. *Can your party guarantee that if the detenus are released the killings will not increase?*

A. We can only suggest how to solve it, nobody can guarantee anything. They should also try and talk to the AISSF and the Damdami Taksal people.

Q. *These are people who have had hit lists, with your name at the top. How can you talk to them?*

A. I'm not saying I will talk to them. I'm saying the Government should.

Q. *You feel that there cannot be a solution without talking to them.*

A. I don't think so.

Q. *Are you against the methods that Ribeiro is using?*

A. Yes, definitely. He is creating terrorism. State terrorism is the worst type of terrorism.

Q. *What about Siddhartha Shanker Ray? How do you see his role?*

A. I don't want to comment.

Q. *Do you see the situation deteriorating to the point that there would one day have to be Khalistan?*

A. That I can't say. Nobody can say. After all, who could have predicted what has happened in these past four years? But there must be a political solution to these problems.

Q. *Is a solution possible with Barnala in power?*

A. It's up to the Centre, because the major problem is with the Centre.

Q. *How do you see the immediate future?*

A. It is not good.

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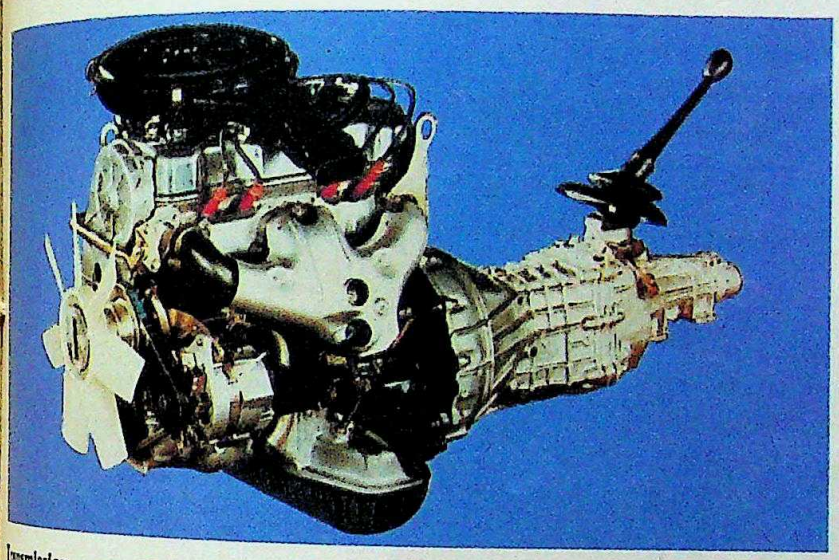

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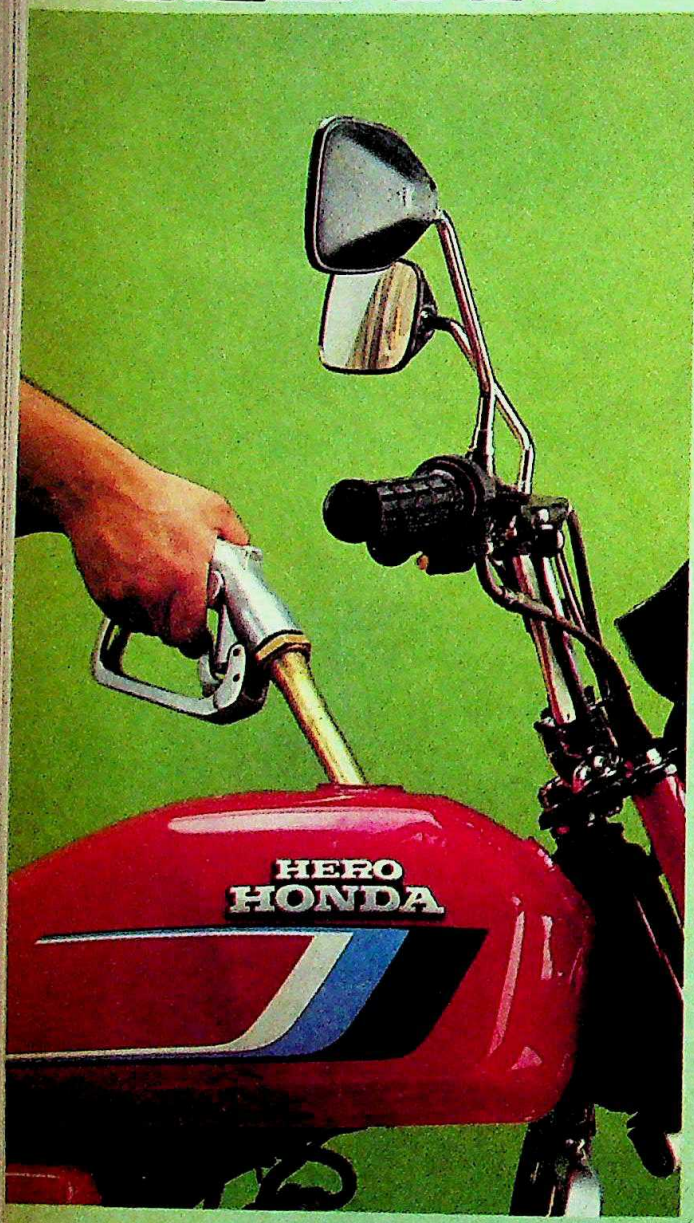

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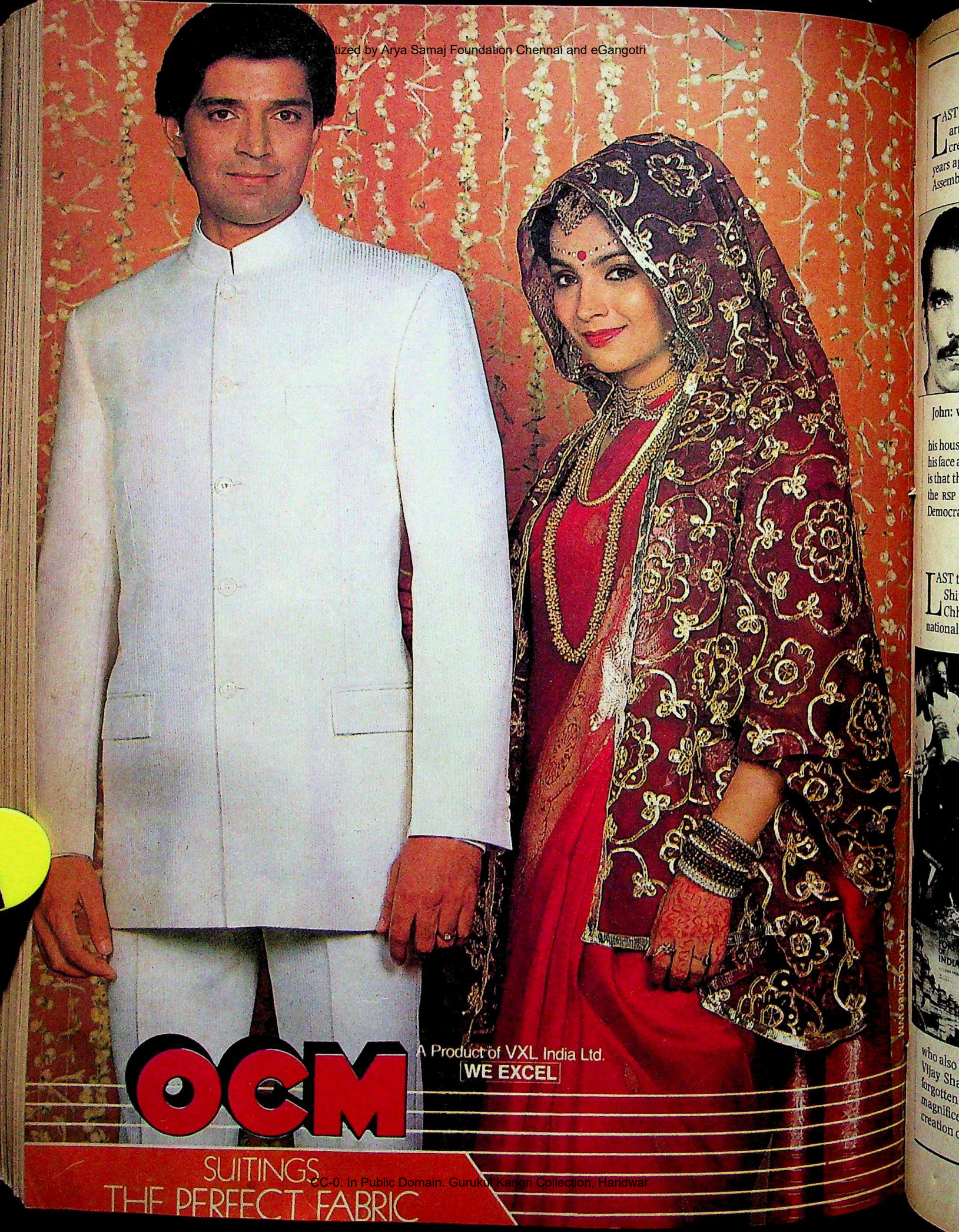

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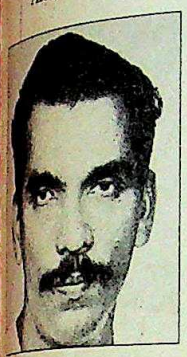
Surprise Ending

LAST fortnight when Chavara Sarasan was traced and arrested by the Kerala police from Vensa in Karnataka, it created political tremors: his disappearance about five years ago had become a major issue during the 1982 Kerala Assembly elections. The allegation was that Sarasan, a factory worker, had been killed by the then finance minister Baby John for defecting from the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) to the Congress(I). Indeed, the 'Sarasan Disappearance Case' was used so successfully by his detractors in the election campaign against John that he barely managed to scrape through successfully.


John: vindicated

A visibly relieved John said last fortnight: "I have been exonerated. It is now proved that he was kidnapped by the Congress(I) and held captive with Gundu Rao's help." According to Sarasan himself, he was abducted from his house and threatened with certain death if he dared show his face again ever in the state. The speculation in Trivandrum is that this is Chief Minister K. Karunakaran's way of wooing the RSP strongman from the camp of the Opposition Left Democratic Front.

Stirring Passions

LAST time, it was Dom Moraes' book on Bombay that fed a Shiv Sena bonfire because the author had referred to Chhatrapati Shivaji as a Maratha rather than as a national leader. Last fortnight, it was Virginia Fass' *The Forts of India* that was the object of communal wrath after a prominent Bharatiya Janata Party corporator, Ram Das Nayak, happened to read it.

FPJ

Protestors burning Fass' book (inset): chauvinistic sentiments

There was an uproar in the Municipal Corporation, followed by a demonstration of BJP and Shiv Sena corporators during which a copy of the book, sponsored by Oberoi Hotels International, was burnt. The controversial paragraphs refer to Shivaji's caste—"Sudra", going by the text. Nayak has not only written to the chief secretary of Maharashtra asking for a ban on the book but threatened legal action against the Oberoi chain of hotels in the absence of a public apology.

The offending passage was not written by Fass, a well-known photographer who also has *Palaces of India* to her credit, but by an IAS officer, Vijay Sharma, and his wife Rita. Ironically, what has been forgotten, in the heat of the moment, is that apart from the magnificent photographs of Shivaji's forts, the book hails his creation of a Maratha nation by rising above caste differences.

Power Game

JAGANNATH Mishra, former Bihar chief minister and a restless soul ever since he lost the top job in the state three years ago, made his intention of pulling down the 18-month-old Bindeshwari Dubey Government more than evident on October 2. Mishra organised a "state-level convention of Congress(I) workers" which, he gleefully claimed, had attracted 50,000 workers, 70 legislators, 20 district party chiefs and two parliamentarians. And the message was that the Government must work or else the party would be finished. He also referred to moves to expel him from the party, and said that he was not about to oblige anyone.

KRISHNA MURARI KISHAN

Mishra at the October 2 convention: show of strength

Dubey and state party President Dumar Lal Baitha reportedly tried their best to stop Mishra, but to no avail. The former chief minister was also emboldened by his meeting with party General Secretary T. Anjaiah, which went off well, as did his 30-minute talk with party Vice-President Arjun Singh, in which he spoke his mind. Dubey's response to his opponent's aggression was unusual: on Gandhi Jayanti day, he flew to Ranchi instead of attending official functions at Patna.

Fall from Grace

THERE is never any knowing what M.G. Ramachandran will do next. Last fortnight, on the eve of the 15th birth anniversary of his All India Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the Tamil Nadu chief minister hurriedly summoned a meeting of his party's executive committee. Then came the announcement that MGR who is already president of the party, was also taking over as its general secretary from S. Raghavanandan. This must be some kind of a political first in itself. And this additional responsibility comes for a man who is already in frail health.

MGR: in control

But the eyes behind the dark glasses are really aiming to cut to size the faction led by Information Minister R.M. Veerappan, which had been in a buoyant mood after its leader's victory in a by-election from Tirunelveli. Raghavanandan had identified himself with Veerappan, particularly in opposing the imposition of Hindi and had sworn he and his wife would go to jail in protest if the need arose. It isn't the jail for him now; it is political wilderness.

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TERAI SIKHS

Wild Goose Chase

THE 6.5 lakh Sikhs inhabiting the Terai region of Uttar Pradesh are up in arms over a door-to-door census of their community being conducted by the state police. The census followed a series of alarming reports from the state intelligence department that the area had become a hotbed of terrorist activity. But the head count and interrogations of suspects drew a blank, and as police officers themselves told Senior Correspondent DILIP AWASTHI, the reports were based on rumour and suspicion and were not founded on fact.

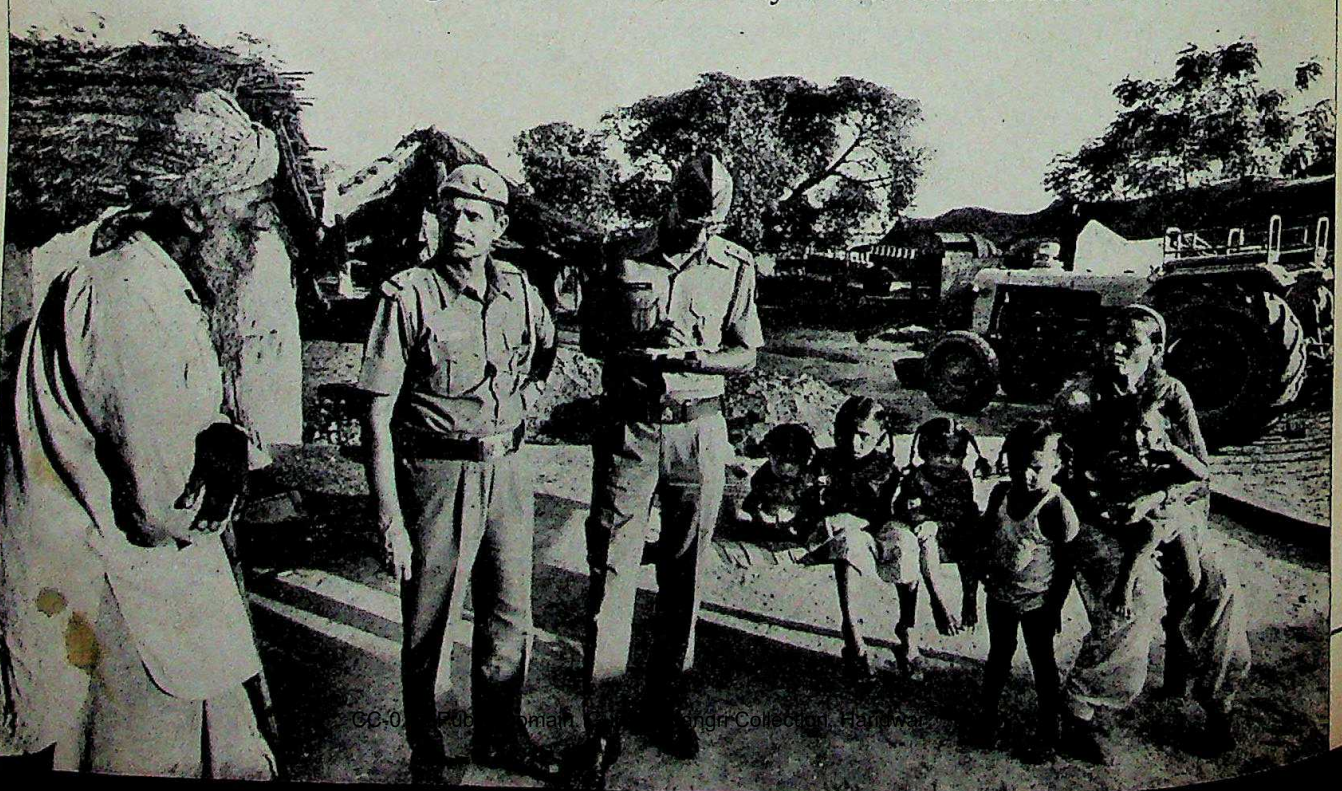
IN what has been billed as a pre-emptive counter-terrorist measure, the Uttar Pradesh Government has ordered the police to conduct a door-to-door census of some 6.5 lakh Sikhs who now inhabit a seven-district region in the Terai, involving house-to-house searches, questioning of the heads of families about the names, ages and addresses of relatives, as well as surveillance of pilgrims who visit the 300-odd gurudwaras in the area. The action has galvanised the mostly affluent Sikh farming community—comprising about 40 per cent of the region's population—into resistance through large organised meetings to protest what they refer to as their "second-class citizenship". Says Lakhminder Singh Dhillon, 55, publicity secretary of the Uttar Pradesh Sikh Pratinidhi Board: "Our backs are now against the wall. The Government has thrown the Sikhs at the mercy of the police and we are determined to fight this."

Map by B.K. SHARMA

The state Government's justification for this drastic head count, which threatens to alienate a hitherto peaceful Sikh community more eager to protect its prosperity than support demands for Khalistan in a far-off place, is based on 10 months of intelligence reports. The reports allege that the Terai is fast becoming a hotbed of terrorist activities like gun-running from across the Nepal border and illegal manufacture of lethal weapons. Filed by local intelligence units and the state Intelligence Bureau (IB), the

Census of Sikhs being carried out in Pilibhit: loud protests

A census based on intelligence reports linking the affluent 6.5 lakh Sikh farmers of the Terai with the Punjab extremists has sparked off charges from the community of second class treatment.



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reports are a follow-up to Operation Shivalik, a massive police campaign launched in January 1985 to flush out terrorists possibly lying low in the Himalayan foothills. But by the police's own admission, the operation fizzled out and resulted in only one case under the Anti-terrorist Act. Still, intelligence reports continued to paint an alarming picture of terrorists holed up in posh and near inaccessible farm-houses in the Terai.

The Sikh community, it appears, has reason for complaint. When the police began to move into action on August 8, 1986, on the basis of the information in the reports, they found that much of it was either concocted or based on rumour. Raids on suspected terrorist hide-outs including 31 gurudwaras and 137 farm-houses—close to the Indo-Nepal border and touching the districts of Lakhimpur Kheri, Pilibhit and Naini Tal—produced no incriminating evidence.

IB reports had identified nearly 38 Sikhs arrested during Operation Shivalik as terrorists or criminals having links with terrorists. Police records, however, name only one Balraj Singh alias Balli arrested on August 16 in Bajpur as a known extremist and a member of the Jinda gang. Five other cases of local criminals suspected of having links with terrorists are still under verification. Says Naini Tal's Additional Police Superintendent N.R. Srivastava: "Only Balraj Singh fits into the terrorist category as he along with Nirmal Singh and Sukhdev Singh (arrested in connection with General Vaidya's murder) had looted the State Bank branch of Kashipur on July 21. We are trying to get Nirmal Singh and Sukhdev Singh to Naini Tal so that they can be confronted with Balraj Singh."

THE case of Sardar Mastan Singh is but one example of the dubious credibility of the alarmist state intelligence reports. He was detained on April 12 at his farm in the Singhavi police circle and interrogated about the whereabouts of one of his seven sons, truck driver Kala Singh, 28, who was not traceable. It later turned out to be a case of a runaway son and the police released Mastan Singh. But he is still listed in intelligence records as an extremist.

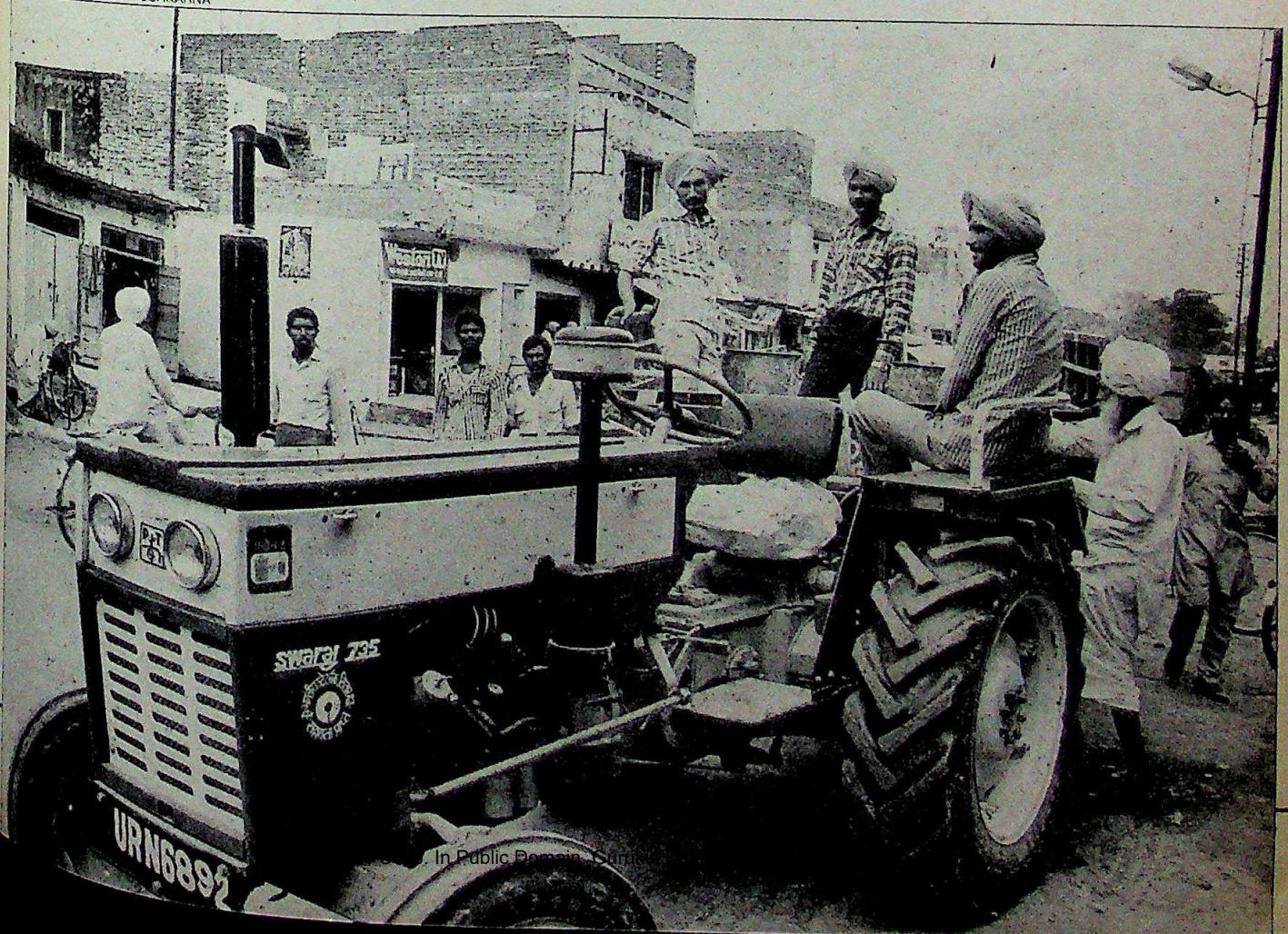
The Lakhimpur Kheri police also came up red-faced following an investigation of the Hemkund Transport Agency in Nepal, which was alleged to be smuggling foreign-made arms from Nepal to the Terai area through Lakhimpur Kheri, Pilibhit, and Naini Tal—and there on to Punjab. The reports claimed that the agency carried out the operation on buses, trucks, taxi-cars and jeeps which plied their way to Pallia, about 35 km inside the border. The owners were identified as Kuldeep Singh, Gurdeep Singh and Pritam Singh, all Sikhs now settled in Nepal.

But the police investigation revealed that the report was baseless. There is only one road link from Nepal to Lakhimpur district. India's last railhead, Gauri Phanta, touches the border of Dhangarhi in Nepal's Kailali district. There is only one road which links Dhangarhi to Gauri Phanta which has three barricades on the Indian side: customs, sales tax and police. According to the Pallia police, no commercial vehicles owned by Hemkund or any other transport agency are allowed beyond Gauri Phanta without crossing the three barricades. The second contradiction was that the transport agency, operating for over 30 years now, does not run taxis, cars or jeeps.

According to another intelligence report Sewa Singh, a notorious Punjab terrorist who was the bodyguard of dismissed Punjab SSP Simranjit Singh Mann, had a hide-out in Pallia and that he conducted a training camp for extremists in Hathia Soth area on the Pauri-Bijnor border. This report, in fact, was the prime factor behind the launching of Operation Shivalik. But a senior police officer in the area admits: "We did not find even a shred of evidence in this connection." Similarly, in Pilibhit which has a population of over 96,000 Sikhs, the police have recovered illicit but sophisticated firearms on a couple of occasions but have not been able to establish terrorist links of the arrested Sikhs. Intelligence records, however, in-

Sikh youths in Kichcha Bazaar: all-round prosperity

Photographs by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



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dicate the arrest of nine suspected terrorists in this district in the past one year. "The only arrest we can qualify in this category is that of Sukhdeo Singh alias Sukha, the Uttar Pradesh treasurer of the All-India Sikh Students Federation." Brij Lal, SP, said.

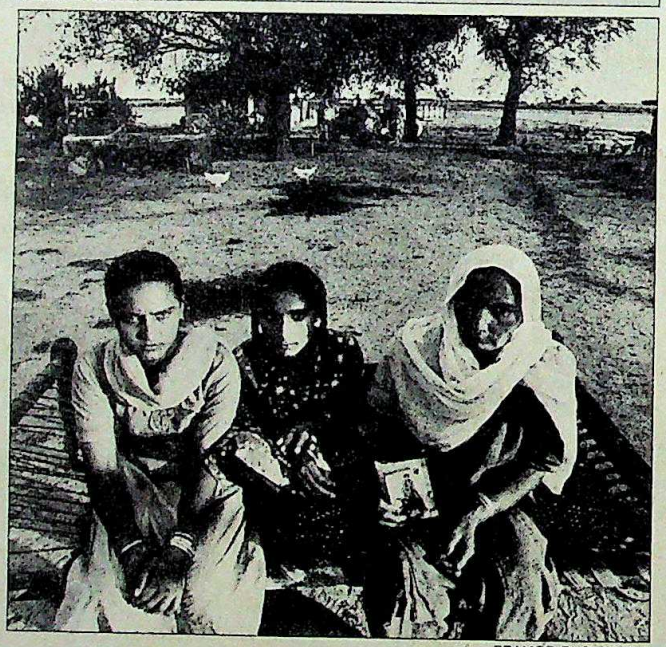
The arrest of Raghuvir Singh, 50, a retired tank driver with the army's armoured corps and a maternal uncle of terrorist Harjinder Singh alias Jinda on September 25, is perhaps the only catch by the Pilibhit police so far in which another terrorist link may be established. Owner of a 150-acre farm in Madho Tanda, 5 km from the Nepal border, Raghuvir Singh was arrested for possessing a Pakistan-made self-loading rifle. The police dug out the rifle, buried near his house, following his interrogation.

INTERVIEWED in the police lock-up, Raghuvir claimed that Jinda had come to his farm-house in January 1985. "He stayed in my house for four or five days and was *mona* (clean-shaven). He had come to participate in the marriage of one of my sons and since then I have never heard from him or his family." But he emphatically denies knowing about Jinda's terrorist connections. He claims he purchased the rifle in 1973 in Rajasthan from a Punjabi Sikh along with 50 cartridges for Rs 5,000, but the police believe there may be more to it than this simple explanation. Raghuvir says that he buried the rifle due to increased police activity in the area and his known relationship with Jinda. Said Brij Lal: "We have arrested him for possessing an illicit weapon but you cannot call him a terrorist as there is no evidence to prove that he had indulged in any such activity." An affluent farmer, who owns a tractor, a jeep, and a jonga, Raghuvir has turned into a wreck in the police lock-up. "*O te jinda hai, asee mare gai* (He, Jinda, is very much alive, I am as good as dead)," he said with resignation.

Seizure of caches of arms in Ramnagar, Kashipur and Bajpur have been treated as cases connected with terrorism in intelligence records. But Srivastava says most of the cases involve not terrorists but rank and file Sikhs. Srivastava, Pilibhit SP Brij Lal and Lakhimpur Kheri SP Padman Singh believe that the region's Sikhs have been purchasing arms largely in anticipation of possible attacks on them or their properties by the majority community. But Sikhs living in this once densely-forested area, have traditionally kept arms and ammunition to meet the threat of wild animals and even bandits. "In the change of perspective now, especially after the Hindu-Sikh riots, the Sikhs have started further strengthening their arsenals and due to a blanket ban on issue of new licences in the state, they seem to have resorted to large-scale purchase of dangerous weapons like Sten guns or self-loading rifles or revolvers of prohibited calibre like the .455 mm," says Pushkar Sen, a senior IB official who is co-ordinating the intelligence operations. The police agree but do not have any idea about where these deadly weapons come from.

The investigations have only resulted in the arrest of Raghuvir Singh, uncle of terrorist Jinda, not on charges of terrorist activity but for concealing a Pakistani made rifle.

S. PREMI



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Raghuvir Singh's family; and (top) Raghuvir: questionable arrest

There is little doubt that the raids are angering the Sikhs. Says clean-shaven Keval Singh, president of the Rashtriya Qaumi Ekta Committee, owner of a cinema hall in Pallia and a posh farm-house in Sampurnanagar in Lakhimpur Kheri district: "We are no doubt being treated as the enemies of the country for which we have sacrificed so much." Adds farmer Darshan Singh, 65, also of Sampurnanagar: "When we fled from Lahore we felt we did not belong to that country but these days we are made to feel the same way in our very own country." But the granthi of Pallia Kalan Gurudwara in Kheri has no complaints against the police who searched his gurudwara several times recently. "We are facing all this because some persons amongst us have gone berserk. The police are doing what they are ordered to do," he says.

Police pressure has already produced a small exodus of Sikhs to the Punjab. As one prosperous farmer put it: "The farmers who have small plots of land are selling them off or are exchanging them with property of the Hindus who are coming from Punjab. As a result of this exodus, the cost of land has come down from Rs 25,000 per acre a couple of years ago to Rs 10,000 per acre. But people like me who have a big stake just cannot move out. We have to live or die here."

Police in Bareilly and Shahjahanpur agree that the growing feeling of insecurity is leading to a new quest for unity in the community. Officials fear that the recent census could create a new wave of militancy which might be effectively exploited by extremists. As a police official put it: "When you have got an elephant by the hind leg and he is trying to run away, it's best to let him run." But the silver lining in this situation has been the refreshing candour displayed by senior police officers who, while stressing the need to maintain constant vigilance against terrorism, have refused to succumb to the temptation of sensationalising the issue and have been willing to publicly criticise the credibility of their own government's intelligence information and reports.

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Permit Problems

ENTRY visas for all Indians planning to visit Britain became compulsory from October 15, but confusion has prevailed at London's Heathrow Airport after the British Government announced on September 1 that visas would henceforth be needed for all visitors coming from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ghana and Nigeria. While some travellers have been arriving with entry permits, many others have been flying in with no permits at all. Harassed and overworked immigration officials claim there has been a "sudden upsurge" in the number of visitors coming from the five countries following the announcement, with some potential immigrants even trying to gain entry into the UK under the garb of tourists.

Heathrow Airport: restricted entry

The opposition Labour Party has, however, come down heavily on the new measure claiming that visas have nothing to do with immigration control but are a discriminatory restriction made on racial grounds. The party has promised to debate the entire issue and vote against it in Parliament. And the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, which is also unhappy with the decision, has branded as "monstrous" the fact that the decision was imposed so suddenly and without parliamentary debate. But the trenchant criticism that has been mounted against the visa decision by many ethnic and liberal groups in the country has left the ruling Conservative Party and the Iron Lady unfazed. Instead, an extreme right-wing ginger group, "The Monday Club", known for its radical views, has now called for sweeping visa controls to be extended to all new Commonwealth countries.

Musical Moments

FOR Asians in Britain the Asian Song Contest is the equivalent of the Eurovision contest, and with the best singers from the United Kingdom expected to compete, the excitement is obviously mounting for the ninth contest, which is to be held at Birmingham this fortnight. The winner of the contest is to receive a cash prize of £300, a gold disc from the Gramophone Company of India and, of course, the winner's trophy. Last year's winner was Najma Akhtar, of Pakistani origin, and the £1,500 that the event had raised were donated to a children's hospital in Birmingham. According to the organisers, "the star attractions" of the evening are to be Indian singer-cum-actress Salma Agha and her husband Javed Sheikh, a popular Pakistani actor.

Salma Agha

Asian music seems to be witnessing a boom in this country, if record sales are any indication. Amongst the most popular of the bands is Alaap—an eight-member group which sings Punjabi folk songs as well as Hindi film songs of the disco variety—which recently concluded sell-out concerts in Asian bastions in California, Vancouver and east Africa. For Diwali, posters in various London tube stations have already announced a "spectacular show", featuring Alaap in one of the "world's most beautiful discos in Watford". Alaap is also to be honoured with a triple gold disc for its impressive album sales by Multone (Polydor) records.

Ardent Indophile

TIM Pigott-Smith, familiar to Indian television viewers as Captain Ronald Merrick in Granada Television's *The Jewel in the Crown*, is the latest British celebrity to turn India-lover. Confesses Pigott-Smith: "I am under the spell of India. It opened me up. This very Indian union of the unaffected and the civilised will, I suspect, always elude and therefore always intrigue the English." Later this month, Pigott-Smith will also release his book *Out of India*, in which he has put together an anthology of pieces from various English and Indian writers. His choice includes some writings from the Rig Veda and the Mahabharata, some pieces by E.M. Forster, Rudyard Kipling, Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru, Paul Scott, Eric Newby, Herman Hesse and Geoffrey Moorhouse, as well as some by Ved Mehta, R. Parthasarathy, Keki Daruwalla and Nissim Ezekiel.

Pigott-Smith's enchantment with India took yet another form when he recently performed a one-man show, *The Bengal Lancer*, based on Francis Yeats Brown's 1930s book.

Lost Hopes

FOLLOWING the visit of US Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger to New Delhi and the issuance of a letter of intent to General Electric to supply its F 404 engine for India's light combat aircraft (LCA) project, it would seem that Rolls Royce's hopes of participating in the project with its RB 199 powerplant engine have ended. But Rolls Royce refuses to throw in the towel yet. A team from India's Aeronautical Development Agency, led by Project Director (Propulsion Systems), V. Gopalan recently visited the Rolls Royce plant. In a vigorous publicity drive, Rolls Royce has pointed out to the visiting Indians that the RB 199 engine is in service with Tornado aircraft in four countries and is also being considered in other LCA projects in Japan and Yugoslavia. Rolls Royce's links with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited at Bangalore stretch back many years, when it helped the latter to establish facilities that now produce the Orpheus, Dart and Adour engines as well as its Turbomeca Adours which are licence-built for India's Jaguar fighter-bombers. But all the past cooperation notwithstanding, Rolls Royce seems to have lost out on the LCA project.

ROLLS ROYCE

—RAMESH CHANDRAN

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INDO-BRITISH TIES

Taking a Pounding

INDO-BRITISH relations have rarely been at such a low ebb. The list of current irritants is long and familiar. From India's side the main ones are British indulgence towards pro-Khalistan elements and its refusal to extradite known Sikh extremists—the proposed extradition treaty notwithstanding *(see box)*. To this list has been added Britain's decision to make visa compulsory for Indian visitors. Whitehall, on its part, is upset with India's delay in allowing two British drug liaison officers to be stationed in the country. Moreover, Rajiv Gandhi, unlike the late Indira Gandhi, does not share the same personal rapport with Mrs Thatcher, partly because of the differences over South Africa.

Last month, a fresh shadow was cast over this bleak state of affairs with the election, based on the enthusiastic support of pro-Khalistan groups, of Mohinder Pal Singh Bedi as the chairman of the Anglo-Asian Conservative Society—the most influential body representing the Asian communities affiliated to the ruling Conservative Party. The election, which was supervised by Tory members of parliament, has also raised doubts about the Tory attitude towards known pro-Khalistan elements. Worried, the Indian High Commission expressed its concern to Whitehall.

Comprising wealthy Asian Tories drawn mostly from India and Pakistan, the society was formed 10 years ago by Narindar Saroop, an influential Lloyds broker and a die-hard Tory, as a "temporary bridge" between the Asian community and the ruling Tory party. The society's importance to the Tories is brought out most clearly in Thatcher's message to the society on its 10th anniversary. Gushed the Iron Lady: "This occasion gives me the opportunity to place on record my real sense of gratitude for all the outstanding work of the UK Anglo-Asian Conservative Society."

However, this year's take-over of the society by pro-Khalistan elements was on the cards. Last year, Saroop was re-elected president of the society only on the basis of their support. This manifested itself most dramatically when about 300 separatists belonging to organisations like the Babbar Khalsa, the Dal Khalsa and the International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF), lustily raised pro-Khalistan slogans in the society's central office in Smith Square, Westminster.

This year, the pro-Khalistan factions showed that they had played their cards with finesse. For one year they supported Saroop and then, barely 48 hours before the election, put up Bedi, a child psychology teacher in Ealing, and a general secretary of the World Sikh Welfare Organisation. The support of Pakistani Tories was quickly arranged, and on the day of the election Bedi supporters were bussed in from Southall to the St James Court Hotel. While the press was firmly kept away and a posse of policemen looked on, many of Bedi's supporters openly canvassed for him—in violation of Tory central office rules.

The real nature of Bedi's support was brought out in *Sandesh*, a local Gurmukhi weekly. *Sandesh* alleged that Bedi and his supporters had gathered outside the Guru Granth Gurudwara in Southall and distributed membership cards without the permission of either the head priest or the management. More importantly, *Sandesh* reported that Sewa Singh Lali, a prominent member of the 'Khalistan National Council', had brought in a busload of supporters from Kent. It also said that one of Bedi's "close associates" was Bhai Gurmail Singh, chief of the Damdami Taksal, UK, whose name cropped up in the confessions of Manbir Singh, alleged perpetrator of the Muktsar killings, as an overseas contact who regularly sent large sums of money.

When INDIA TODAY contacted Bedi for his comments on *Sandesh*'s charges, he declined to say anything. But Bedi's election has dismayed most long-time members of the society. Said a disgusted Saroop, who has disassociated himself from the society: "I now feel I have created a Frankenstein monster." Adds Sucha Singh Dhami, a respected Tory who had introduced Bedi to the society, that Bedi has neither the experience nor

Bedi's election as chairman with the support of pro-Khalistan groups has raised doubts about the Tory attitude towards Khalistan elements.

Mrs Thatcher with Bedi (third from left): enthusiastic support

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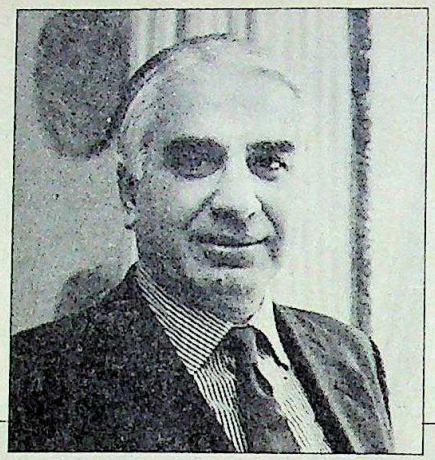
the clout to become its chief.

The furore has also irked several young Asian Tories like Barinder Dhami who describes Bedi as a "controversial figure in the Asian community since the rise of fundamentalist Sikh movements in India" and accuses him of "using his band of Khalistani followers to frighten any potential opposition".

When asked for his comments on the allegations levelled against Bedi's election, Conservative Party Chairman Norman Tebbit said in a letter to INDIA TODAY: "I would not expect any organisation affiliated to the Conservative Party to become involved in the internal politics of other countries."

But the question remains: are the Tories consciously backing Britain's pro-Khalistan factions? Although there is no ironclad evidence, critics say that since Indians in Britain have traditionally supported the Labour Party, by cultivating the separatist Sikh minority the Tories are hoping to grab a new vote bank. The single most celebrated pro-Khalistan statement, which had sparked off a controversy, was by the party's candidate for the Ealing-Southall parliamentary by-election who had said: "...just as Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA is permitted to advocate the use of armed struggle to throw the British out of Ireland, so too the separatists (Khalistanis) are permitted to advocate the use of armed struggle to partition off the Punjab."



"I now feel I have created a Frankenstein monster."
NARINDAR SAROOP
Founder, Anglo-Asian Conservative Society

The large Indian community in Britain is increasingly convinced that the ruling party is soft on those preaching a separate Sikh state. While immigration from India and the rest of the subcontinent has been almost hermetically sealed, several people wanted in India have managed to gain entry into Britain. They include Bhai Gurmail Singh, Dal Khalsa's M.S. Bajaj and Inderjit Singh Reyat, a close associate of Babbar Khalsa International's Vancouver-based Talwinder Singh Parmar.

In its defence, the Conservative Party says that it is a truly democratic party. This is unquestionably true. But the Tories also have an extremist fringe which advocates the winding up of the Foreign Office, Britain's withdrawal from the United Nations and support for right-wing dictators world-wide. And pro-Khalistan factions are known to fraternise with "The Monday Group", comprising of these rabid right-wingers. Why the party should even think of courting a foreign separatist group which enjoys marginal influence within its own community remains a puzzle.

—RAMESH CHANDRAN

EXTRADITION TREATY

On the Cards

Both India and Britain are optimistic that a new treaty will be ready by the end of this year.

A BILATERAL extradition treaty between Britain and India is finally emerging. After arduous rounds of negotiations in New Delhi and London, differences remain on core issues but officials on both sides are optimistic that a new treaty will be ready after the third round of talks in New Delhi by the year-end.

This optimism is not misplaced. Contrary to British Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe's earlier opinion that the Fugitive Offenders Act (FOA)—which governs extradition between Britain and Commonwealth members—was an adequate measure, Britain's legal experts are now agreed that the FOA is substantially inadequate. India and Britain, it is agreed, need a bilateral treaty which not only embraces the provisions of the Suppression of Terrorism Act, which exists between Britain and other West European nations, but also includes such areas as funding of terrorism and incitement. Britain's anti-IRA extradition treaty with the United States, by which Irish terrorists will no longer be guaranteed a safe haven in the US, has also helped.

The key point of difference now concerns British-based accessories to a crime: whether someone in Britain who assists in a crime committed in India—by sending funds for instance—ought to be extradited and tried in India. The second contentious issue relates to the humanitarian safeguards clause, by which offenders living in Britain are protected for fear that they would not get a fair trial in their own countries. The Indians argue that the Indian judicial system can stand comparison with that of the freest nation in the world, but the British have refused to budge.

Other important issues on which broad agreement seems to have reached are on the question of extraditable crimes. Indians have put forward a list of specific crimes for which offenders can be extradited but the British prefer a system which embraces all offences that attract a sentence of 12 months or more in both countries. Britain seems to have agreed to extend the range of terrorist-related offences to which the controversial "political offence exception" will not be applicable.

Most important for India, Britain has conceded India's demand to apply the treaty with retrospective effect. Indians used the Anglo-US anti-IRA extradition treaty—which is with retrospective effect—as an example of this point. With just two major crimps to be ironed out, it seems reasonable to expect that a new treaty is around the corner. The crunch, however, will come when the treaty has to be ratified by the British parliament.

—RAMESH CHANDRAN

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SECTION 309

Suicidal Right

A mentally ill, 39-year-old Bombay police Constable, Maruti Shripati Dubal, who attempted to end his life last year, would never have guessed that he would create judicial history. But that is exactly what he did when two Bombay High Court judges, P.B. Sawant and B.G. Kolse-Patil, upheld Dubal's right to kill himself and struck down as unconstitutional Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code, which prescribes penalties for people who unsuccessfully attempt suicide.

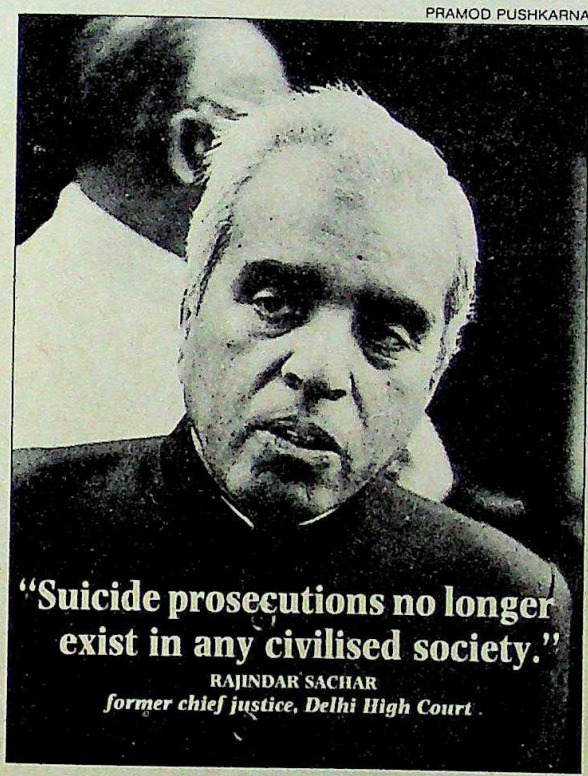
The headline-hitting judgement last month had been preceded last year by another resounding verdict, handed down in the Delhi High Court by the then chief justice Rajindar Sachar, who quashed all cases in Delhi against people who had attempted suicide, but stopped short of striking down Section 309. Unless challenged, these two judgements will become the touchstone for deciding similar cases in other states.

It all started in April 1985, when the distraught Dubal, who became a hallucinating schizophrenic after suffering head injuries in a road accident, tried to immolate himself. To supplement her sick husband's income, Dubal's wife had been promised a hawker's licence, but bureaucratic procedures intervened and the licence was never issued. In desperation, Dubal marched into the office of the Bombay municipal commissioner, doused himself with kerosene but was overpowered before he could set himself alight.

Dubal himself does not remember the incident. He says: "My wife and four children were away and I was alone. The tension in my mind became unbearable. I don't know how it happened. I can remember what was happening before and after I went to the municipal commissioner's office, but about the incident itself I know only what other people have told me." His mental condition provided no protection and Dubal was prosecuted under Section 309.

Fortunately a criminal lawyer, Shrikant Bhat, took pity at Dubal's plight. "He was trembling and unable to articulate properly when he came to see me," says Bhat. The lawyer filed a writ petition before the high court challenging Section 309, which, he said, had remained unchanged since it was drafted in 1833. On September 25, the judges upheld Bhat's plea and quashed all similar cases being prosecuted in Maharashtra. The judges remarked: "Those who make the suicide attempt on account of mental disorders require psychiatric treatment and not confinement in prison cells, where their condition is bound to worsen.... Those who attempt suicide because of acute physical ailment, incurable disease, torture or a decrepit physical state induced by old age or disablement, need a nursing home and not prison to prevent them from making the attempt again. No deterrence is going to hold back those who want to die for a social or political cause...loss of interest in life or for self-deliverance."

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



"Suicide prosecutions no longer exist in any civilised society."
RAJINDAR SACHAR
former chief justice, Delhi High Court

The Bombay judgement enlarged on the judgement of Sachar and fellow-judge Malik Sharief-ud-din who had acquitted Sanjay Kumar Bhatia, a young Delhi boy who had attempted suicide: "The continuance of Section 309 is an anachronism unworthy of a humane society like ours. Instead of sending the young boy to a psychiatric clinic, (society) gleefully sends him to mingle with criminals.... Medical clinics (are needed) for such social misfits; but police and prison, never."

But Sachar was an angry man last fortnight because the Delhi police continued to file charges against fresh suicide cases. "Suicide prosecutions no longer exist in any civilised society." That view was echoed by Minoo Masani, president of the World Federation of the Right to Die Societies, who is happy that the "judicial conscience has moved ahead of the law. Parliament should now amend the law because, outside Maharashtra and Delhi, India still lives in the 19th century."

Masani's views are well known, but other responses indicated that a growing section of progressive opinion believes the law on this point is an ass. Thus, Dr Sarah Dastoor, director of the Samaritans in Bombay, and Vatsala Sivasubramaniam of Delhi's Sanjivini (both organisations that help disturbed people), welcomed the judgement as progressive. Suicide, they said, was a desperate cry for help and it was a shame to punish someone in this state.

Even the Chairman of the Law Commission, Justice D.A. Desai agreed. He asked: "Is the sanctity of life so value-packed that it can't be terminated by one's own effort, even though living life is death itself?" Desai, however, was in favour of strengthening provisions against abetment to suicide: "The Law Commission will say that abetment to suicide, making a person so miserable that he has no option left but to commit suicide, is murder."

Meanwhile, in Bombay, Dubal was taciturn about the legal excitement he had caused. "There is nothing to be gained by a police case for attempted suicide. *Sirf nuksaan hi nuksaan hai.* (It is loss all around.) What else can I say? It's for the big people to think about it." The big people—primarily the Supreme Court and the Central Government—were saying nothing. It seems unlikely that the Government will challenge the judgement, and the Supreme Court will come into the picture only if another high court takes a different view. Till then, the newly-established right to die by one's own hand remains intact in at least some parts of the country.

—RAMINDAR SINGH with M. RAHMAN in Bombay

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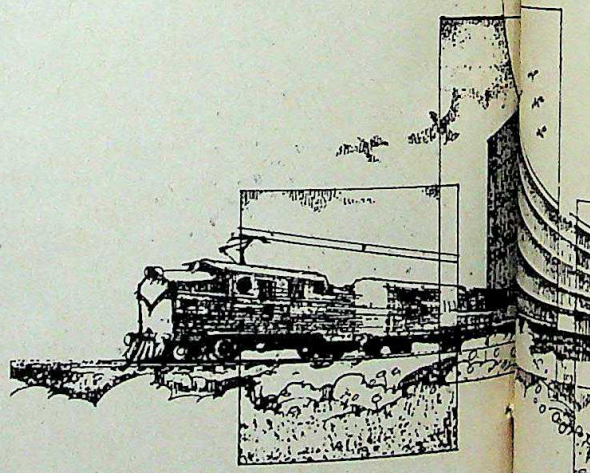

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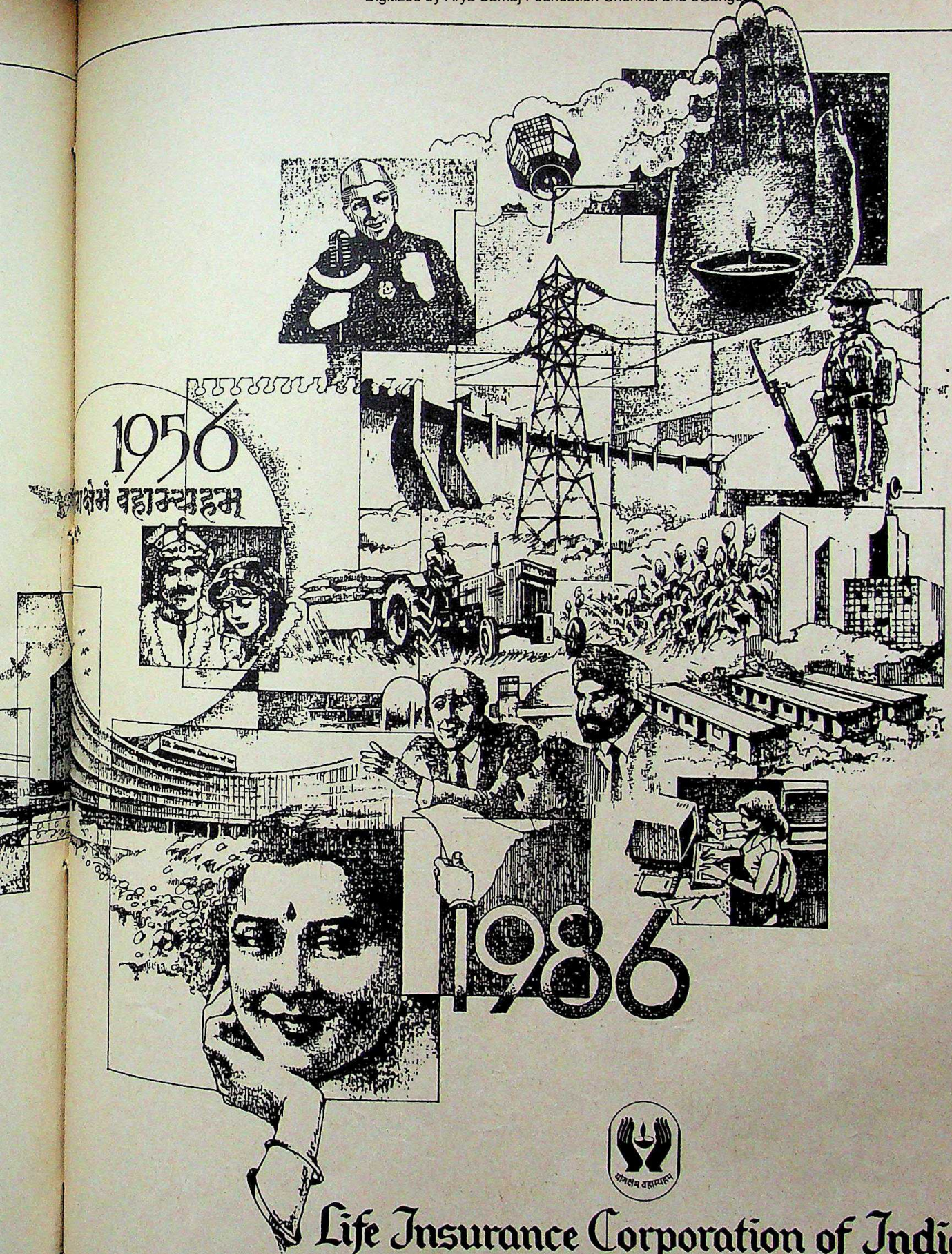

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PFIZER'S PLANS

AFTER deciding to reduce its overseas share-holding from 60 per cent to 40 per cent, Pfizer has drawn up ambitious plans to expand its pharmaceutical business, but intends to try and stay a high-tech company without diversifying from its main lines of business. The company will be outside the restrictive net of the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act (FERA) once its foreign share-holding is reduced in the near future, and it intends to go in for the manufacture of the anti-rheumatic drug pyroxicam, doxycycline (reserved for non-FERA companies), tinidazole, and several others. Pfizer's FERA status had come in the way of getting some of these licences in the past, but licensing should not now be a hurdle. The problem, however, will be on the pricing front, since the Government's drug pricing policy is restrictive.

PROJECT DRUGS

IEL Ltd, the chemicals, fertiliser and explosives giant, has decided to diversify its operations, and has applied to the Government for permission to move into the relatively unfamiliar field of pharmaceuticals. The company has applied for an industrial licence to manufacture ethambutol and aminobutanol at a new factory to be located near Madras. The proposed investment of Rs 2.75 crore is expected to generate an additional turnover of no less than Rs 12.75 crore. Earlier, the company had tried to bag one of the giant gas-based fertiliser projects slated for completion in the Seventh Five-Year Plan, but had to back out for lack of resources.

CLOSING MOVES

WHILE the Government has categorically ruled out the sale of losing public sector companies to the private sector, the closure of others is still being debated in official circles. The proposal to close several units in the red had met with stiff opposition from the unions when it hit the headlines. The Government is now thinking of hiving off the unprofitable operations of losing firms and rehabilitating their workers elsewhere. Meanwhile, informed sources claim that at least one privatisation move failed to come off. Scooters India Ltd was put up on the auction block because it had accumulated losses of over Rs 50 crore, and both Escorts and Bajaj Auto held talks with the Government on buying it. But the Government backed out because the buyers wanted the company's bloated labour force to be retrenched first.

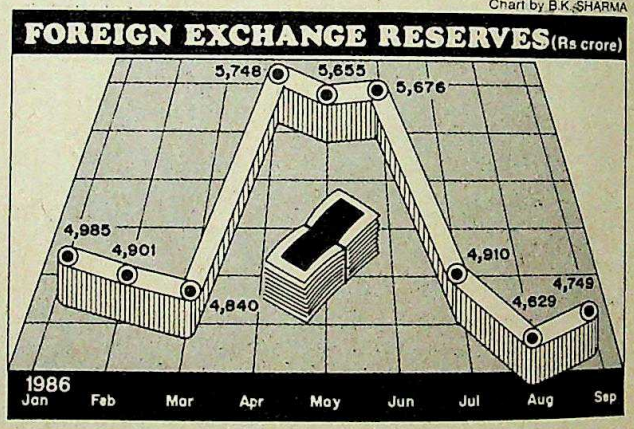
FARAKKA FACTOR

OFFICIALS of the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) struggling to complete the Farakka super thermal power project have been stymied by factors beyond their control. Five years after they approached the Bihar Government to acquire the land for their merry-go-round railway line to bring coal from their captive mines, the land acquisition is still to be completed. Labour trouble has been chronic while productivity has been lower than at other sites. And now even foreign firms getting contracts for the plant have started providing for what has become known as the 'Farakka factor'. Ansaldo, the Italian firm supplying a boiler for the 500 MW unit, recently asked for 40 per cent more than comparative prices for the boiler at Korba and Singrauli. When puzzled officials of the NTPC sought the reason for this, the answer they got was the 'Farakka factor'.

FALLING RESERVES

AFTER a long spell of buoyancy, the country's foreign exchange reserves are on the downward slide again. The reserves have dropped by Rs 317 crore over the last year. The actual drop in terms of foreign currency is in fact much greater, because the reserves expressed in rupee terms are exaggerated as a result of the devaluation of the Indian

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



currency over the last year. The reserves, which now stand at Rs 4,749 crore, are barely sufficient to pay for three months' imports: which is the danger level. If the reserves continue to drop and imports keep surging, the reserves will soon be well below the minimum acceptable requirements.

HOLDING OPERATION

THE Government may be keen on a merger of the two major airlines, Air-India and Indian Airlines. But an expert committee that was set up to look into the question has stopped short of recommending a merger, and has instead suggested that the Government first go in for a holding company that will act as an umbrella for both airlines. The committee felt that the two airlines have different cultures, and that an immediate merger would not serve any purpose in the absence of clear-cut plans by the airlines that would take advantage of combined operations. Some of the criticism on this point was directed at Air-India, whose representative on the expert panel took strong objection to some of the remarks that the committee wanted to make in its report. It now remains to be seen what the Government will do on the report. At least some members of the newly appointed airline boards are known to be arguing in favour of an immediate merger.

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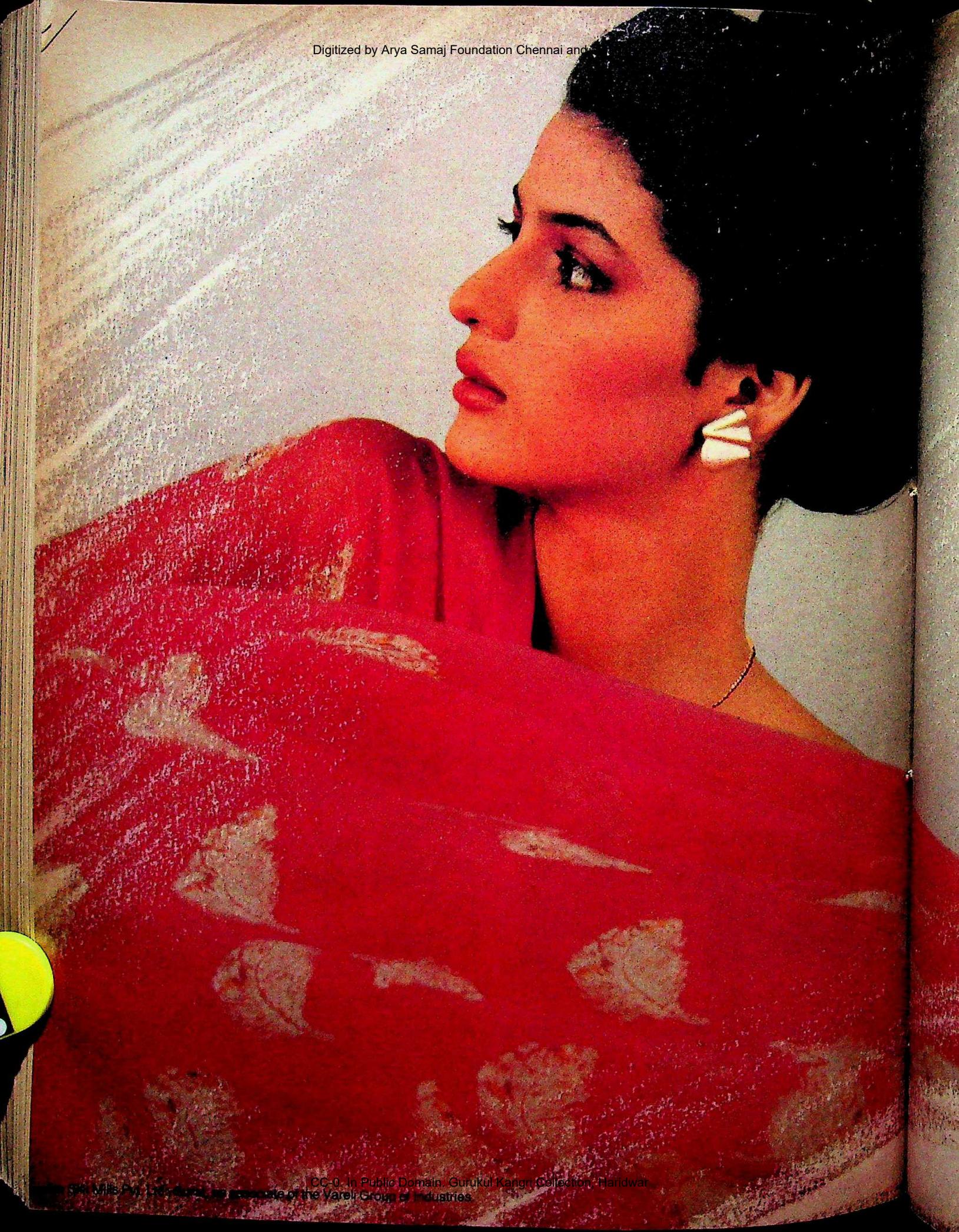

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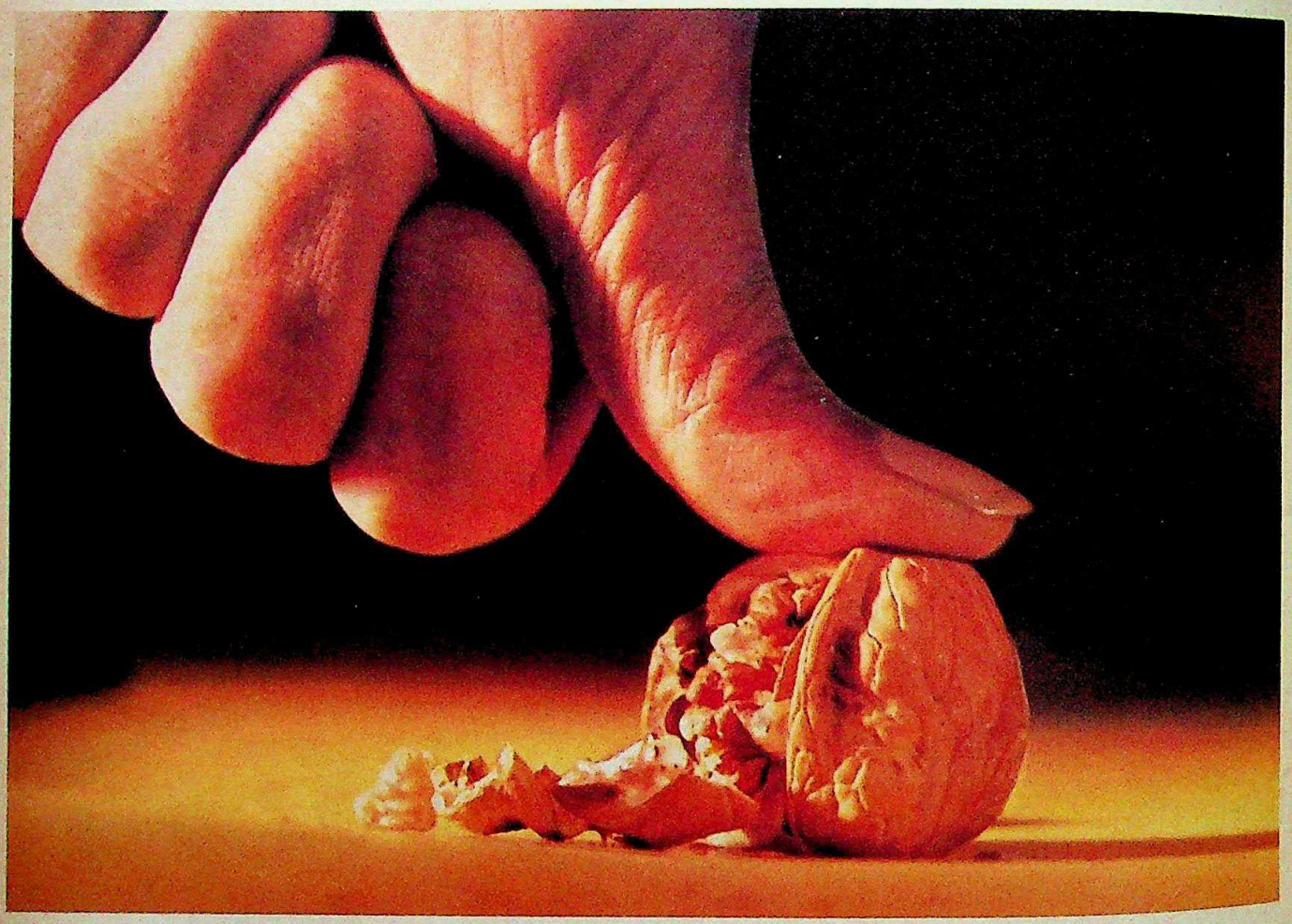

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BY PREM SHANKAR JHA

Burdened by Controls

HALF-WAY through the financial year, it is no longer possible to conceal the fact that 1986-87 is going to be a year of poor economic growth. The promise held out by abundant early rains has been belied by the prolonged dry spell in the north. By the time the monsoon revived at the end of September, much of the rain-fed paddy crop in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other parts of north India was beyond salvage. A 20 per cent devaluation of the rupee has neither stimulated exports nor discouraged imports, and industrial production, which had risen sharply in the second half of 1985-86, has slowed down again. Against 6.1 per cent in 1985-86, the industries covered by the Directorate-General of Technical Development—which account for the bulk of manufactured output—recorded a growth of just 4.9 per cent in April-June of 1986-87.

Of these discouraging trends, the slowdown in industrial growth is the most disturbing. Six weeks ago, the RBI drew attention to it, and a month ago Rajiv Gandhi met young industrialists to get their assessment of what was wrong. So far, however, no one in government seems to have any idea of the causes of industry's return to stagnation.

In its annual report the RBI has put the blame on bottle-necks in industrial infrastructure, particularly the sub-normal growth of power supply. Somewhat inconsistently, it has also put forward a "demand side" explanation, saying that the burst of new investment in 1985-86 which led to a roughly 50 per cent increase in investment authorisations, will take 18 months to translate into a rise in demand. The industrial growth rate should thus pick up towards the end of 1986. The second explanation is inconsistent with the first as it implies that slack demand, and not supply constraints, is the problem.

The RBI's explanation is reminiscent of those trotted out monotonously by the Government during the fourth plan (1969-74), and is born of the same reluctance to examine the causes of industrial malaise for fear of what they will find. The truth is that today, and for that matter throughout the '70s and '80s, the main cause of sluggish industrial growth is not to be found in supply bottle-necks but in dearth of demand; and this has been caused by the thicket of economic constraints that the Government has itself built.

In the last six years in particular, savage increases in administered prices of all industrial raw materials—notably steel, petrochemicals, non-ferrous metals and power—have conspired with steadily rising levels of indirect taxation (excise and sales tax) to push industrial costs up far more rapidly than personal incomes. There has resulted throughout Indian industry a move backwards, up the demand curve, to a point where producers do indeed maximise profits, but at a very high price and a very low turnover. At this point the demand curve is highly inelastic. The new taxes and further increases in input costs cause only a small fall in demand. Thus producers unhesitatingly raise prices to offset the rise in costs and taxes and the entire burden falls on the consumer.

> "The main cause for sluggish economic growth is not supply bottle-necks but dearth of demand due to the thicket of economic constraints the Government has itself built."

But at this point the nature of the market too has changed. Only those consumers are now left in it who have the power to increase their money incomes to offset the rise in prices that they face. As a result, they "pass back" the price increase in the form of higher wages, higher professional fees, or higher profit margins which further push up market prices. And the gap between this minuscule consumer elite and the rest of the population grows wider and wider.

The political threat implicit in this process is obvious, but does not concern us here. What does is that this minuscule market is an inelastic one. Just as increases in price or costs do not significantly reduce demand, the market simply does not have the capacity to absorb a sudden increase in supply without a marked fall in prices. This is what the regime of administered prices and high indirect taxes completely prevents.

Between 1981 and 1986, seven successive increases in steel prices put the market price of domestic steel at twice the level prevailing in the domestic markets of Europe and Japan. Relentless hikes in power tariffs by the state governments have pushed the average cost of electricity to aluminium producers to 54 paise per unit, against 23 or 24 paise abroad. And while the prices of all petrochemicals products have been falling throughout the world, the Government has been pushing these up in India.

In the same way, excise duties have been pushed up by the Central Government till they amount to 32 per cent of the value added in industry. Since the average incidence of import duties is only 18 per cent of value added, inevitably—as the Narasimhan Committee found when studying the problems of the capital goods industries—much of Indian industry is now enjoying a negative rate of production. This is partly why, despite the devaluation of the last 16 months, the flood of imports (notably of capital goods) continues unabated.

Several recent industry by industry studies have shown that production has fallen in precisely those capital goods industries where the rise in imports has been sharpest. The Government has tried to stem the flood by raising duties on several capital goods. But this has only pushed up the domestic cost of investment and production and further constricted the already narrow market. Lastly, competition—the only antidote to rising prices—has been choked by licensing and monopoly controls for the last four decades and government liberalisation measures in 1985 have been too half-hearted to change the basic monopolistic character of industry.

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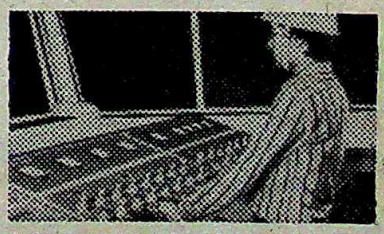

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TWO-WHEELERS

Rough Riding

SUDDENLY two-wheelers are going through a rough ride. The market is still expanding, production is going up, and new capacity continues to get installed. But all the road signs point to a shake-out in the market.

Andhra Pradesh Scooters has had nearly 60 per cent of its customers cancelling their bookings, and production lines are working at less than half their capacity. Says S.D.M. Rao, the company's managing director: "The set-back has led to a cut in production. We have lowered our monthly target by 1,000 scooters." Ideal Jawa and Enfield India are faced with rapidly dwindling market shares. Lohia Machines has had about a quarter of its 22 lakh customers cancelling their bookings, forcing the company to introduce a new model. Kelvinator of India is phasing out its scooters because they have sold poorly, and is now placing its bets on mopeds instead. And Gujarat's Girnar Scooters was recently forced to appeal to the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) for financial help, one of the several companies to do so.

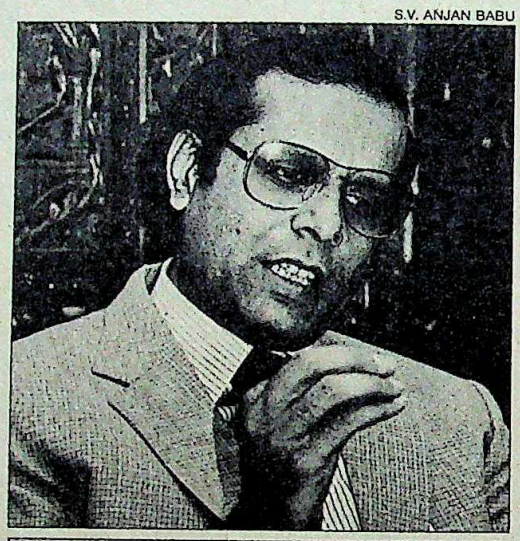
From coast to coast, the two-wheeler market is in the throes of unprecedented turmoil. Waiting-lists are disappearing, the premia on vehicles have dropped, manufacturers are budgeting more for advertising and grimly fighting it out on the television screen. Thus, Enfield and TVS can give deliveries in a week. The premium on Bajaj scooters three years ago was as much as Rs 4,000, but is now down to less than Rs 1,000, and the waiting-list is down from eight years to nine months. And Andhra Pradesh Scooters is jacking up its spending on advertising fivefold, from Rs 30 lakh last year to Rs 160 lakh next year.

Three years ago, manufacturers were falling over one another to tie up foreign collaborations, racing to the Government for licences or quickly expanding their plants. The outcome of that burst of activity is only too visible today. The Government has licensed production capacities for over 3.6 million two-wheelers. And industry executives estimate that installed production capacity will be some 2.8 million vehicles in the next couple of years. With the demand for two-wheelers officially pegged at 1.8 million by 1990, surplus capacities are inevitable.

The industry, however, believes that trouble is yet a good way down the road. Last month, the Automobile Manufacturers' Association of India met in Bombay and confidently predicted that manufacturers would be able to hawk two million vehicles four years from now, two lakh more than the official estimate. Says Rahul Bajaj, chairman and managing director of Bajaj Auto: "The two-wheeler market is buoyant and booming. Look at our production figures. We are doing extremely well." Echoes Arun Firodia, managing director of Bajaj Tempo, which recently kicked off its Kinetic Honda scooters: "This talk of a slump is meaningless. What has happened is that the premium market has virtually disappeared. But the number of scooters sold is increasing every day."

Firodia is right. Production is actually on the upswing (*see chart*). The industry's barons, in fact, contend that the market will only balloon further because cities are rapidly growing and people do not want to trade off the freedom given by personalised transport for public transport. Hoji Wanake, who is on deputation from Honda to Kinetic Honda as joint managing director, argues that what India is seeing is part of a logical cycle which every country goes through. "In terms of numbers," he reasons, "the market

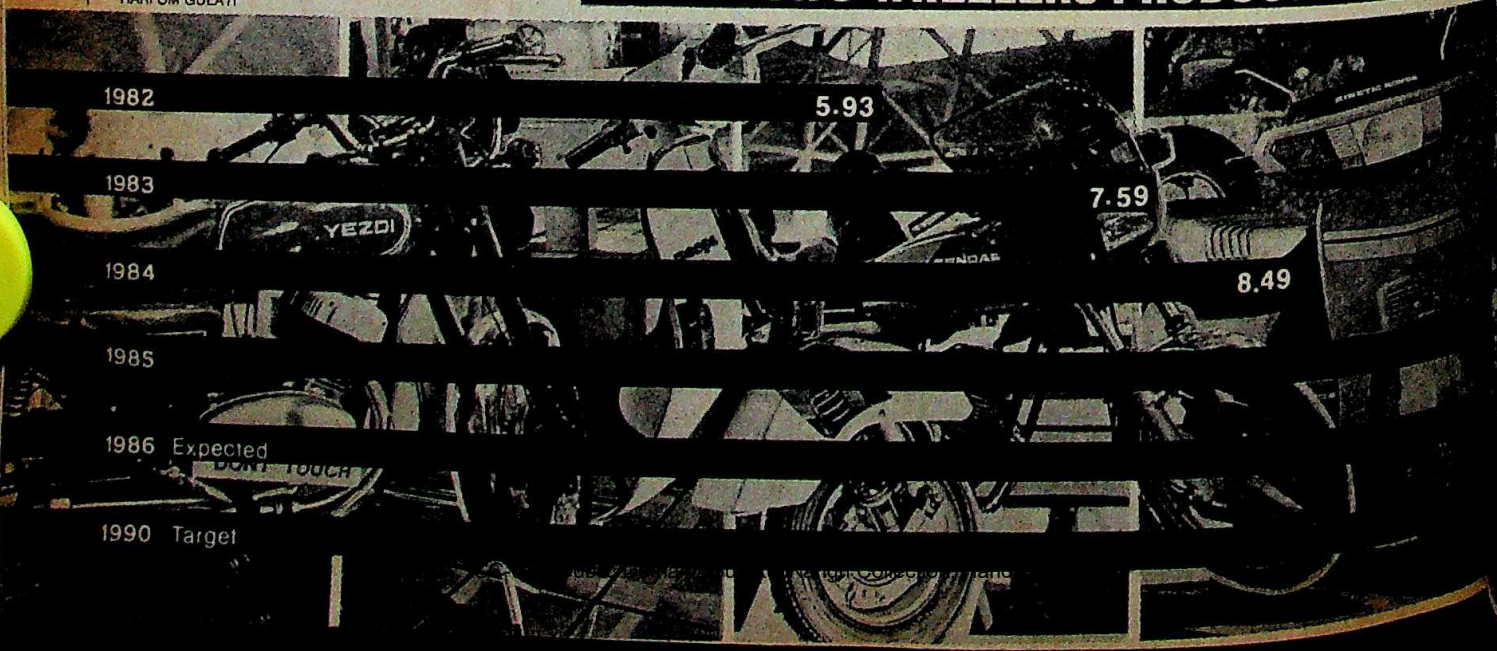
S.V. ANJAN BABU



"This talk of a slump is meaningless. What has happened is that the premium market has virtually disappeared."
ARUN FIRODIA
managing director, Bajaj Tempo.

HARI OM GULATI

TWO-WHEELERS PRODUCTION (in lakhs)



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is heading for a boom. One starts off as a pedestrian, graduates to a bus, then to a scooter and finally to a car. In Taiwan and Japan, they have reached the last stage. India is on the threshold of the third. All the signals read 'go' for us now."

THE signals may read 'go' for the big boys like Hero Honda, which still claim waiting-lists of up to eight lakh or more, but there is little doubt that the market is in the midst of a shake-out. As Hero Honda's Managing Director Raman Kant Munjal puts it: "A total restructuring of the market is going on." So the casualties could well be the smaller fry and the older companies.

Several of the moped and scooter firms launched by various state governments have called it a day already, while the three older motorcycle brands have lost ground to the Japanese onslaught. According to one industry analysis, Escorts, Enfield and Royal Jawa accounted for 86 per cent of the motorcycle market in the first half of last year, while the new-comers (Suzuki, Hero Honda and the Escorts Yamaha) had a market share of 13 per cent. This year, the positions have been dramatically reversed: the old models' market share is 44.5 per cent. The newer brands have cornered 55 per cent of the market—even though they are far more expensive than the older ones.

"It's not fair to compare totally dissimilar products," protests Escorts' Assistant Vice-President P.S. Batra. "Like should be compared with like. Within the Indian segment, we've been growing." That may be so, but competitors say that Escorts' 175 cc Rajdoot has been losing some of its potential buyers to the company's 100 cc Yamaha. Batra may be conceding the point when he candidly acknowledges the fact that "Escorts would have been hurt if we hadn't introduced the Yamaha a year ago."

The new motorcycles clearly have been a big hit. But if they are riding the crest of the sales wave, the new scooters and mopeds are not. But with a market share of well over 60 per cent, Bajaj continues to straddle the market like a colossus. "The new brands have a long way to go. Bajaj may be old in the market but it's a very sound scooter technically," says Munjal admiringly. Equally important, the new 100 cc scooters did not go down well with buyers. Explains Rakesh Jayal of Lohia Machines: "Everyone mistook the 100 cc engine displacement for horsepower. This was a psychological barrier."

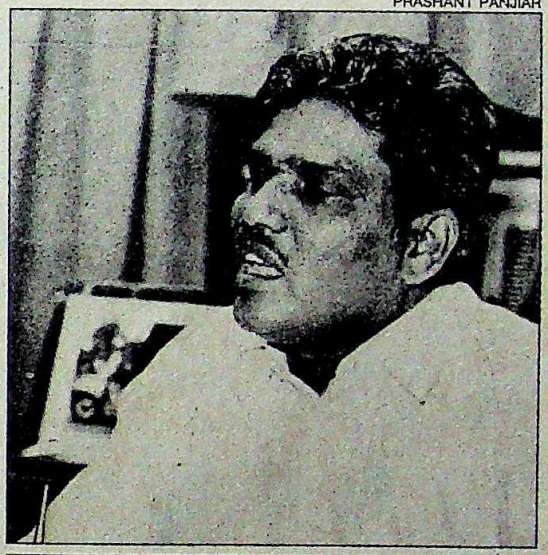
On the moped front, the problem appears to have been price. At over Rs 7,000, many of the new mopeds were beyond the pockets of the lower middle class clientele. So manufacturers such as Shree Chamundi Mopeds are readying to launch cheaper models. Said Chamundi Chairman A.P. Mehta: "The cost of the vehicle will come down due to indigenisation of parts and will be more or less (on par) with the other two-wheelers."

Indeed, almost every two-wheeler company rocked by the competition is busy protecting its flanks and has plans to diversify. Andhra Pradesh Scooters has a 50 cc moped and a bigger scooter on its drawing-boards. And Enfield is moving into consumer electronics. Says an Enfield official: "The diversification into television sets and electronics is to make sure that Enfield doesn't rest on its two-wheeler oars."

Predicts the managing director of one of the older two-wheeler firms: "Fifty per cent of the two-wheeler companies will close down in the next 18 months. Only the fittest will survive." And Amit Chaturvedi, deputy general manager of Hero Honda, forecasts: "Not more than 12 companies will last till 1990." IDBI seems to partly share this pessimism. It has urged several losing two-wheeler concerns to merge or develop common ancillary suppliers. If they swallow the prescription, a slimmer industry may be in the offing sooner than expected.

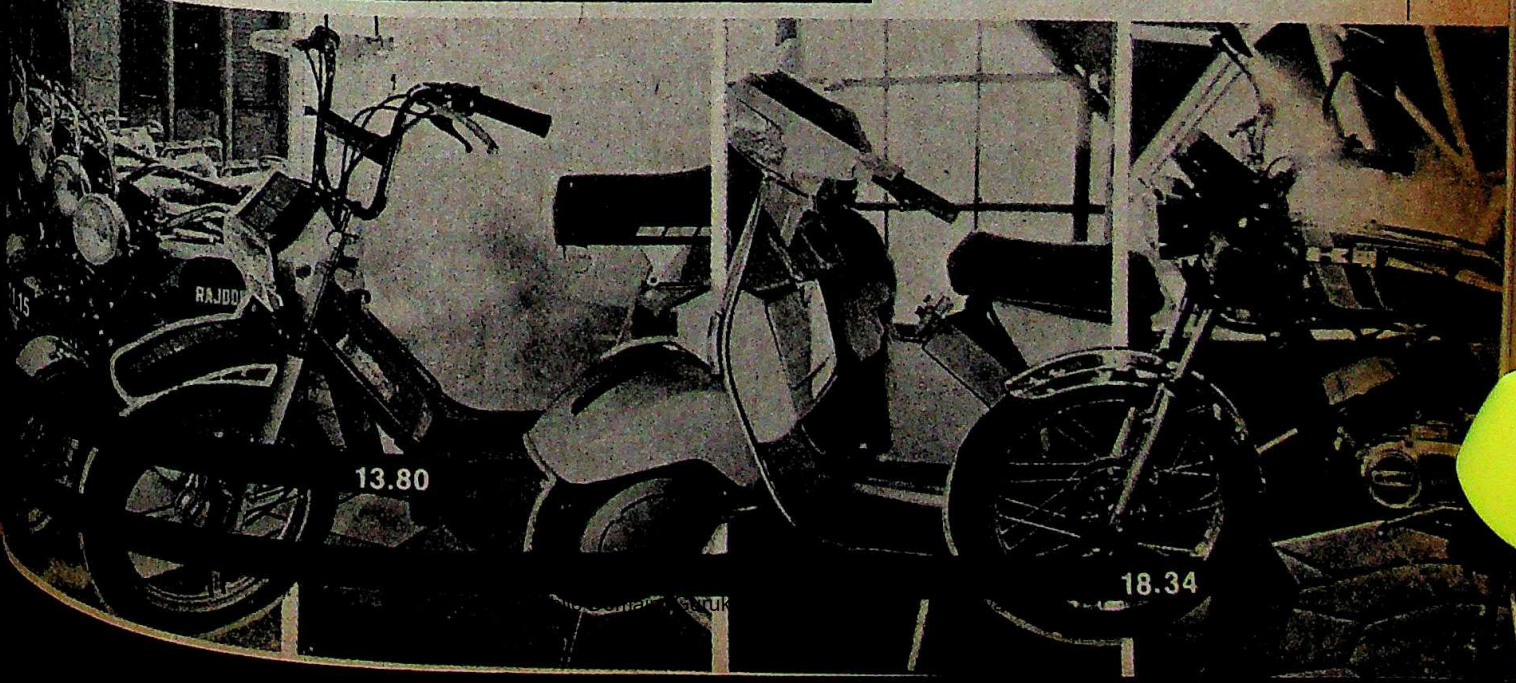
—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI
with bureau reports

PRASHANT PANJIAR



"The set-back has led to a cut in production. We have lowered our monthly target by 1,000 scooters."
S.D.M. RAO
managing director, Andhra Pradesh Scooters

Total production capacity sanctioned: 36.56 lakh



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NATIONAL SILICON FACILITY

Raising a Sandstorm

THE decision is taken to set up an expensive plant with foreign technology when local know-how is in the works. A controversy snowballs and the prime minister orders the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to look into the matter. The agency cross-questions top drawer bureaucrats who would not normally be subjected to such an indignity. The CBI even asks for permission to search their homes, without success. In the end, it comes up with a headline-hitting report that indicts a pantheon of officials. And an embarrassed government asks the high-ranking functionaries for their version of events.

That improbable scenario has unfolded on a deal with an American company to produce a material vital to the country's electronics and solar energy programmes—silicon. The cabinet secretary has sought and obtained an explanation from most of the officials who figure in the CBI report: S.R. Vijaykar, secretary to the Department of Electronics (DOE), former DOE secretary P.P. Gupta who now heads the state-owned Computer Maintenance Corporation (CMC), S. Varadarajan, former director-general of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, DOE Joint Secretary N.W. Nerurkar, and Additional Secretary Ashok Parthasarathy of the Department of Science and Technology. While the officials themselves declined comment, an informed source said that "explanations were sought only on some issues relating to the language in the files." He also dismissed the CBI report, arguing that the agency "did not understand science".

Nonetheless, indictments of such senior bureaucrats have been rare in recent times. An official committee's decision over two years ago to sign up with Hemlock Semiconductors for the 200-tonne, Rs 92-crore National Silicon Facility (NSF) stirred a hornets' nest in the Government itself and among scientists. The issues involved: the project's high cost and the resort to foreign technology.

Critics argued that there was an indigenous, cheaper source for silicon. Building on the efforts of the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore and the National Chemical Laboratory in Pune, the Tamil Nadu-based Mettur Chemical and Industrial Corporation put up a 25-tonne silicon plant for a mere Rs 4 crore. As the arguments heated up, various scientific wings of the Government took sides, the NSF project was virtually put in cold storage and the prime minister finally ordered an inquiry into the increasingly messy affair.

The CBI after questioning top drawer bureaucrats, came up with a headline-hitting report that indicts a pantheon of officials for blithely disregarding reports testifying to the quality of Mettur's silicon.

Vijaykar

Varadarajan

P.P. Gupta

The outcome of that investigation was submitted to the cabinet secretary some months ago. The 50-page document accuses the electronics secretary and his aides (Parthasarathy was a key Electronics Department functionary then) of blithely disregarding reports testifying to the quality of Mettur's silicon even as they aggressively pushed ahead with the Hemlock deal. As evidence, the report cites jottings on departmental files. Gupta and Varadarajan are let off more lightly—the first is held responsible because the deal went through when he headed the DOE (insiders say that Gupta had in fact been personally opposed to the Hemlock tie-up); the second is assailed for backing Hemlock in a report to the Government early last year. Varadarajan is believed to have concluded that while Mettur had done good work, the company would need much more time to scale up its processes to commercial levels.

If the CBI report is to be believed, obduracy and not corruption impelled the officials to act as they did. Says an investigating official: "They were on an ego trip and stuck to their positions." But undaunted by the latest salvo fired at it, the DOE has stuck to its guns. It recently turned down the report of an official four-member team that returned from Mettur convinced that the company's silicon qualified for the solar energy programme. Explained a DOE official: "The committee had a seven-day deadline. It did whatever it could in this period. We wanted to know what the average monthly production was but the committee went by what Mettur said. It didn't check the quality of the silicon but merely produced reports that the company had submitted in 1984. So we have told the Central Government that Mettur still faces problems."

Critics of the Hemlock deal were quick to counter that the department had rejected the recommendations of its own experts, two of whom were members of the latest committee. Said a critic: "First they claimed that Mettur did not have the capability, then that it had only a pilot plant, and then that the company was not producing enough. Now it is saying this."

If that signified anything last fortnight, it was that the NSF controversy was about to erupt again. Old charges are being dusted off the shelves and new ones are being aired. Certainly, the CBI report seems to lend support to some of the long-standing complaints that are aired about both the controversial project and the DOE itself. The Department of Non-Conventional Energy Sources (DNES), which is responsible for the solar energy pro-

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gramme and will therefore be the major user of silicon, has consistently argued that Hemlock's technology will become obsolete in the next few years because cheaper amorphous silicon techniques are round the corner both at home and abroad. In fact, seven laboratories in the country are right now developing precisely this.

In any event, NSF would be charging Rs 1,100 per kg of silicon, some Rs 100 to Rs 300 more than the international price of silicon, even though NSF is assured of cheap power. Mettur could have produced at half the price had it been given the same advantage. NSF's critics also contend that the bill for the project should not have exceeded Rs 25 crore, as a report by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in the US shows. Finally, the NSF's 200-tonne production capacity is far too high because the demand for polysilicon by 1990 will not exceed 30 tonnes.

Tagged on to these are some fresh allegations. For one, the DOE failed to invite global tenders before it approached Hemlock, thereby closing the door on less expensive options (example: an East German offer was rejected). For another, key officials in the DOE rammed the Hemlock deal through government committees, brushing critical opinions under the carpet. And last year, the public sector Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) had sampled some of Mettur's silicon and testified to its quality. Mettur had also submitted to the DOE a report by the California-based Midac Corporation which said that "the material we have seen is fully the equal of any made by the large poly suppliers". Several government laboratories have also tested Mettur's silicon and given it good chits.

A DOE official conceded that global tenders were not invited for the project: "There may have been a procedural lapse. But there are only a handful of companies in the business worldwide and a committee had visited them and found the Hemlock offer the lowest." He also argued that the East German firm's offer came late and would in any case have cost the same as Hemlock's because the quotation excluded critical equipment. Said the official: "Statements have been made on the basis of what the East German company's agent said. We had detailed discussions with the company and found that the East German plant would cost the same as Hemlock's."

Referring to the charge of having ignored reports certifying the quality of Mettur's silicon, the official claimed that when basic decisions about the project were taken in 1982 Mettur did not produce any scientific evidence of its capability, and that the company has yet to submit satisfactory proof. "The crucial point was the end of 1982. The NSF project could have been stopped then. No one has ever investigated whether Mettur had any documentary proof. We also analysed the Midac report and other reports. All of them said that more samples from different batches were required to test the consistency of the product."

He may have a point. Mettur officials have privately said in the past that they had not fully taken the Government into confidence because they apprehended that their technology would be pilfered. A BHEL official also explained last fortnight that the public sector company had used Mettur's silicon to produce photovoltaic cells and found its quality satisfactory, but felt that the silicon sample was not large enough to pass a final judgement. BHEL therefore plans to place an order on Mettur for 100 kg of silicon.

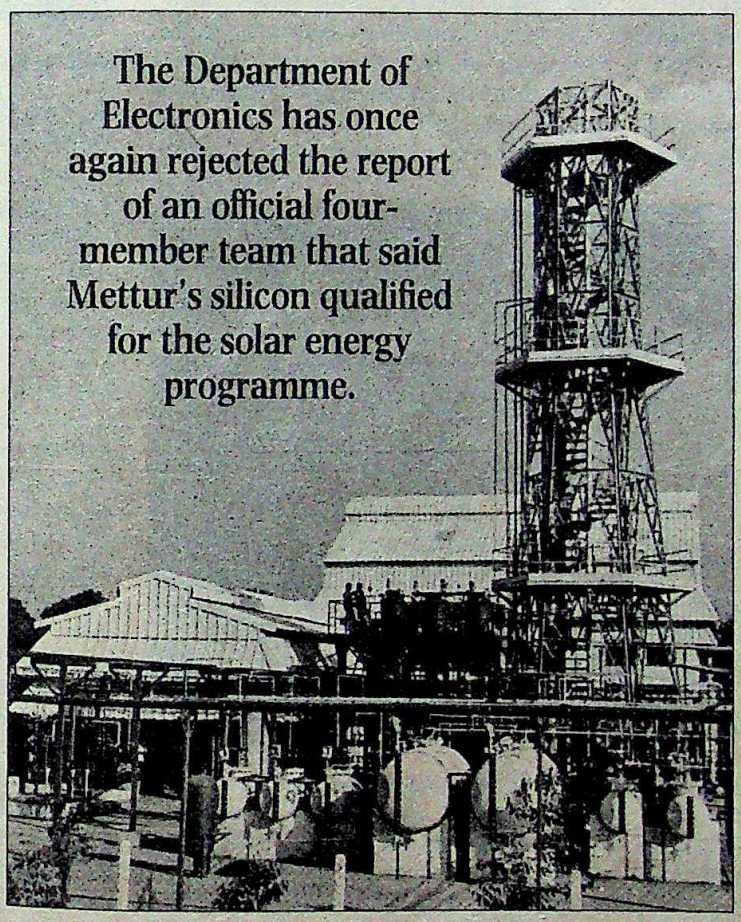
But the DOE's current stance is somewhat more helpful to Mettur than it was back in 1982. It now contends that the Mettur and NSF projects have always been separate issues, and that Mettur can always manufacture and sell silicon regardless of the NSF venture. A DOE official went as far as to say that the department had in fact helped Mettur, which had faced power problems and so could not implement its licence for two years. The DOE recommended a two-year extension of its licence instead of the one year's extension that is normally granted. The department had also ensured that the silicon import requirements were arrived at after providing for what local companies like Mettur could supply.

The official also argued that Hemlock's costs could hardly be exorbitant when it was competing successfully in the world market, and that a 200-tonne plant cost almost the same as a 50-tonne plant.

Advocates of the NSF proposal are also quick to argue that if Hemlock's technology is likely to become obsolete in two years because of the development of amorphous silicon technology, so will Mettur's. But Mettur Director R.V. Ramani counters this with the assertion that his firm's technology converts energy more efficiently and that amorphous silicon degrades faster than polysilicon. Says Ramani: "At the most, amorphous silicon may replace some of the polysilicon as far as photovoltaic cells for the solar energy programme go. It cannot replace polysilicon in electronic uses."

Meanwhile, 35 per cent of Hemlock's $6.7 million fee for know-how and training personnel has already been handed over to the US company and another 35 per cent is due now. If the Government decides to back out of the deal, it may have to shell out at least this amount. Hanging on to Hemlock will of course prove more expensive. Whether it will also prove as harmful as the Socratic poison is what the Government will now have to decide.

—PALAKUNNATHU G.MATHAI and TANIA MIDHA with bureau reports



The Department of Electronics has once again rejected the report of an official four-member team that said Mettur's silicon qualified for the solar energy programme.

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GOLD SMUGGLING

On the Rise

AFTER a brief lull, the smuggling of gold into India is again on the rise. In the first six months of 1986, Customs officials across the country seized almost twice as much gold as in the same period last year. Till June, 2,525 kg of smuggled gold valued at Rs 52 crore was seized, up from 1,306 kg worth Rs 27 crore last year. Said P.K. Kapoor, collector of customs at Bombay's Sahar airport: "The growing difference in the Indian and international prices of gold (now up to Rs 80,000 per kg) has become a big incentive for such smuggling."

If more gold is now being smuggled in, it is also being brought in for a different purpose. Traditionally, the flip side of gold being smuggled in was silver being smuggled out (since silver is priced higher abroad than in the country). But with the domestic and global prices of silver converging, its place has been taken by drugs. And Customs officials are clearly worried by the new nexus between gold and drugs smuggling.

Gold smugglers have also developed new, ingenious ways of bringing in the yellow metal. Traditionally, gold used to be concealed in chocolates, beaten into sheets and placed inside permissible goods, strapped tightly around women's thighs, and tucked cosily into corset belts.

But increasingly, the favoured route is the rectum. Recently, 36 bars of gold were recovered in Bombay from the posteriors of four men returning from Haj, and 39 bars from six men who had flown in from Hong Kong.

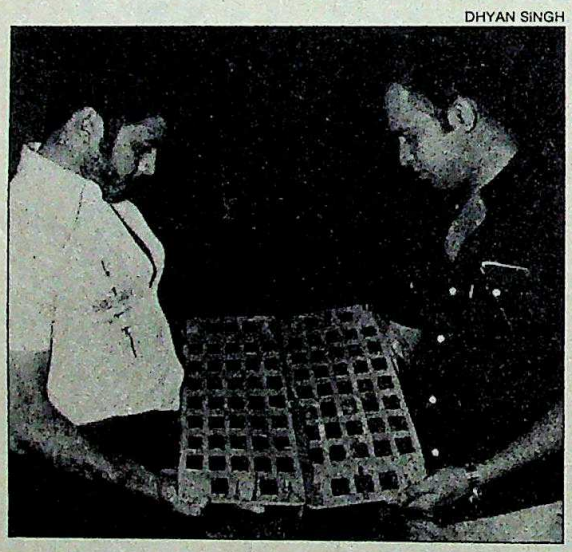
The use of the rectum is the hardest to detect for investigating officials. Still, there are the tell-tale signs. Said a Customs officer: "They put the gold bars in half an hour before landing. But by the time they reach the customs enclosure they are quite anxious to get out. They perspire as a result of the pressure, develop wrinkles below their eyes and are fidgety."

Customs officials say that their drive against smuggling has been greatly helped by the enhanced rewards scheme introduced for informers last year by the Government. An informer gets Rs 350 for each 10 gram of pure gold seized. The smuggling syndicates pay far less to a courier, who (if he gets caught) usually goes to jail for at least two to three years.

But if he turns informer he not only gets protection from the police, he can also continue to be a courier. He runs little risk of exposure, as his identity is known only to the seniormost officer, and the file on him bears no identifiable name or signature, only his thumb impression. Said a Customs officer: "So far not one informer has been exposed, and they continue to collect the reward, tax free."

But representatives of jewellers' associations feel that the anti-smuggling drive can never eliminate the menace of gold smuggling; for that the Gold Control Act—enacted in 1983—must be repealed. "Because of the ban on gold imports imposed by the Act, smugglers have come to occupy a predominant position," says Arvind Jhaveri, secretary of the Chamber of Jewellers and Gold Dealers Associations of India.

DHYAN SINGH

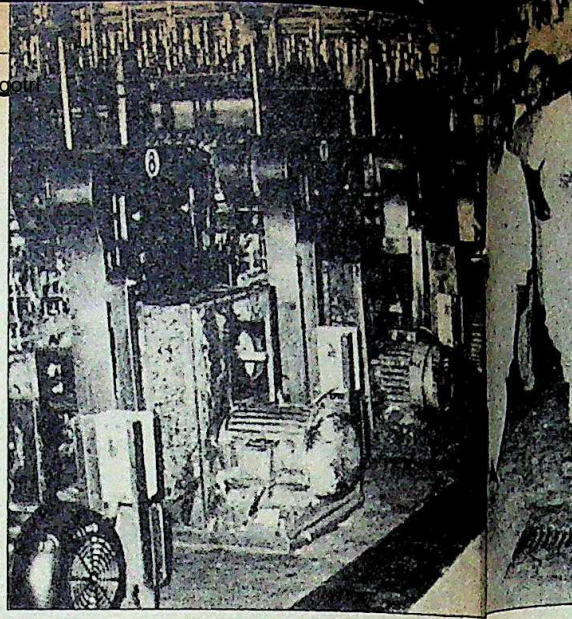


Officials displaying seized gold

Jhaveri estimates that Rs 2,800 crore worth of gold was smuggled into the country last year. If the Government allowed passengers to bring in small amounts of gold on payment of duty, he argues, hundreds of crores of revenue would be generated.

The Finance Ministry has set up a gold policy study group to review the Act. But until a more rational policy is evolved and implemented stringently for the import of gold, smugglers can be expected to employ all manner of ingenious methods to satisfy the Indian's unappeasable hunger for gold; and the cat and mouse game between the smugglers and the Customs officials will continue.

—M.RAHMAN



TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Saving Scheme

THEY call it the 'Gujarat model'. And for a troubled textile industry, it spells hope amidst gloom. For with the majority of the country's 880 textile mills in various stages of sickness, and even the 160 nationalised mills in no great shape, the industry's future is bleak unless it can find a solution that works. And the 'Gujarat model' may well be the answer.

The 'model' envisages nationalising already closed mills, picking out potentially viable units for resuscitation and permanently closing down the rest after paying compensation to surplus workers who opt for voluntary retirement. The machinery and land of the units that are to be scrapped will be sold, and the money used to modernise the viable ones.

The two-year-old scheme was the brain-child of Arvind Buch, former president of the Textile Labour Association (TLA) and H.K. Khan, former principal secretary in the state ministry of industry, mines and energy. Both argued it was pointless pumping in Rs 50 crore annually into the textile industry as aid and tax deferments. Said Khan: "We didn't want to reopen sick mills and then keep suffering losses for all time to come."

Rival trade union leaders argued that it was wrong of Buch as a labour leader to advocate voluntary retirement, but Buch argued back that if workers were not persuaded to leave, the industry as a whole would fail to survive. The TLA split and Buch was forced to retire as its chief.

But for all the flak, the scheme seems to have produced some results. The dozen closed mills have been nationalised, 12,000 workers have put in their resignations, and 10,222 workers who decided to

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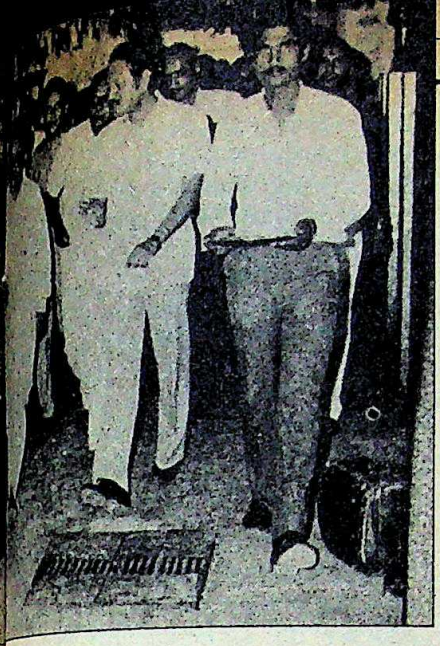


Gujarat chief minister inspecting reopened mill: a new boost

stay on have been accommodated in the five reopened mills, which the Gujarat State Textile Corporation (GSTC) now plans to restructure. Altogether eight of the 12 mills involved have been founded to be viable. Some Rs 22 crore have been paid to retiring workers. If there is a problem, it has been in absorbing the workers who want to continue working: some 4,000 are still to be found new placements.

The total package plan envisaged spending Rs 87 crore, of which Rs 65 crore was to come from the Centre as a loan. The state Government is expected to raise Rs 70 crore by selling obsolete machinery and the land housing closed mills.

If the 'Gujarat model' seems to have been a success so far, it has had its failures too. Workers who have been rehabilitated have not changed their old attitudes to work, the GSTC has had its own bureaucratic problems, and stocks worth crores of rupees are still lying in the godowns of five reopened mills, which are now suffering cash losses. In other words, they are not yet on the road to viability. But GSTC Managing Director Niranjan Singh argued: "All change takes time." And Khan said: "We have been running the mills using the same machinery and the same hands, and we expected losses in the first three years. Only after that will we turn the corner." Added M.D. Rajpal, executive director of the Ahmedabad Textile Mills Association: "If implemented properly, this scheme is worth replicating."

He may well be right, provided the 'Gujarat model' finally proves itself. So far, it can at least claim that whereas two years ago 24,000 textile workers in the state were involuntarily out of work, now the figure is no more than 4,000.

—RAMESH MENON

HBJ PIPELINE

Tardy Progress

If ever a project needed to be completed on time, it was the Rs 1,700-crore Hazira-Bijaipur-Jagdishpur (HBJ) gas pipeline. For one thing, six fertiliser plants in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh cannot get going unless the pipeline brings them natural gas from off the west coast. For another, the price of delay can be as much as Rs 30 lakh a day, going by the contract that has been signed between the Gas Authority of India Ltd (GAIL) and a consortium of companies led by the French Spie-Capag.

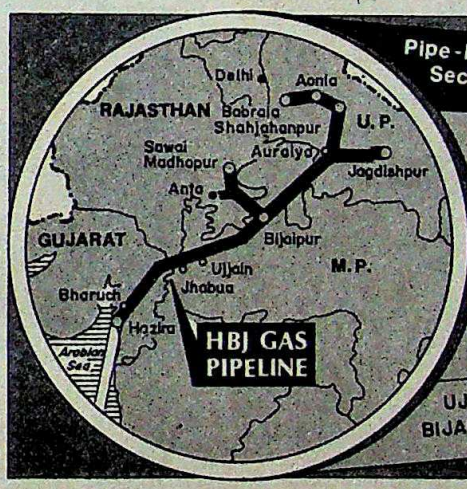
However, a project that took inordinately long to get under way in the first place is now progressing so slowly that it has in less than five months slipped two months behind the project schedule, with little signs as yet of making up for lost time.

Guna (Madhya Pradesh) should have started despatching coated pipes on September 1, but that the plant is still under construction and the "production test will be conducted in late October." A GAIL official said that test-coating should have been done as early as July.

Crucial pipe-laying equipment is not in position either. Of the 33 pipe-layers needed in the first three of the pipeline's five sections, not one was in position in September when Spie-Capag submitted its progress report. Dodsal, the Indian company in charge of the last two sections, had managed to move only 22 pipe-layers into position (of the 40 needed).

In its own report to the Ministry of Programme Implementation GAIL has pointed out that pipe-welding should have started in mid-August and early September for Dodsal's two sections. But work began on the first section only on September 25, and has yet to start on the second section. GAIL also says that the

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



Pipe-laying Sections	Required rate of progress kms/day	Length to be laid (kms)	Completion Date
HAZIRA to BHARUCH	0.95	91	10-1-87
BHARUCH to JHABUA	2.40	229	10-1-87
JHABUA to UJJAIN	1.15	160	17-1-87
UJJAIN to BIJAIPUR	1.20	160	25-1-87

The cost of this delay, going by the terms of the contract, will be as much as Rs 18 crore, and there could well be disputes over who is responsible for the delay, and who should pay the penalty. At least some of the penalty will have to be paid to Spie-Capag for keeping its equipment back beyond the deadline.

One factor causing the slow start may well have been the fact that GAIL itself was headless for three months immediately after the contract was awarded last May. Its Chairman and Managing Director, H.S. Cheema, was inexplicably removed, only to be rehabilitated last month as a member of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC).

The delays have now been documented in detail in two separate reports recently submitted to the Government. A progress report submitted by Spie-Capag points out that the pipe-coating plant at "network finalisation is inordinately delayed".

As for the pipe-laying itself, the target for all five sections put together is 5.7 km every day. Work on the first three sections should, in fact, be completed by January 10 next year. But pipe-laying has barely begun, and GAIL still has only a joint secretary from the Petroleum Ministry at its helm. Said a senior GAIL manager: "GAIL has not been properly pursuing the contractors to ensure that they meet their deadlines. There has not been enough follow-up."

These deficiencies may be made up in the coming weeks and months. But morale in GAIL does not seem to be very high at the moment—some 60 people who had gone on deputation from ONGC and elsewhere to GAIL have now chosen to go back to their parent organisations.

—RAMINDAR SINGH

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TOY INDUSTRY

Coming of Age

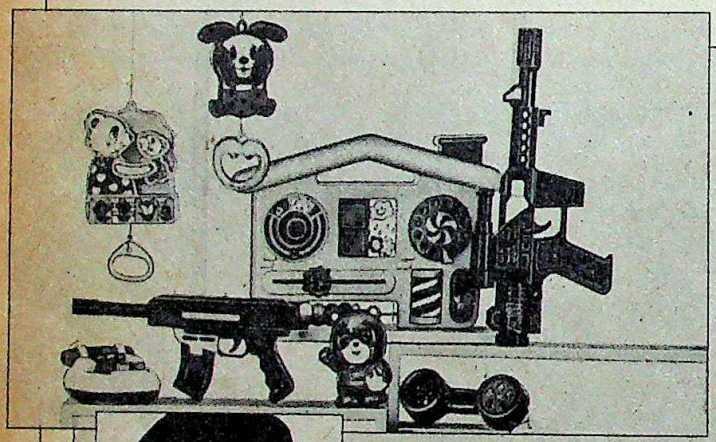
DADDY's girl does not want a doll any longer. At least, her parents feel so. An early teddy or perhaps a cuddly companion who will blink and say "Mama" may pass muster, but once you have toddled out of your diapers and perambulator it is over to today's world of educational toys.

"Activity house: eight ways to have fun while learning," says the advertisement. The recommended age is one to five years. There's also the "funny bunny" meant for still younger kids, and being hawked as "a great way to learn about sight-and-sound interaction".

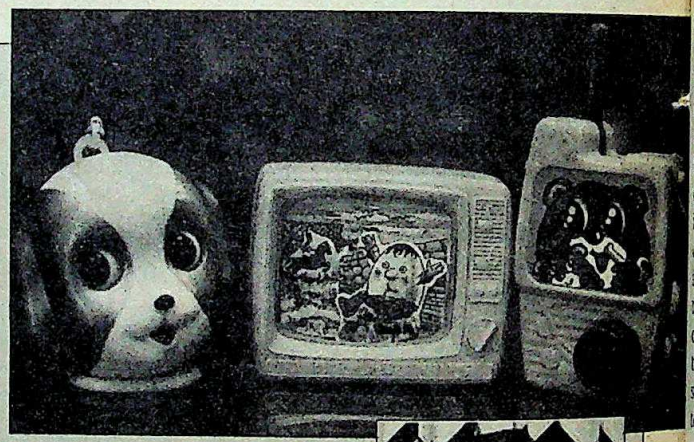
The Delhi-based Dinky Toys has been promoted by a group of professionals including some non-resident Indians. The newly-started company has entered into a collaboration with Bandai, whose turnover of $500 million makes it Japan's largest toy concern.

For an industry which has long been made up of scattered small units with minuscule market shares, the current clutch of foreign tie-ups may well be a signal that the days of largely outdated, unimaginative and unsafe toys may be coming to an end. Mayur Enterprises, a Calcutta-based newcomer to the field, has up in 1976 TAITMA, along with the Indian Standards Institution, has been monitoring the safety standards of Indian toys. "There are really very few checks here," Chinoy adds. "Metallic toys have sharp edges and paints used have toxic elements. You may not be giving your child a honed knife to play with, but he can still injure himself with a blunt one."

But the times are evidently changing. "People today want a good product at a reasonable price," says Blowplast Chairman Dilip Piramal (Leo Toys is a division of Blowplast). "The style of living has changed, thanks to the consumer boom. Though it is our cheaper toys which sell more, we have brands that retail at Rs 150 and are not gathering dust on shop shelves." Dinky's dealer price ranges from Rs 20 to Rs 100. But it expects to introduce battery operated and electronic toys soon



"The toy industry had to grow up some time."
HARMEET SINGH
chairman, Dinky Toys



"People today want a good product at a reasonable price."
DILIP PIRAMAL
chairman, Blowplast

Educational toys are not all that are new in toyland. An industry reserved for small-scale companies is now getting invaded by big brother outfits keen to get a piece of the action; professionals are entering the business, and so are some of the world's biggest names in toys, who are signing up collaboration deals with Indian partners. And with the promise of new, different, high-quality, safe toys also comes the rider: higher prices. For, the new entrants to the trade are concentrating on the top end of the market.

"It had to grow up some time," says Dinky Toys Chairman Harmeet Singh. a marketing and technology arrangement with a French company. Leo Toys, for five years the sole standard bearer of the organised sector in the industry, is trying to enter into a collaboration with Mattel, and a Madras-based entrepreneur is negotiating with the giant US toymaker, Hasbro.

"It is very, very necessary," insists Munira F. Chinoy, president of the All India Toy Manufacturers Association (TAITMA). "In the west they are very particular about safety standards. Here almost all our toys are unsafe." And TAITMA should know. Ever since it was set which will cost twice that amount. And the Mikabu brand, promoted by Mayur Enterprises, will also have some products at the top end of the market.

But the picture may not be quite as rosy as the new entrants seem to feel. Leo Toys, with an expected turnover of Rs 1 crore this year, has been in the business since 1981 and expects to break even only now. Says Piramal: "Our main cost is the mould which has to be imported and can come for anything between Rs 5 lakh and Rs 10 lakh. In the US they can make 10 lakh toys from one mould and sell that amount: here one-tenth that figure can

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prove a drag on the market. Obviously toys will cost more here."

The Managing Director of Mikabu, Amarnath Chakravorty, has no such fears. "The market is growing at 25 per cent per annum and is not yet overcrowded. Our products are expected to be sufficiently superior to existing toys available indigenously. We have actually checked out consumer rating between our products and market leader Leo. We see no problems in getting a Rs 5-crore turnover in the very first year." Dinky's Harmeet Singh, who did a stint with Leo Toys earlier, agrees: "We expect a profit in the very first year itself. We started manufacture in July and we hope to achieve a Rs-30 lakh monthly turnover very soon."

But Leo Toys may have had an additional problem in that it was the only manufacturer which was trying to put the industry on an organised footing. "We are spending Rs 50 lakh on advertising," says Piramal. "Only we advertise and everybody gains." What really rankles is that cheaper toys are available by the score, and some of the mini-units are alleged to be not above excise evasion. Until a sense of quality and safety consciousness is instilled in the consumers, which can only come about through extensive advertising, the more expensive brands are bound to suffer. But both Mikabu and Dinky plan considerable advertising budgets and there may be a change for the better very soon. Nevertheless, marketing the new toys may not be child's play.

Meanwhile, most of the manufacturers are hedging their bets by going in for what can be loosely termed unisex toys. Leo does not have any line exclusively for girls and only has a stray game toy or two meant for the fairer sex. Dinky, while it does have some plans of introducing dolls, has launched its initial range with what appears to be a male emphasis and Mikabu is little different. Although the best selling toys are usually guns, both Leo and Dinky are orienting their advertising to emphasise the educational aspect.

Chinoy has an explanation: "In yesterday's world, girls were expected to grow up to be basically housewives; today no parent would like her daughter to be a somebody." Piramal feels that the reason lies more in the fact that good quality dolls are just not available, and Singh contends that in the present competitive environment educational toys are a must. So goodbye babies and cabbage patch kids, enter the infant Euclids. In an age in which one has to give exams to enter kindergarten, is there any other option?

—PARTHASARATHI SWAMI

BUSINESSPEAK

SUDHIR MULJI

The Rules of Business

HE comes from a family of great wealth (the Sheth family that runs Great Eastern Shipping), has married into a family of great wealth (the Irish beer-manufacturing Guinness family), and has been strongly and openly critical of the Rajiv Gandhi Government's economic policies. He has traces of an upper class British accent, is strongly right-wing in his views, which he pens for a couple of magazines, and is a visiting fellow of Nuffield College at Oxford. Also, he has for all practical purposes been a non-resident, having based himself in London for the last nine years to run the international arm of Great Eastern.

That's not the sort of background that normally gets a man into the hot seat in a giant public sector company often accused of shady deals. Nevertheless, Sudhir Mulji, 48, is now the chairman of the State Trading Corporation of India (turnover: Rs 2,523 crore). "Certainly, I didn't expect it," Mulji says, and he is chary of disclosing who suggested the appointment. He admits reluctantly that he met Rajiv ("the prime minister is wonderfully direct and straightforward, and very easy to relate to") before going through the round of interviews and meetings that finally got him his appointment. And—conscious of the contradictions in someone with his views being chairman of STC—he says quite simply that "if I was being asked, I couldn't refuse. Some of the members of the interview panel may have felt that I might not fit into the public sector, but they perhaps felt it was an experiment worth trying." His mother, he says, is "proud but unhappy": she doesn't see what there can be for him in getting caught up in New Delhi's byzantine world. And he himself wonders whether he is made for the public sector.

"I didn't set any pre-conditions," he says. "That wouldn't be playing the game." But now that he is there, he hopes to "try and change the conditions in which the business side of government is done." For a start, he wants to improve the low morale in STC. "I have said I will not tolerate anonymous notes: corruption is important, but morale is even more so. In any case, STC people are as honest as the general level of honesty in the country, and I don't see major loopholes. There are a lot of rumours about state trading that are unfair. STC can do a reasonable job. But having joined STC, I am biased in its favour."

His views on economic policy remain what they have been: he thinks the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act should be scrapped altogether ("people don't want to take their money out, they want to bring it in"), he doesn't see any real liberalisation having taken place in economic policy, and he maintains that "there are too many controls, and the natural talent of the Indian businessman hasn't been given free rein".

How can a rule-bound government-owned company do well in international trade? "I don't think you can do business by sticking to rules and regulations," he says. "You just have to ensure the national good. And both the Government and the public have to understand the nature of trading. One shouldn't be afraid of making mistakes. If you worry about that, it'll be impossible for the public sector to survive. You have to take decisions that might go wrong."

He doesn't think in terms of targets ("in any case, it's much too early for that"), just of how to get the next contract. And he loves business: "I consider nothing more honourable than being a businessman. It's very easy to be above reproach, but a businessman takes on challenges. Both business and politics are very difficult games, and you can't have a very simple moral rule for these kinds of things. There is always some good and some bad. Circumstances might make you do things that are morally reprehensible but are ultimately right. You may have to entertain lavishly in order to get business. So business is not a question of simple moral precepts, it really takes life as it is." It now remains to be seen whether STC, the bureaucracy and Parliament will take Mulji as he is.

—T.N. NINAN

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SHAW WALLACE

The Final Battle

THE battle lines have been drawn for the final skirmishes in one of the fiercest corporate wars ever to be fought: for the control of Shaw Wallace and Company. Last fortnight both Kishore Rajaram Chhabria, the London-based non-resident Indian, and Senapur Panduranga Acharya, currently Shaw Wallace chairman, were busy lobbying with the Government and the financial institutions for support in the decisive battles that lay ahead. While Chhabria, a candidate for becoming Shaw Wallace chairman, camped in a plush suite in one of the capital's luxury hotels, Acharya was busy operating from the company's well-appointed guest-house in the capital. Both put forward their case on the basis of high principle (the rights of the largest block of shareholders vs the responsibility of a management to the company's total share ownership), but in truth it was simply a battle for power and control.

For Chhabria, this was his chance to capture the Rs 230-crore company, 38 per cent of whose shares he acquired almost two years ago when he and his brother, M.R. Chhabria, bought the holding company, R.G. Shaw. But since then, he has been stymied by Acharya, who has fought a determined battle to keep the Chhabrias out on the ground that they had teamed up illegally with Bangalore-based liquor giant Vijay Mallya to buy R.G. Shaw. Said Chhabria: "We simply want the management to pass into the hands of those who actually own the company, nothing else. Is this a crime?" Retorted a Shaw Wallace official: "When the question of the real ownership of the shares is in doubt, how can they lay claim to the company?"

The battle between Chhabria and Acharya entered its critical phase when the Supreme Court ordered the holding of Shaw Wallace's long-delayed annual meeting of shareholders, as well as two extraordinary general meetings (EGM's) that had been requisitioned months ago by Chhabria. The meetings are to be held in mid-November, and will discuss and vote on resolutions calling for the removal of Acharya and other Shaw Wallace directors, and for passing the annual accounts of the company plus the payment of dividends.

The Supreme Court decision had come at the end of a long legal battle in which over half-a-dozen cases were filed in different courts, apart from one before the Company Law Board. The board eventually lifted its ban on the Chhabrias exercising their shareholding power. But along the way, the Calcutta High Court had restrained the holding of the EGM that Chhabria wanted in order to remove Acharya. Also, the various economic intelligence arms of the Government had pounced on the Chhabrias and on Mallya, and arrested both of them for FERA violations. Among the charges: they had bought R.G. Shaw overseas without the approval of the RBI. Once Chhabria was arrested, Acharya had gone to the courts and got the EGM's postponed on a variety of grounds.

The latest judicial order now forces Acharya to hold the meeting of shareholders that Chhabria wants, and is a clear victory for the non-resident businessman. The court has even ordered that Acharya will not chair the shareholders' meetings. Instead, it has put together a panel of three retired judges to preside over the meetings.

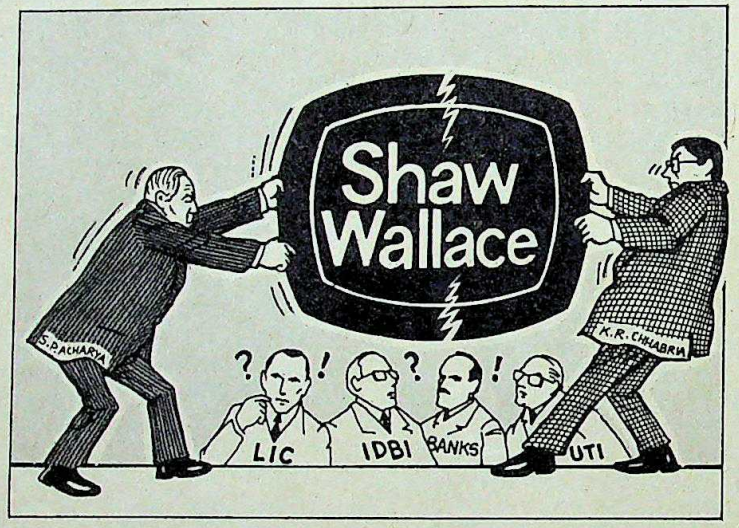
If the issue of who controls Shaw Wallace is going to be decided purely on the basis of shareholder voting power, the dice is heavily loaded against Acharya and his supporters. Acharya himself owns less than 1 per cent of the company's shares, against Chhabria's 38 per cent. Over 27 per cent of the shares are owned by the financial institutions. And last fortnight Chhabria was able to raise his equity holding to over 44 per cent by forking out Rs 8 crore to acquire Shaw Wallace shares held by two families based in Madras and Calcutta.

During the last four months, the tireless Chhabria has knocked on almost every door in the Finance Ministry to plead his case. Throughout, Chhabria has accused Acharya of violating laws and milking the company for his personal benefit, charges that Acharya has vehemently denied. While the Finance Ministry has remained neutral on the contentious issues, it nevertheless ordered a probe into Chhabria's allegations of financial bungling. And a report submitted to the Central Board of Direct Taxes says that senior Shaw Wallace executives have floated parallel companies with the help of money drawn from the parent company. What these and various other charges will ultimately amount to is not known, and Acharya did not make himself available for comment. In the context of the imminent battle, these charges serve the purpose of making it difficult for the financial institutions to support Acharya. But since the Finance Ministry still holds the view that a good management should not be destabilised, which way the final voting will go remains the vital question.

Acharya, in any case, has not given up the battle as lost. He is pinning his hopes on the FERA case against Chhabria which, if it goes against the non-resident investor, could put an end to all his hopes of taking charge. And going by the comments of senior Shaw Wallace executives, Acharya still seems confident that the financial institutions will back him with their 27 per cent voting power. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Chhabria now controls 44 per cent of the total shareholding. And it will take a superhuman effort on Acharya's part to put enough votes together to stop Chhabria in his tracks, come November.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

Illustration by AJIT NINAN



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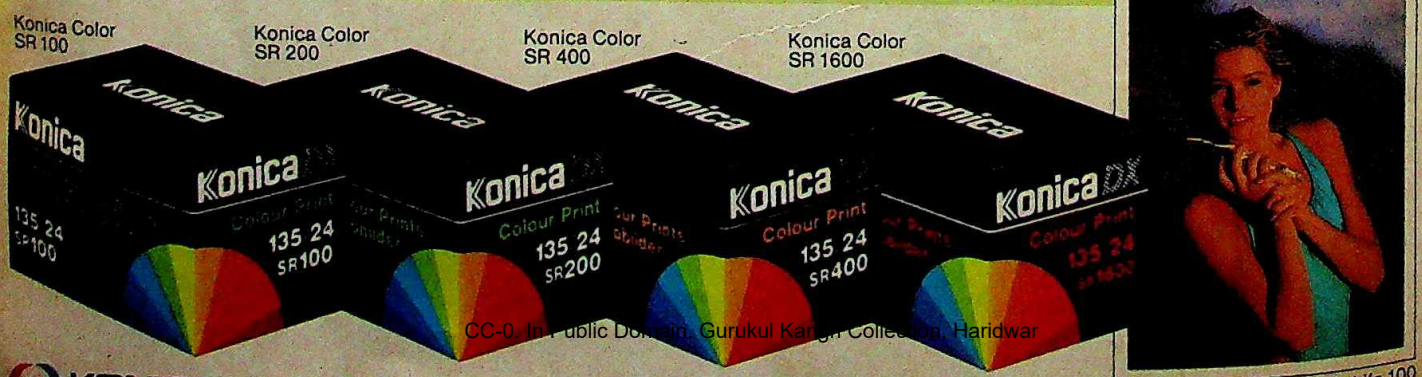
So next time, don't just take home color pictures, take home a rainbow.

ONLY KONICA QUALITY LETS YOU TAKE HOME A RAINBOW.

Konica
COLOR FILM & PRINT



Konica Long Life 100

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KONISHIROKU No 26-2, Nishishinjuku 1-chome, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 163, Japan Tel: Tokyo (349)5101

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PAN MASALA

Soaring Sales

IT looks like lumpy powdered chocolate, leaves a mildly mint-like flavour on the tongue, and has a growing number of aficionados craving for more. And of course, it is one of the hottest-selling items in town. Touted as a substitute for the more messy pan, pan masala is chewing up sales records all over the country. And at least one brand occasionally commands black market rates.

The Kanpur-based Kothari Products had a turnover of Rs 31 lakh a decade ago; last year it was Rs 26 crore. The total market has grown equally exponentially and is now estimated at around Rs 100 crore. And yet, the orders come in too fast to be handled. Says Kothari Products Managing Director M.M. Kothari: "Forty per cent of our orders are pending. We cannot produce enough and have to allot dealers quotas." Adds R.N. Goela, managing partner of Swastik Fragrances (of Rajnigandha fame): "We haven't been able to catch up with the demand. Orders sometimes have to be kept pending for two to three months." Even smaller producers are flourishing—Hari Chand Shri Gopal kicked off its Mayur brand two years ago and ran into unexpected trouble as its factory could not keep pace with the demand. Says one partner K.P. Agrawal: "We could have sold Rs 10 crore worth of pan masala but couldn't supply enough last year. We have now expanded our plant more than tenfold." The sharply rising sales graphs clearly signal what should be obvious—that pan masalas are winning converts and influencing buyers like never before.

Things started changing in the '70s when Ashok and Company—the now-defunct industry daddy—set the ball rolling by introducing mass production techniques. Now manufacturers have harnessed convenient packaging and big budget advertising to hit the big time. Thus, a 100-gram tin is priced around Rs 20, but the market ballooned two years ago when manufacturers launched 4-gram sachets, pricing them at the more affordable Re 1. "By introducing pouches, we captured middle class buyers who didn't want to spend Rs 20," says Kothari.

The annual ad budgets range from Rs 30 lakh to a hefty Rs 1 crore, and firms have roped in film stars to endorse their wares on TV. "We're trying to associate our product with people of all age groups. We want to convey the message that using pan masala is a status symbol," says Goela. The gambit has paid off. Says a senior ad agency executive: "Advertising has changed public perceptions. Pan masala is not regarded as a down-market product any more."

Such strategies have sent corporate sales soaring. And the success stories are enticing outsiders. Last fortnight, health and beauty products company Dabur was bracing to take on industry heavies by launching a pan masala called Nawabi in mid-October. Dabur Marketing Controller S. Ramachandran expects a 20 per cent profit: "We'll step into any market where there's a monopoly or oligopoly. The question of our failing doesn't arise; we have a big distribution network."

Still, such calculations could go awry. Manufacturers claim that their profits are just 5 per cent, and that conglomerates like ITC had lent either marketing muscle or advice to pan masala ventures, only to come a cropper in a business that calls for immense personal supervision. One reason may be that success lies in the quality of ingredients used and in the blending of the various flavours—which are claimed to be family secrets.

Personal involvement does seem to be a key to success. "The big companies don't inspect the quality of the betel nuts they order the way I do. And like Coca-Cola, our concentrate is a secret. I myself prepare a concentrate comprising over 20 flavours once a week at night in our basement at home," said Kothari. But Ramachandran countered: "It's not the formula but the consistency that counts."

The next few months could, of course, determine that issue. Right now the mood in the industry is far from glum. "There's room for everyone," declares an industry watcher. He could be right. Some 100 small-timers are fighting successfully for niches in the market. And if the ad hype and hard sell are anything to go by, pan masalas will continue to have a lot of spice in them.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI

M.M. KOTHARI
managing director, Kothari Products

"Forty per cent of our orders are pending. We cannot produce enough."

"We could have sold Rs 10 crore worth pan masala but couldn't supply enough."

K.P. AGRAWAL
partner, Hari Chand Shri Gopal

R.N. GOELA
managing partner, Swastik Fragrances

"We want to convey the message that using pan masala is a status symbol."

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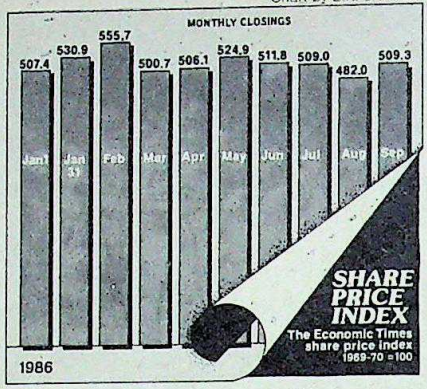
THE MARKETS

New Jolts

THERE is not going to be any great bounty flowing from the share markets this year. That much now seems inescapable. And the recovery that was on the cards has been nipped in the bud: by the financial institutions (which have suddenly decided to unload some of their holdings), by brokers themselves (one of them brought about a payments crisis in Bombay by over-extending himself in Modi Rubber) and by such unexpected events as the assassination attempt on Rajiv Gandhi.

So, while September saw *The Economic Times* share price index rise quite handsomely from 482 to 509.4, the first week of October saw the index slide back once again to 503.4. This is somewhat higher than the level a fortnight ago, but it is not even 1 per cent higher than the level of the index immediately after the post-budget crash, in March, and shows how weak the market undertone has been in the last six or seven months.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



Perhaps the only factor that has prevented a wholesale slump is the occasional buying by the financial institutions, and even this has been intermittent and hesitant. Last fortnight, as a matter of fact, both the Unit Trust of India (UTI) and the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) decided to turn sellers. UTI unloaded Tata Steel and Tata Tea on the Calcutta Stock Exchange, and the IDBI got rid of some of its holdings in Gujarat Fertiliser.

In the prevailing mood (which wasn't helped by the payments crisis and the closing of the market for a day), even higher dividend announcements by several companies didn't bolster the sentiment. Thus, firms like Bajaj Electricals, Modern Suitings, Chemicals and Plastics and Bakelite Hylam hiked their dividend, as did Richardson Hindustan. But even when the general mood is depressed, there are always some scrips that manage to do well, and among these were Atlas Copco, Asian Paints, the flourishing Bajaj Auto, Bata India and National Organic.

Meanwhile, some of the leading companies that want to go to the market to raise funds find that clearances are slow in coming from the controller of capital issues in New Delhi. Among the firms now waiting for the green signal are such corporate stars as Tata Steel, Indian Rayon, Hindustan Aluminium and Reliance Industries. Attractive public issues by these companies should at least serve to lace the current uncertain mood with some optimism about good investment prospects. But as things stand, the current financial year may not see as much fresh capital being raised from the market as might have been expected at one stage. In a year with so many other disappointments, this is one that could have been avoided.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1986 HIGH	1986 LOW	CLOSE 6.10.86	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	45.00	23.00	26.00	2.00 +
Asian Paints	280.00	130.00	220.00	18.25 +
Associated Cement	389.00	186.00	216.00	2.50 +
Atlas Copco	103.00	64.00	103.00	19.00 +
Avery India	149.00	100.00	146.75	13.75 +
Bajaj Auto	4300.00	1950.00	4125.00	275.00 +
Baroda Rayon	490.00	230.00	232.50	10.00 –
Bata India	118.00	54.00	114.00	11.00 +
Bayer	680.00	445.00	595.00	27.50 +
Bharat Forge	86.00	48.00	65.00	1.00 +
Birla Jute	97.00	42.90	48.50	nil
Bombay Dyeing	123.00	77.00	93.50	1.50 –
Brooke Bond	96.75	56.00	80.50	0.50 +
Ceat Tyres	560.00	240.00	560.00	35.00 +
Century Spinning	1690.00	710.00	812.50	2.50 +
Chloride India	132.00	86.00	124.00	5.00 +
Colgate	350.00	200.00	322.50	7.50 +
DCM	58.50	26.25	34.00	3.00 +
Dunlop	74.50	49.75	64.50	3.00 +
Elecon	127.00	80.00	102.50	nil
Escorts	117.00	69.00	90.00	4.50 –
Finolex Cables	106.00	36.00	98.50	4.50 +
Food Specialities	375.00	164.00	195.00	16.00 +
Garware Nylon	61.50	33.50	34.00	2.00 –
Glaxo	87.00	48.00	48.00	7.50 –
G.E. Shipping	36.00	13.00	19.25	1.50 +
Gujarat St. Fertilisers	182.00	92.50	161.00	2.50 +
Grasim Ind	96.50	59.00	90.00	0.50 –
Hind. Cocoa	215.00	97.50	200.00	35.00 +
Hindustan Lever	187.00	124.00	178.00	10.00 +
Hindustan Motors	128.50	37.75	46.60	nil
Hind. Dorr	660.00	305.00	310.00	25.00 –
IEL	84.50	61.50	65.90	1.10 –
Indian Organic	97.00	63.00	79.00	3.00 +
Indian Rayon	151.00	100.00	130.50	5.50 +
Indrol	467.50	200.00	400.00	57.50 –
Ingersoll-Rand	505.00	250.00	287.50	12.50 +
ITC	76.50	53.00	74.00	1.75 +
J.K. Synthetics	132.00	90.00	106.00	1.00 –
Kinetic Engineering	385.00	220.00	350.00	20.00 –
KSB Pumps	495.00	205.00	235.00	nil
Lakme	195.00	120.00	137.50	2.50 +
Larson & Toubro	204.00	102.00	114.00	7.50 +
Lipton	69.00	46.50	66.00	2.00 +
Lohia Machines	70.00	21.00	24.00	1.00 +
Madura Coats	92.00	51.00	62.00	4.50 +
Mahindra & Mahindra	86.00	46.00	48.00	nil
Motor Industries	1000.00	440.00	480.00	360.00 –
National Organic	840.00	512.50	585.00	50.00 +
Nirlon	77.00	29.00	31.50	0.50 +
Orkay Silk Mills	192.00	111.00	152.00	3.00 –
Peico Electronics	104.50	48.00	68.00	3.50 +
Ponds	390.00	200.00	350.00	50.00 +
Premier Auto	990.00	555.00	977.50	70.00 +
Ranbaxy	160.00	105.00	126.00	5.00 –
Raymond	97.00	72.00	75.00	2.00 –
Reckitt & Colman	155.00	81.25	150.00	17.75 +
Reliance Industries	392.00	226.00	268.00	2.00 +
Shriram Fibres	88.00	35.00	36.50	2.00 -
Sandoz	135.00	62.00	112.00	3.00 +
SPIC	184.00	61.00	55.50	3.25 –
Tata Steel	1610.00	1090.00	1245.00	15.00 +
Telco	910.00	575.00	640.00	12.50 –
Vulcan Laval	162.50	45.00	52.50	2.50 –
Wimco	98.00	54.00	55.50	0.50 –
Zenith Steel	97.00	68.00	77.00	2.00 –

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	8.1734	8.1335
Austria	Schilling	100	91.9264	91.5123
Bahrain	Dinar	1	33.2026	33.1782
Bangladesh	Taka	100	42.3662	42.3080
Canada	Dollar	1	9.2918	9.2590
Denmark	Kroner	1	1.7145	1.7088
Egypt	Pound	1	17.8970	17.8336
France	Franc	1	1.9762	1.9723
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	1.6502	1.6454
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	1.0008	1.0003
Iran	Rial	100	16.4932	16.4600
Italy	Lira	100	0.9100	0.5000
Japan	Yen	100	8.4000	8.2500
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7800	0.7662
Kuwait	Dinar	1	42.9160	42.8668
Malaysia	Dollar	1	4.9064	4.8790
Mauritius	Rupee	1	0.9520	0.9436
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6030	0.5998
Netherlands	Guilder	1	5.7201	5.7023
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7439	0.7180
Singapore	Dollar	1	5.9319	5.9113
Spain	Peseta	1	0.0960	0.0951
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4338	0.4220
Sweden	Kroner	1	1.8827	1.8756
Switzerland	Franc	1	7.9539	7.9275
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.2890	0.2699
Thailand	Baht	100	48.5990	48.5230
UK	Pound	1	18.5048	18.4672
USA	Dollar	1	12.8525	12.7475
UAE	Dirham	1	3.4110	3.3980
USSR	Rouble	1	13.6889	13.6228
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	6.4599	6.4020

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 7.10.86.

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Tangail, Shantipuri, Dhonekhali, Baluchari, Jamdani and Printed Sarees, Dhoti, Polyester Blend Suitings, Shirtings, Dress materials, Readymade garments and Furnishing fabrics.

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Bengal Handloom

The West Bengal State Handloom Weavers' Co-operative Society Ltd.
45, Biplabi Anukul Chandra Street, Calcutta 700072

ABC-T-504-86

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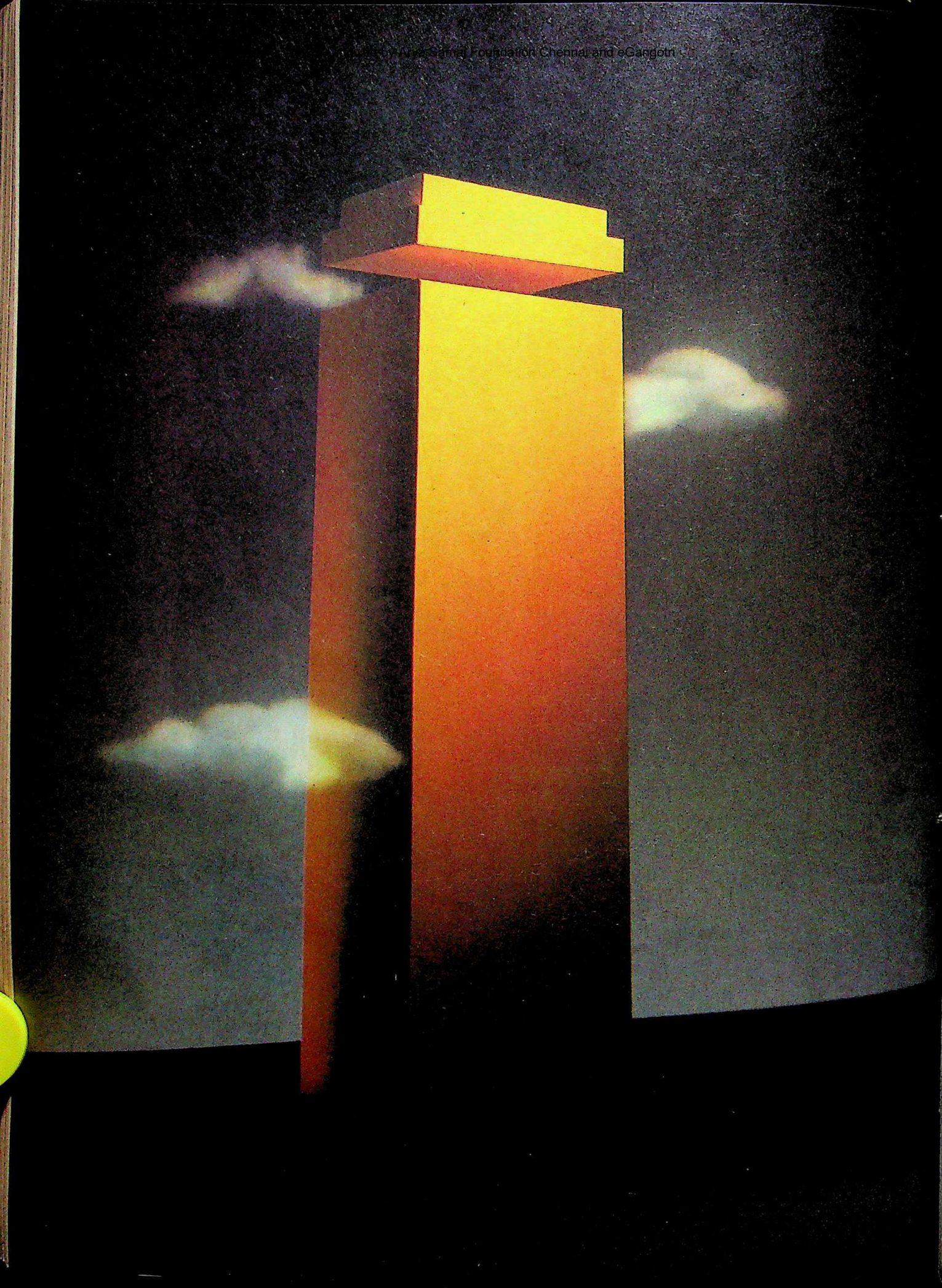

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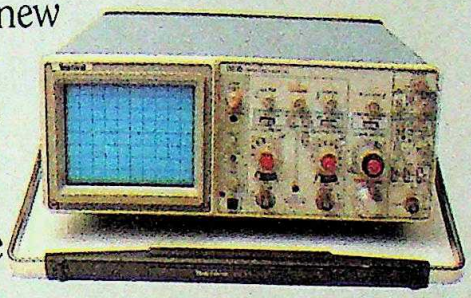
THE TECHNOLOGY SKYSCRAPER: ONCE YOU'VE REACHED THE TOP, THERE'S NO COMING DOWN.

It's a rigid caste system out here. And people at the top mix only with their peers.

Hinditron's new manufacturing venture is a case in point.



TEKHIND 2235 OSCILLOSCOPES. WITH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FROM TEKTRONIX, U.S.A.

To win the technical assistance of Tektronix and Fluke, Hinditron had to prove themselves at the highest level of technology.

Tektronix, world number one in oscilloscopes and display devices. And Fluke, ditto in digital multimeters.

What convinced them to stake their giant reputations with Hinditron?

There's no charity in the tough world of high-tech.

So, Hinditron's credentials had to be more than just impressive – they had to be impeccable.

As representatives for Tektronix and Fluke for over two decades, Hinditron have acquired in-depth expertise in high-tech electronics.

Hinditron know all there is to know about the products, their scope, and about customer needs. And have an excellent set-up for marketing and field service.

Over the years, people in the know have come to recognise Hinditron as a premier supplier of state-of-the-art products and services.

The spectrum ranges from communication equipment and process control instrumentation to analytical instruments and test and measuring instruments.

Plus of course, computers – marketing and field services, software development and export, training in information technology. As well as data centre management.

The software development cell needs to be singled out for special mention. It solves complex problems for major clients in nine countries – including the U.S.A., England and West Germany.

So when Hinditron chose to go into manufacture, it had to be at the highest level. Or not at all.

A new factory at Bangalore stands testimony to Hinditron's intentions. Guaranteed to turn out products of the highest pedigree.

With three very big reputations to live up to, was there ever a choice?

HINDITRON 86 DIGITAL MULTIMETERS. WITH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FROM FLUKE, U.S.A.

Hinditron's New Manufacturing Venture. Born Famous.

HINDITRON

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Himachal

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Six-thousand temples dot this land of spiritual charm. Temples whose architectural excellence emphazises the vitality of religious art.

Baijnath,Bajuara and Chamba temples blend miraculously features of northern and southern temple architecture.

Wood-carvings on the temples of Lakshana Devi at Bharmour, Shakti and Kali Devi at Mankula (Pangi), as also Magru Mahadev temple at Mandi are masterpieces of temple art. A beautifully carved temple in Pagoda style is dedicated to Hidimba.

There are beautiful bronzes at Hatkoti, Sarahan, Chamba, Chhatrari and Bharmour temples.

The shrines of Naina Devi, Chintapurni and Chamunda Devi and Jwalamukhi, indicate the mother goddess cult. Though Shiva and Shakti cults predominate, exquisite—Buddhist monastries can be seen from Dalhousie to Mandi and beyond to Lahaul and Spiti.

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THE HIMALAYAN DREAMLAND

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HIMACHAL TOURISM

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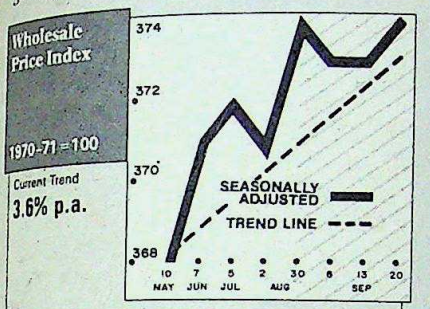
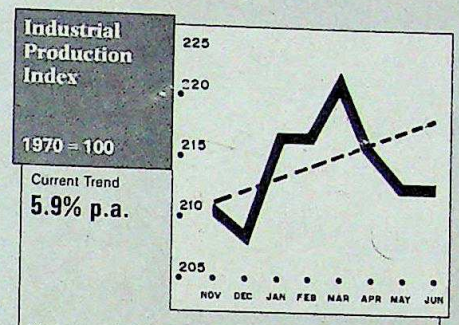
The indicators hold no surprises. Almost everything is on track except the Industrial Production and Manufacturing indices which are somewhat below trend. Demand continues to be strong. The use of petroleum products is up almost 15%. Increased use of fertiliser augurs well for farm production in a bad monsoon year.

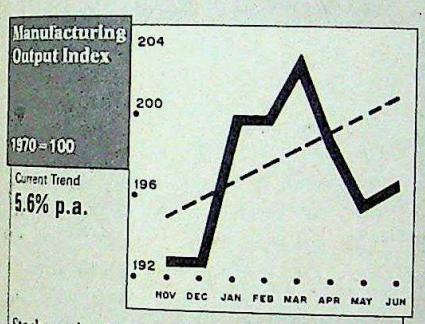
All data are seasonally adjusted. The current trends are computed on the basis of six-month (weekly data) or two-year (monthly data) figures. Quarters in the text refer to the calendar year quarters.



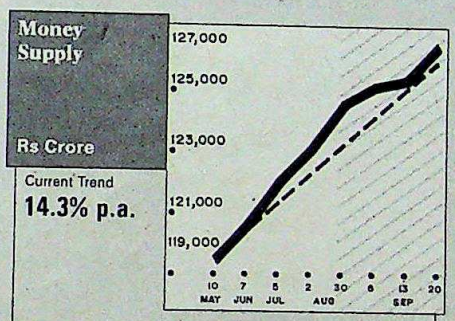
Prices have been essentially stable the last few months. Price-wise, 1986 promises to be the best year since the inflation rate of 2.48 in 1982.



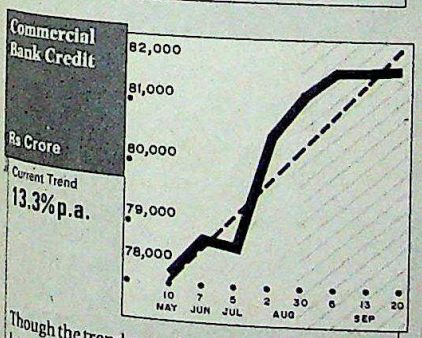
Not since the first quarter of 1974 has the decline been as sharp as the −7.8% (annual rate) recorded in the most recent quarter.



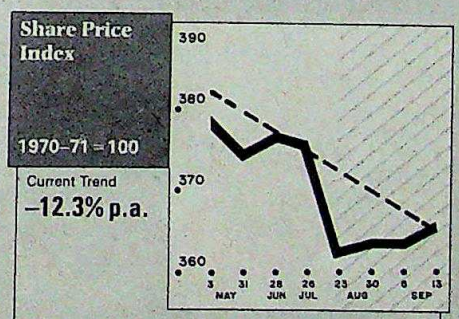
Stock-market health and indicators like power use suggest that the second quarter decline might have been temporary.



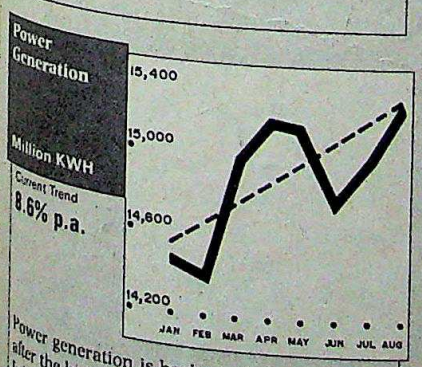
Money supply continues its expansionary pace. Though September has shown some acceleration, there are no signs of overheating.



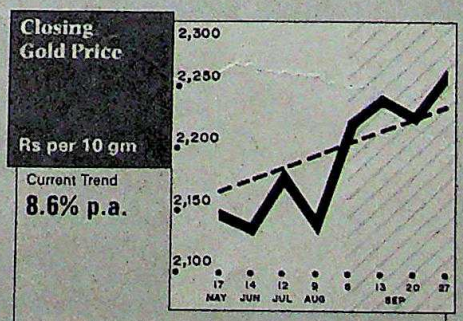
Though the trend growth rate has dropped in the last month, bank credit in real terms has an expansionary stance.



Clear signals of a 'bottom formation' are present. The bear phase since March may be finally ending.



Power generation is back on its healthy trend after the large dip in June; the improvement in July was sustained in August.



The rally has been mild compared to the one in international markets. Domestic gold prices are up only 6%; internationally, they are up 25%.

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

Growth of Items in June, 1986

	% Growth
Motor Cars	45.24
Synthetic Rubber	32.53
Railway Rolling Stock	25.34
Coffee Curing Works	17.2
Hand Tools and Small Tools	16.61
Tobacco Manufacture	16.25
Grain Mill Products	13.74
Iron and Steel Pipes	11.69
Sugar Machinery	11.61
Electrical Motors	11.26
Fertilisers	9.32
Generation and Transmission Equipment	8.84
Electrical Machinery	8.7
Ferro-Alloys	8.51
Sewing Machines	7.36
Petroleum and Coal Products	7.14
Dairy Products	6.6
Hydrogenated Oil (Vanaspati)	5.84
Footwear	5.81
Cosmetics	5.22
Paints and Varnishes	4.91
Iron and Steel (Metal)	4.7
Tea Machinery	4.54
Soaps and Glycerine	4.18
Organic Chemicals	3.83
Iron and Steel Structurals	3.6
Inorganic Chemicals	3.54
Cotton and Blended Yarn	2.85
Agricultural Machinery	2.71
Chemical and Pharmaceutical Machinery	2.08
Cement (Hydraulic)	2.05
Paper	2.0
Rubber Footwear	1.82
Matches	1.79
Dairy Machinery	1.78
Conveying Equipment	1.39
Storage Batteries	1.05
Beverage Industry	0.95
Sugar Industry	0.89
Paper Board and Straw Board	0.85
Man-made Fibres	0.58
Telecommunications	0.46
Cotton and Blended Mixed Fabrics	−.15
Artificial Leather and Oil Cloth	−.47
Power-Driven Pumps	−.57
Hurricane Lanterns	−.62

Of the 86 series considered, 42 of them with a total weight of 39.1699987 had a positive growth and 44 of them with a total weight of 48.806 had a negative growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1986	1985
Crude Petroleum Thousand Tonnes, September	2,529	2,436
Petroleum Refinery Products Thousand Tonnes, September	3,876	3,382
Fertiliser Thousand Tonnes, August	596	497
Letters of Intent Issued Numbers, August	82	100
Industrial Licences Issued Numbers, August	32	63

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ARYAN ADX/HT 009

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DOORDARSHAN

Grand Designs

DOORDARSHAN, like Rip Van Winkle, has suddenly woken up to the need to catch up with the times. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has grand designs on its drawing-boards for a 'revitalised' television set-up. Helicopters, state of the art studios, many more electronic news-gathering (ENG) vans, computerised lighting and a lot else to update the frayed hardware. And to take care of the equally fraying human factor, a total outsider will be inducted as director of news, and other journalists taken on contract. For good measure, there will also be six new posts of additional or deputy directors-general.

This package has not yet got the Government's green signal, though it should soon be coming. Approved already, however, are two huge professional studios to be built at a cost of about Rs 35 crore in the dining hall and sports complex of New Delhi's Asiad Village. These studios will include rehearsal rooms and stages where dances and ballets can be performed and viewed by invited audiences (canned laughter and applause are finally here). Doordarshan will also rid itself of its outdated low-band equipment, which is unacceptable internationally. Already a dozen studios, costing roughly Rs 1 crore each, are being built in Mandi House, where Doordarshan's new headquarters and Delhi Kendra are coming up.

Doordarshan's electronic tentacles are spreading too. Regional television is gradually becoming a reality. Earlier this year, Bombay's coverage was extended to all of Maharashtra. The Madras station will be able to cover the whole of Tamil Nadu later this month, and Hyderabad will transmit across Andhra Pradesh in November. Doordarshan's second channels in Delhi and Bombay have thus far been damp squibs—the one kilowatt signals being too weak. They will be updated to 10 kilowatts next year. Calcutta and Madras will get their second channels by September next year as well.

HARI OM GULATI

Doordarshan proposes to acquire fancy new hardware, recruit fresh talent and brighten up its news presentation, but the changes may not go far enough.

Doordarshan's new headquarters

To brighten up the news presentation, experiments are already being carried out for the national hook-up. Newscasters might soon read out the news with a live news-room as a backdrop. To make the news less of "radio with pictures" (as it is constantly referred to), Doordarshan might introduce square windows which show frozen footage that comes alive and expands to fill the screen as the news-reader fades out. The Sivakasi-calendar colours—fluorescent orange and electric blues—might happily prove victims of the proposed change. Teleprompters, rejected earlier by the news-readers because they thought these made them appear too wooden, might return. So news-readers will have to come in early for rehearsals.

Doordarshan certainly needs a change of form; but what it needs even more is a change of heart. Change has got to be more than electronic-deep. What good are all the fancy ENG vans and the rest of sci-fi hardware when cameramen do not have telephones at home? They can't be summoned if there is a late news development. Says a former Doordarshan producer: "Only the bureaucrats have telephones. If you do not reach the cameraman, you don't reach the audience ....Unfortunately the same set of rules govern the Income Tax Department as well as radio and Doordarshan." The 10-to-5 mentality is not conducive for the reflexes essential to a news organisation, nor are second Saturdays and the myriad holidays. Complains another producer: "The litmus test of a TV station is the get-out time. Doordarshan takes anywhere from two to four hours to reach a news site. After all, fires don't give notices or press handouts."

What Doordarshan is really geared to cover, according to yet another producer, is the prime minister's doings and sayings and airport arrivals and departures. "When it comes to the prime minister's visit everybody responds in fear....Everything else is pushed aside, even as important an event as the Shah Bano case....The more the prime minister talks about the need for media to underplay him, the more the bosses accord coverage to him. They believe he is not satisfied and wants more."

Those at the ground level in the TV set-up fear that the planning is being done from the top, with an approach that does not show familiarity with the problems on the ground floor. The problem is not one of creating new posts, but having the right people in the right places. A news team as such is non-existent. Transfers and appointments from assistant station director upwards are outside Doordarshan's control because the ministry must decide. And those below assistant station director too are beyond its control, because here it is All India Radio that decides! Even the tiniest decisions, such as the choice of cricket commentator or the placement of a commercial, sometimes go up to the ministry. And now, the reorganisation, revamping, modernisation and brightening up depend on the ministry's imprimatur too.

—MADHU JAIN

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Luxol Silk. It is the only emulsion paint you can tell with your eyes closed. Just run your fingers over the silken, super-smooth finish.

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Drape your walls with Luxol Silk – the richest emulsion in the world.

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BERGER PAINTS

MAS/(C)/BPLS/31/2720

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When you will settle
for nothing less than
exclusive
gilt-edged value...
the fabric has to be

Raymond's

Royal Gold

merino
fine
extrafine
wool

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First, Neycer sanitaryware Now, Neycer tiles too!

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SHANANDA

Acting Editor

MOVIE star, stage actress, film maker and now editor, 40-year-old Aparna Sen still retains the Midas touch. Her latest venture, the Bengali women's magazine, *Shananda*, published by Calcutta's Ananda Bazar Patrika group, has arrived on the local media scene with as much of a bang as her films. The first issue of the fortnightly appeared in July-end with 70,000 copies and vanished from the stands within days. The next issue with 85,000 copies also sold out. Today, advertisers and distributors are convinced that *Shananda* has already captured a niche in the Bengali media world, assuring the one-time glamour girl another successful debut.

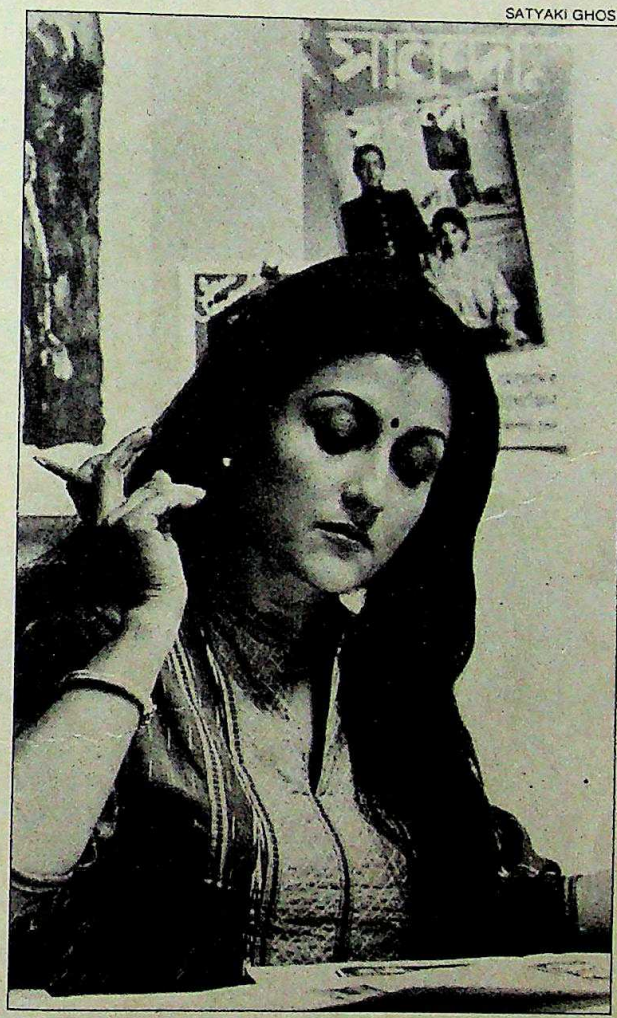
But switching roles after making the super-hit movie *Paroma*, which shocked and titillated Bengal's straight-laced middle class, is proving to be quite a jump even for Sen. "I did not realise what editing a magazine entails," she admits. It is not all fun, as she had initially presumed when Aveek Sarkar, the managing editor of the Ananda Bazar group, offered her the job. "Since I have lent my name to the magazine and the responsibility of the final product is on me, I realised I have to stand by it," she says. And this is proving to be a lot of hard work.

"She is by no means a sleeping editor," testifies *Shananda*'s Chief Reporter Sankarlal Bhattacharya. Though the deal with Ananda Bazar envisaged only a part-time role for Sen, in practice all the major decisions are being taken by her. Says Bhattacharya: "We give her the ideas and she suggests how articles should be handled and personally goes through the more important ones."

Sen, who is currently also playing the lead in *Sharalipi*—a commercial stage production running to full houses since June last year—thus finds herself directing the magazine's affairs from an air-conditioned cubby-hole in the Ananda Bazar office for three days every week. "All my life, I have been in films that require working only in concentrated bursts, but magazine work is continuous. It's really tough to consistently maintain standards," she says, with a trace of fatigue.

Her critics, who are many, are quick to point out that lack of imagination and effort is already beginning to show in the magazine's contents. "*Shananda* is beginning to look just like another film magazine and not a woman's reading," remarks an advertiser. There is some truth in the criticism. The last few covers have been dominated by film personalities, focusing on their private lives and styles. Even the section on interior decoration is unwittingly aimed not so much at the average housewife but at the kind of flamboyant homes associated with filmdom.

SATYAKI GHOSH



Aparna Sen at the *Shananda* office

"It's difficult to guess what readers want, and I have to keep on experimenting, trusting my gut feeling," admits Sen. But she is emphatic in denying that *Shananda* is geared to the very upper class or to women with particular tastes. "The magazine would have become heavy reading if it were left entirely to me," she explains, "but I have to ensure that it appeals to broader tastes." As examples, she cites the cover story on the "Santoshi Mata" phenomenon, as also articles on whether housewives should be paid, on child labour and drugs.

Guessing what Bengali women readers want should not be too difficult for *Shananda*'s editor, considering that she has epitomised the glamorous Bengali woman on the Tollygunje screen for more than a decade. And in making *Paroma*, Sen demonstrated that she is tuned in to Bengali middle class sentiments. The success of *Paroma* testified that the archetype of the average Bengali woman as the paan-chewing, docile matinee show-addict is obsolete. Thus even *Shananda*, says Sen, "is aimed at the aware woman, a woman who is aware of herself as a citizen".

But the movie maker-turned-editor had better keep guessing right. For staying in place will depend on how she tackles the latest threat—another new Bengali women's magazine launched last month by the Allahabad-based Mitra Prakashan. This monthly, *Manorama*, has had as successful a launch as *Shananda*'s and is expected to cross the one-lakh circulation mark within a few months of publication, considering that its first issue sold over 80,000 copies. Aimed at the middle class and even the lower middle class reader, *Manorama* may find a larger market than the more exclusive *Shananda*.

Advertisers, however, remain optimistic. "If *Shananda* can stick to its image of an upper bracket women's magazine, its future is assured," says Sushen Shaha, media director of Hindustan Thompson Associates. What remains uncertain is Aparna Sen's long-term involvement in the magazine. Her first love remains cinema and already the germ of an idea for a fresh movie—on the theme of sati—is brewing in her mind. "Next year, no matter what happens, I am going to start work on my film," she says. At that time Sen may end up as editor only in name, with the actual running of the magazine left to the core *Shananda* staff that she is putting together. But hopefully by then, editing would have become another triumphant notch on her career graph.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

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The Communal Devil

SOME years ago, while studying the phenomenon of possession by spirits in rural north India, I was struck by a curious fact. In a large number of cases, the *bhuta* or evil spirit possessing Hindu men and women, who went for help to village exorcists or to well-known healing temples and shrines, turned out to be a Muslim. When, during the healing ritual, the patient went into a trance and the spirit started expressing its wishes, these wishes invariably turned out to be those which would have been horrifying to the patient's conscious self. In one case, the Muslim spirit possessing an elderly Brahmin priest vigorously insisted on eating *kababs*. The five women surrounding the man who had engaged the *bhuta* in conversation were distinctly disheartened that he had turned out to be a *Sayyad* and one of them lamented: "These Mussulmans! They have ruined our dharma but they are so strong they can withstand our gods." In another case, the *bhuta* inhabiting a young married woman not only expressed derogatory sentiments towards her 'lord and master', but also openly stated its intentions of bringing the mother-in-law to a violent and preferably bloody end.

Possession by a Muslim *bhuta*, then, seemed to reflect the afflicted person's desperate efforts to convince himself and others that his hunger for forbidden foods and uncontrollable rage toward those who should be loved and respected, as well as all other imagined transgressions, sins of the heart, belonged to the Muslim destroyer of taboos and were farthest away from his 'good' Hindu self. In that Muslim *bhutas* were universally considered to be the strongest, the vilest, the most malignant and the most stubborn of the evil spirits, the Muslim seemed to symbolise the alien and the demonic in the unconscious part of the Hindu mind.

Recent events in Punjab, I am afraid, are a prelude to creating yet another major demon in the Hindu psyche of north India. At least in the metropolis where I live, the Sikh as a symbol of violence and unbridled aggression has already begun to enter the average middle class Hindu dream—or nightmare, to be more precise.

Demonic spirits take birth during that part of our childhood when the child, made conscious of good and bad, right and wrong, divine and evil, begins to divide himself into two parts, one that is the judge and the other that is being judged. The unacceptable, condemned parts of the self are expelled outside and attached to various other beings—animal and human, as well as to whole castes and communities. This early split within our nature, which gives us a future licence to view and treat others as if they were no better than the worst in ourselves, is normally completed by the time the child is six to seven years old. As the child grows up into an adult, he further elaborates and fleshes out his private demonology, providing the Muslim demon, and lately the Sikh one, with their *purana*. The *purana* of the Muslim demon, for instance, has nothing to do with Sufi saints, the prophet's sayings or the more profound sentiments of Islam. Instead, its stories are of rape and pillage by the legions of Ghazni and Timur as well as other more local accounts of Muslim mayhem. Similarly, the emerging Sikh demon has tales of Bhindranwale's dark malevolence and the lore of murderous terrorists rather than verses from the *Gurbani*. Although the existence of the demonic *puranas* is rarely acknowledged publicly, they have as much a home in the Hindu imagination as those of Hindu gods.

The fact is that we need our demons as much as our divinities, the sewer as much as the puja-room. If the gods recompense our devotion by making us feel morally upright and good, the demons too increase our feeling of well-being by becoming the containers for our evil, draining away our unavoidable wishes to overcome social conditioning and transgress deeply-held taboos. It is here that we must look for the psychological roots of communalism and its continuing tenacity in all communities—Hindu, Muslim or Sikh—though the latter two are not the subject of this essay. For instance, we do know that Muslims see Hindu *devis* and *devatas* as a numerous, powerful and threatening host of supernatural beings which can be warded off by such sorcery as the driving in of nails at all corners of a room. Best of all, one can protect oneself from the Hindu *bhuta* by being a pious Muslim and by constant proclamations of faith. This, it seems, expresses one of the primary fears of the Indian Muslim—of somehow lapsing from the faith and being reabsorbed by the insidious Hindu society surrounding him wherever he happens to be in the country.

> "If the gods make us feel morally upright, the demons too increase our feeling of well-being by becoming the containers for our evil. It is here that we must look for the roots of communalism and its tenacity in all communities—Hindu, Muslim or Sikh."

Well-meaning educative efforts in the class-rooms or in national integration seminars to bridge the communal divide are for the most part too late and perhaps too little in that they are misdirected. They never frankly address the collective—and mostly subconscious—fears and wishes of the various communities. Demons are neither amenable to 'correct' interpretation of religious texts nor to humanistic pleas for change into good and loving beings. All we can do is to accept their existence but reduce their power by confronting our fantasy of the Muslim and Sikh with the realities of ordinary, everyday Muslim and Sikh lives. What is required in educational strategies is not as much the conveying of information but of insight, a form of knowledge arising out of strong emotional experience and enhancement of empathy.

If our communal demons appeared only in individual dreams and in the possession trance of mental illnesses, we would have little cause for collective concern. Unfortunately, there is one social setting where, under certain conditions, they (communal demons) can vio-

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tly take over our personalities in ups essentially incorporating and ex- essing our religious identity. As part of a wd and in the press of bodies in a *kirtan-ging toli*, a *satsang*, a *sangat* or any her religious congregation, the sensual unding through all bodily avenues on dissolves our sense of individuality d merges us into a single homogeneous ss of flesh.

At first there may be a sense of unease as the body, the container of our individuality and the demarcator our boundaries in space, is sharply nched away from its habitual way of eriencing others. For as we grow up, touch of others, once so berately courted and re- nded to with delight, in- asingly becomes a prob- Coming from a loved touch is deliciously wel- med; with strangers, on the er hand, there is an invol- tary shrinking of the body, r touch taking on the macing air of invasion by other.

But once the fear of touch ppears in the fierce press ther bodies and the indi- ual lets himself become a t of the crowd's density, original apprehension is nsformed into an expan- ness that stretches to in- de the others. Distances differences—of class, sta- age, caste hierarchy— ppear in an exhilarating ing (temporary to be sure) t individual boundaries can indeed be nscended and were perhaps illusory in first place. Of course, touch is only one e sensual stimuli that hammers at the e of individual identity. Other excita- s, channelled through vision, hearing smell, are also very much involved. In tion, there are exchanges of body , muscle tension and body rhythms h take place in a crowd. In short, the d's assault on the sense of individual- s invitation to transcend one's indi- al boundaries and its offer of a free- from personal doubts and anxieties is nigh irresistible.

The problem is that this transcen- e of individuality, perhaps the core of religious quest, not only opens us to influx of the divine but also heightens receptivity to the demonic. The surge ing devotion also washes away the ces against the emergence of archaic hates. Without the rituals which make tradition palpable and without the permanent visibility of religious leaders, whose presence is marked by conspicuous external insignia, religious crowds can easily turn into marauding mobs. Transcending individuality by merging into a group can generate heroic self-sacrifice but also unimaginable brutality. To get out of one's skin in a devotional assembly is at the same time also to have less regard for saving it in a mob.

Religion and community, we are told, are the basis of our civilisation, and perhaps nothing much can be done to prevent the expression of our religious identity through various forms of group action. The values of sceptical individualism are neither intellectually fashionable nor are they attuned to social and cultural realities in the Indian context. As a result, these values cannot be propagated and fostered as a counterweight to religious communal identities.

What can be done is not to actively intervene in the country's cultural life in search of national integration. Thus we need to ensure that any official propagation of culture does not inadvertently increase the self-idealisation of the Hindus, whose traditions constitute an overwhelming part of Indian culture. Such a self-glorification easily becomes defensive and exclusive where, out of pride and defensiveness, existing knowledge is derided, insights denied and possible alternatives ignored. Any pointing out of the so-called deficiencies of western and Islamic civilisations can at best be cautionary. Such comparisons with the Hindu ethos need to be reflected upon in all humility and not become a source of misplaced self-congratulation—the perennial temptation and bane of Hindu intellectual endeavour.

As Hindus, merely a numerical majority for a long time, now become culturally more and more dominant in the nation's life, they have a special responsibility to avoid going the fundamentalist way, not out of altruism but from self-interest. We know that the belief of the dominant party in a relationship often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, involuntarily changing the very consciousness of the weaker partner. Children thought to be intelligent by their teacher, even when this belief has no basis in fact, do indeed become more intelligent; rats, erroneously believed by the experimenter to be bright, learn faster than those labelled as dull. The Hindu image of themselves and other communities is apt to be incorporated in the self-image of non-Hindu minorities. Even when consciously accepted, the denigrating part of the image is likely to be a source of intense unconscious rage in other communities. This rage is stored up over a period of time, till it explodes in all its violent manifestations whenever historical circumstances sanction such eruptions. As Hindus, perhaps unwittingly, seek to establish their cultural traditions as the corner-stone of a national Indian identity, the country seems fated to go through a long spell wherein our various collective *bhuta* are unleashed.

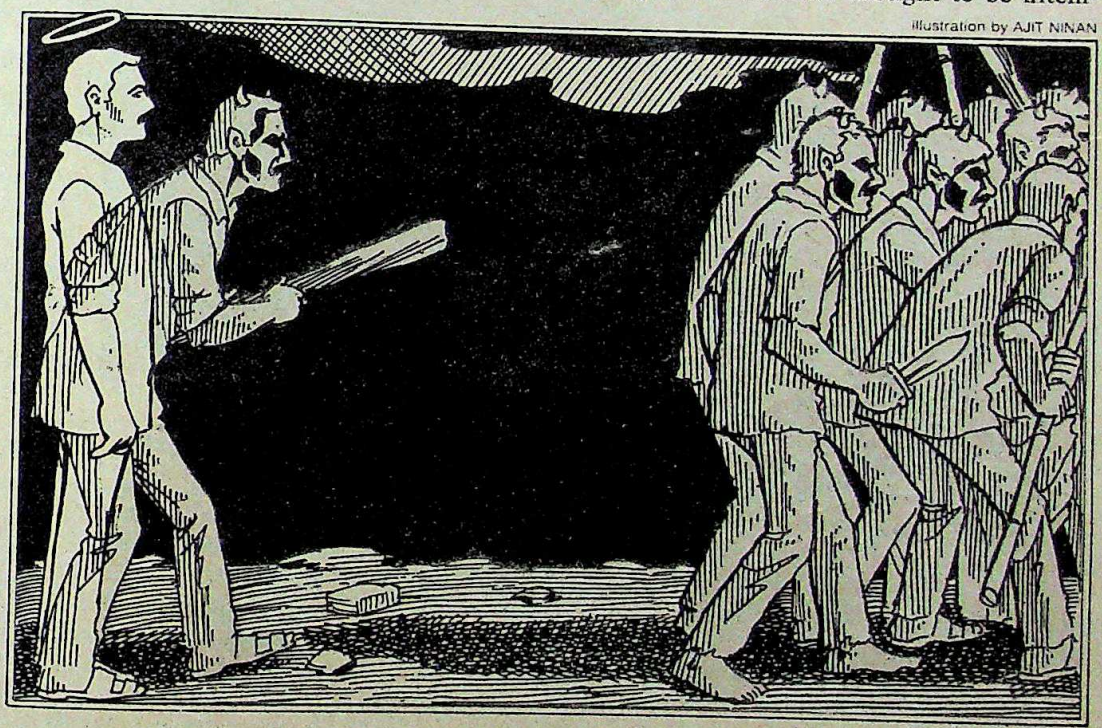

Illustration by AJIT NINAN

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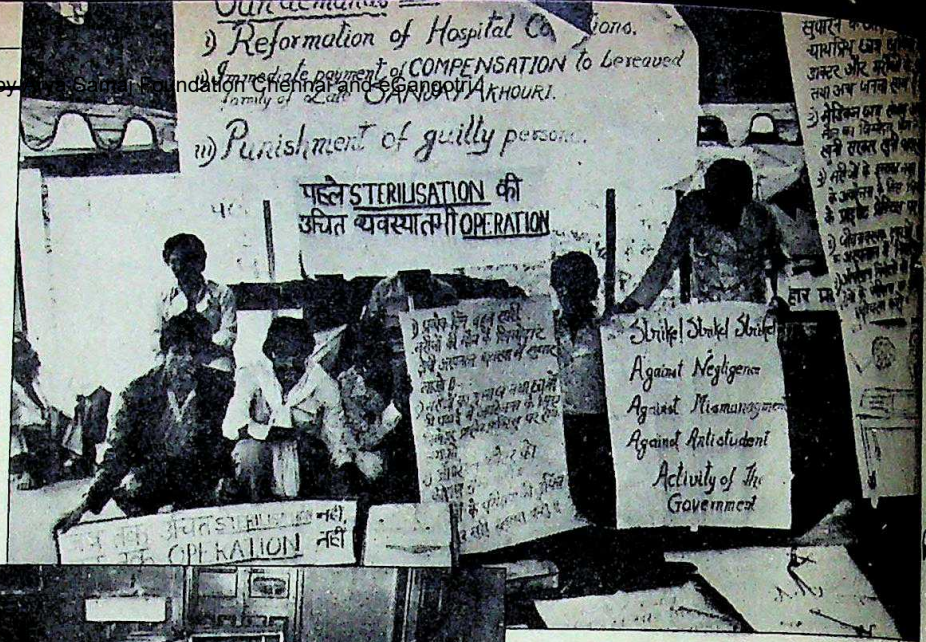
BIHAR

Ban Battle

AT the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi after his gall-bladder operation in August, Bihar Chief Minister Bindeshwari Dubey had told his aides casually: "Look, I am going back and now I will use some bitter pills to cure the ills of Bihar." Last fortnight he prescribed his first bitter pill—he banned private practice by government doctors.

But it was a pill that proved more bitter than expected, provoking a strong reaction. Bihar Congress(I) Medical Cell General Secretary Baidyanath Mishra lashed out at the Government decision: "It is like administering the wrong medicine to a patient." Added Bihar Health Service Association (BHSA) General Secretary Gopal Prasad Sinha: "This is a gimmick to divert public attention. No one will benefit—neither the doctors, nor the public nor the Government."



Photographs by K.M. KISHAN

Agitating doctors; and (left) Patna Medical College operation theatre: deplorable conditions

Predictably, the BHSA and 37 other leading doctors went to court even as the teacher-doctors of the state's nine medical colleges went on a three-month protest leave from October 1—one day before the ban was to take effect. Challenging the ban as violative of several articles of the Constitution as well as Rule 3-A of the Bihar Service Code, the doctors contended that the ban discriminated against the medical college teachers and got a stay order.

Observed Justice Ali Ahmed and Justice S.B. Sanyal of the division bench of the Patna High Court: "To us it appears that to put a ban on private practice will not be advantageous to ailing members of the society. Their inconvenience may increase and hospitals may not be able to render efficient medical care." The court also ordered the setting up of a panel to examine the condition of medical college hospitals.

The court verdict came as a shot in the arm for the agitated medical community which had already succeeded in securing a major concession—the sanctioning of the University Grants Commission's (UGC) pay scales for medical college teachers. Besides this the Dubey Government also sanctioned Rs 5 crore for the upgradation of hospital equipment and appointed a committee to suggest need-based improvements in the medical college hospitals.

Three days later the doctors returned to work with the warning that if their remaining demands were not conceded they would resort to agitation once again. Said Sinha of BHSA: "We have reciprocated the human-interest verdict of the high court, not the Government's decision to grant us UGC pay scales. That hardly touched even the fringe of our problems." Added BHSA chief Ramajanam Singh: "The doctors' demands include the computing of their salary on a UGC scale that takes into account their duty hours and number of working days, payment of additional dearness allowance, interim relief and time-bound promotion."

However, the Government was not ready to give up the battle. Said Health Minister Dinesh Kumar Singh: "The Government is determined to ban private practice and improve the overall health care."

The doctors argue that the ban is no solution. According to them the already unfavourable patient-doctor and the patient-bed ratio will deteriorate further and outdoor and indoor patient queues will lengthen. Operations were expected to be another major casualty with critical patients lying in limbo.

BHSA officials said that at Patna Medical College Hospital no facilities are available for even routine pathological tests. They charge that neglect has affected the college's costly medical equipment, worth over Rs 3 crore and that there is no facility for research work.

Said Ramajanam Singh: "There is no health administration worth the name in the state." Sixty per cent of the state's 6,000-odd government doctors are still to be confirmed, though some of them were recruited as far back as 1976. Many senior posts have been lying vacant for years. These include five posts of additional director, five posts of joint director, one post of drug controller, six posts of deputy director and 11 posts of regional deputy director, among numerous others. Of the nine medical colleges, seven have no principals and about 300 teaching posts are vacant. Recently the Government found that 350 doctors were working abroad on unauthorised leave.

Singh claimed that ever since he took over as health minister he has been fighting with officials to streamline the department's working. Recently, the Government raised the per head provision for diet and medicines in all government hospitals, and also ordered an inquiry into the equipment rusting at hospitals. How far these measures will benefit the patients remains to be seen. So while the Government and the doctors are locked in a battle over private practice, patients needing medical care in Bihar remain a most unfortunate lot.

—FARZAND AHMED

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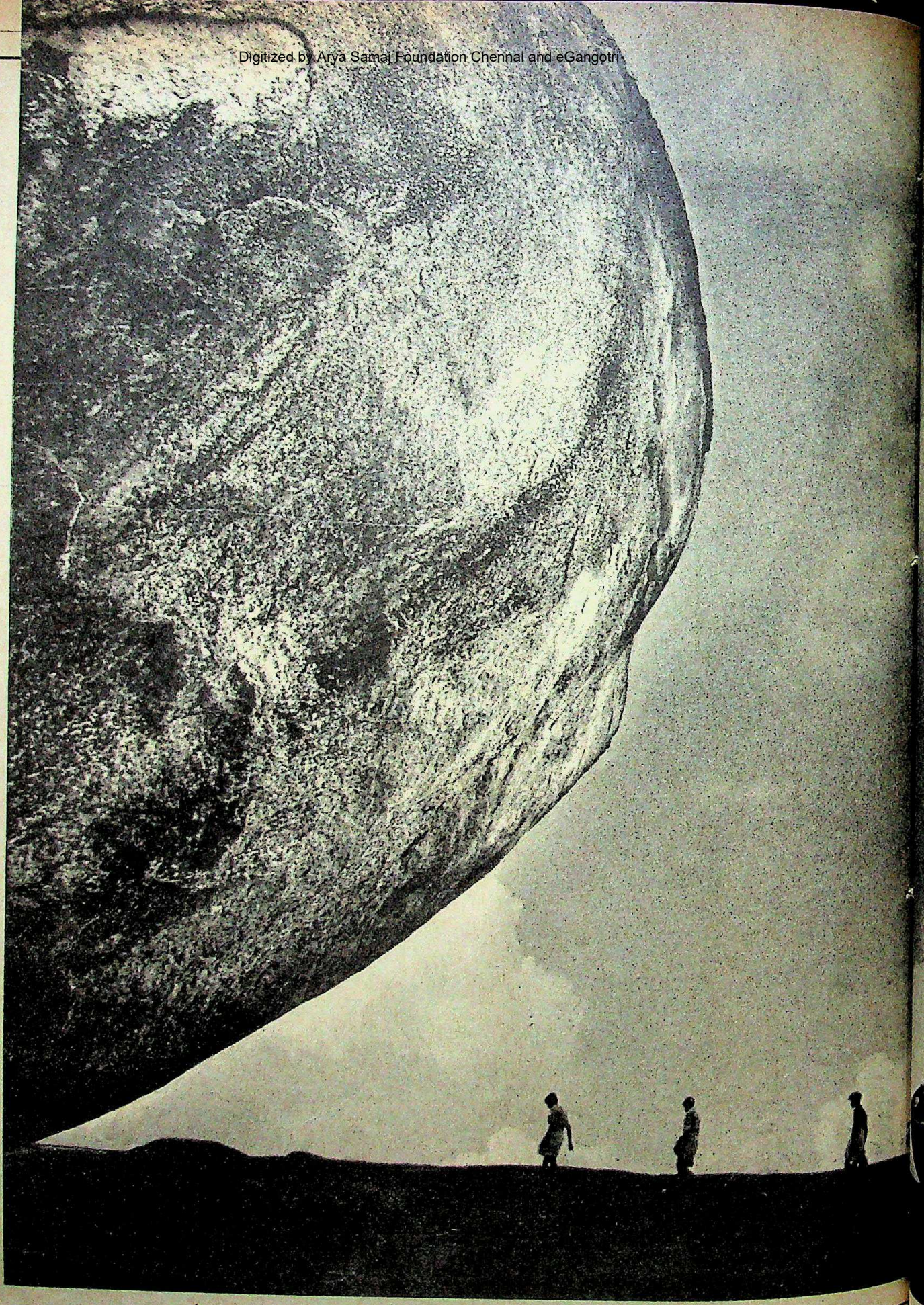

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PHOTO ESSAY BY RAGHU RAI

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S. BALACHANDER

A Divine Talent

S. Balachander, 60, is the unchallenged king of the veena on which he plays Carnatic music with dazzling virtuosity. He was interviewed by Features Editor INDERJIT BADHWAR for the continuing series of photo essays on the great masters of Indian art and music.

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THE microphone picks up and amplifies the sound of his sobbing which at times drowns out the song of the veena he is playing in a New Delhi concert hall. For 15 minutes S. Balachander has been nursing an intricate melodic weave in Raga Lalita. He and his veena weep together. "*Andavane*," Balachander whispers. "*Andavane*." (Everything is the blessing of god). Over and over he repeats the word. He stops in the middle of his performance. The raga, he says, has been performed very rarely. "By not playing such ragas," he tells his audience, "how much we are missing sharing with you. What sin did this raga commit to deserve the fate of not being shared with the world more often?" He thunders even as his voice breaks. Then slowly his eyes turned heaven-ward, he stares blindly into space and resumes the recital.

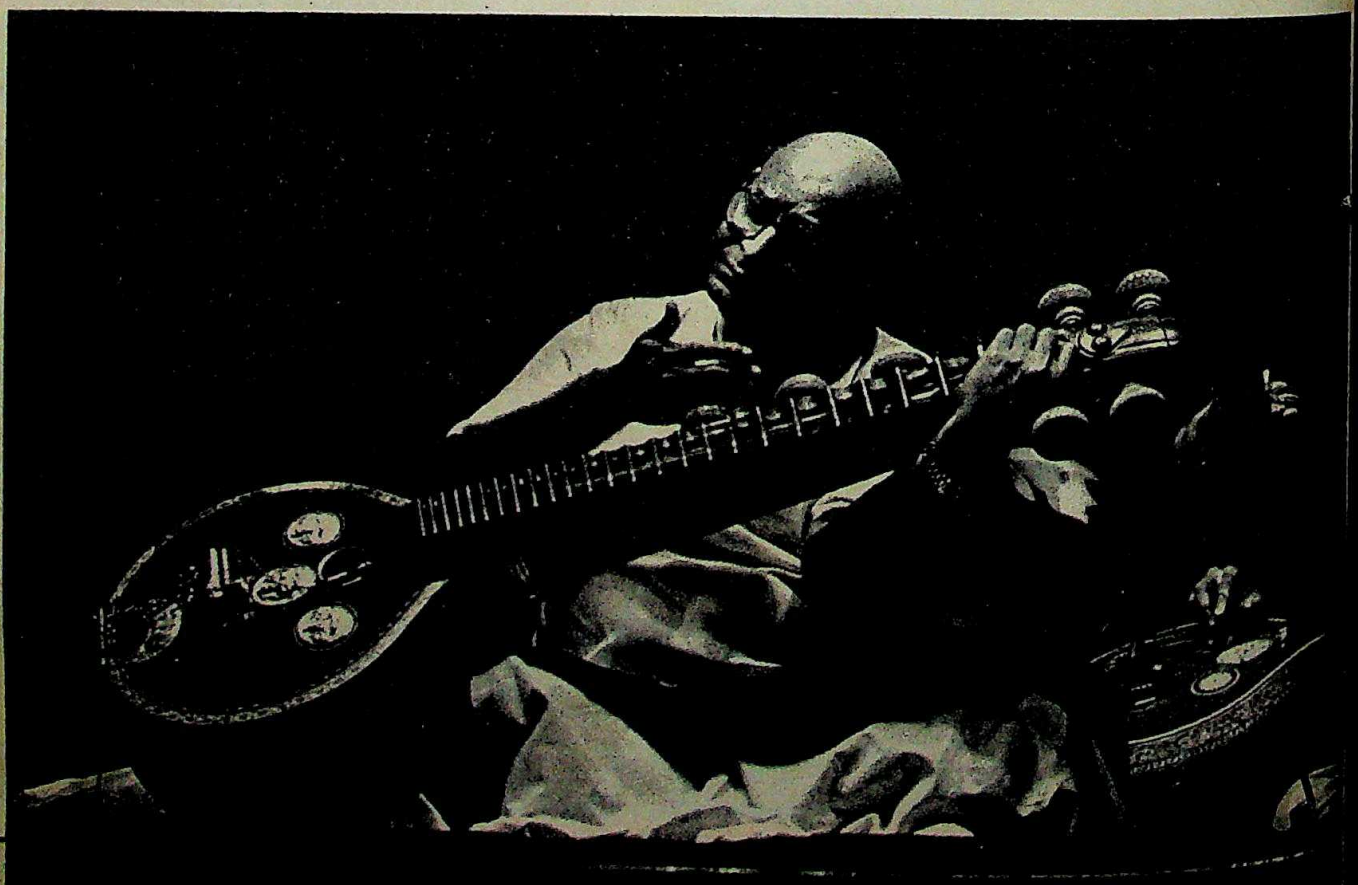
Balachander is a man given to both jovial, hearty laughter as well as to instant tears. Both, he says, are the products of prayer. His incessant utterance of *andavane* during a performance, he says, "is my beseeching guidance of the raga *devatas*. 'What shall I do now?' I ask them. Or I thank them for taking me to heights I've never known. Sometimes I don't know where I'm going when I'm playing, and I ask them to show me the way. Or if I have gone wrong somewhere I'm asking their forgiveness for having made an ass of myself." For him life ceases to have any meaning without his incessant conversation with the gods of music because, as he says, "they chose me for this duty on earth. To take their music, to take the music of the Vedas to earth through this divine instrument. What I am doing was ordained."

He expresses his sense of divine duty in totally matter-of-fact conversation. There is no braggadocio. But he is keenly conscious of his artistic burden. "It is a blessing. And one should assert the blessing. One should say, I *have* been blessed, not that I *think* I've been blessed. But in that assertion there shall not be any ego, only humility with which we should express our gratitude. We are fortunate to be in a position to feel this." The brutal simplicity with which he eloquently expresses the core of his metaphysical being also helps him remain remarkably free of many of the existential dilemmas which generally haunt great artistes. He is rarely troubled by doubts about his place in contemporary Indian classical music, about the heights he has reached as an individual and about the completion of his life's journey.

"My satisfaction," he says, "is immensely full because I've been faithful to the *sur devatas*. I have never cheated the musical expectation of the gods. They gave me talent and asked me to do certain penance. If I can play the veena with true *sruti*, then where is the problem of attaining *moksha*? In my music I'm always reaching out for the salvation I've been promised, and I have full faith in the gods that they won't let me down. Every single twang of a musical note contains hundreds of prayers. When I play a raga I am praying at the feet of a deity. Where I stand or oscillate on a note is a part of that prayer. It is an intense sense of surrender. It is always a source of wonderment to me why I was chosen from among thousands of talented people. Why did the imprint of the divine musical being come to this mundane soul? Forgive me if I sound proud but the veena is about 3,000 years old. There are references to it in the Vedas. The sitar is 300 years old and came into being about the time Amir Khusro lived. The sitar is a great grand disciple of the veena."

Balachander is the first of his own gharana. There was

"I do not practice before a performance. I don't really know what I'll play. I leave it to the moment. I'm a man of the moment. The gods will guide me."



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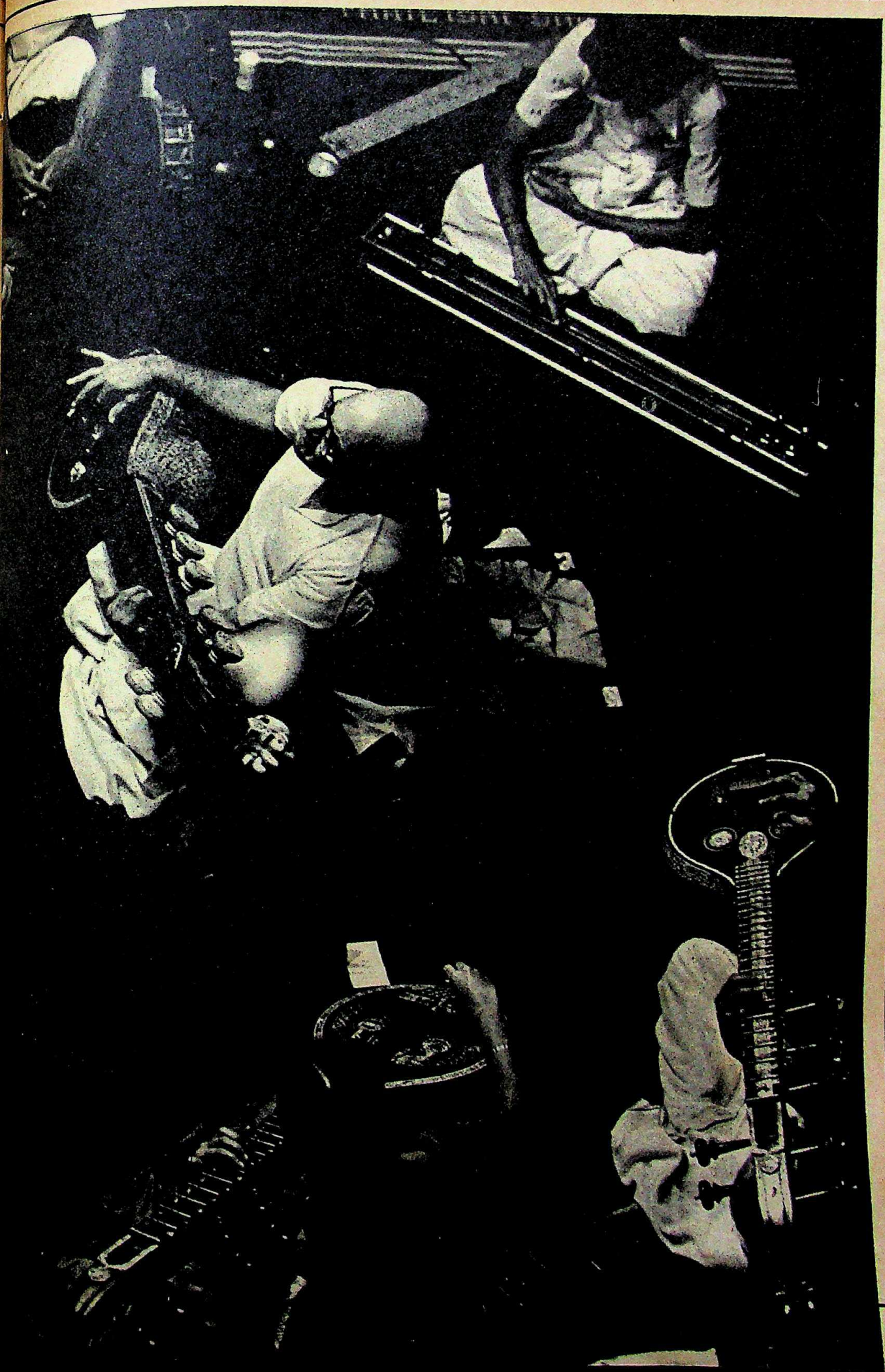

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never any single guru, no lineage, no tradition he could follow. "I learned," he says, "by listening." He was an infant in Madras. His father, a lawyer devoted to Carnatic music, spent whatever paltry sums he earned on inviting musicians, mostly vocalists, to live and perform in his house. His elder brother was learning to sing, "but I was always the intense listener. I never opened my mouth." When he was five, a musician presented him with a *kanjira*, a tambourine, which he mastered quickly. And at the age of six he was accompanying musicians in concerts on his percussion drum. A year later, movie-maker V. Shantaram, who had heard him play, presented him with a pair of tablas and featured him in *Sita Kalayanam* in which his brother played Rama, his sister Sita and his father, Janaka. By the age of nine Balachander was singing and playing the harmonium. When he had just turned 10 he was accompanying his vocalist brother on the tabla at a concert in Karachi. During the intermission, a lady who had listened to him in fascination went home and "did something which was to change my entire life," he recalls.

"She had purchased a sitar for her son who had never used it. It had been junked in the attic. Its strings were broken and the frets were rusted. But after the concert she presented it to me with great tenderness. The sitar, literally, was thrust on me. I had never played the instrument but I used to listen to Ustad Inayat Khan (father of Vilayat Khan) play over the radio. I had the sitar repaired in Madras and began playing Carnatic music on it. All that was pent up and bottled up inside me, the musical treasures which had been stored in that young heart just came pouring out. It was ordained. It had to be ordained. It had just never entered my mind to buy or play a sitar, leave alone a veena. Within a year I was performing concerts on the sitar. There were about half a dozen good veena players. I used to listen to them

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forming Carnatic music but I always found something sing in their playing. Because I was also a gayaka ger), I found the sense of *gayaki* missing from their ring. Their instruments seemed to twang and not to g. The sound was staccato. They seemed to be missing e glides so essential to Carnatic music."

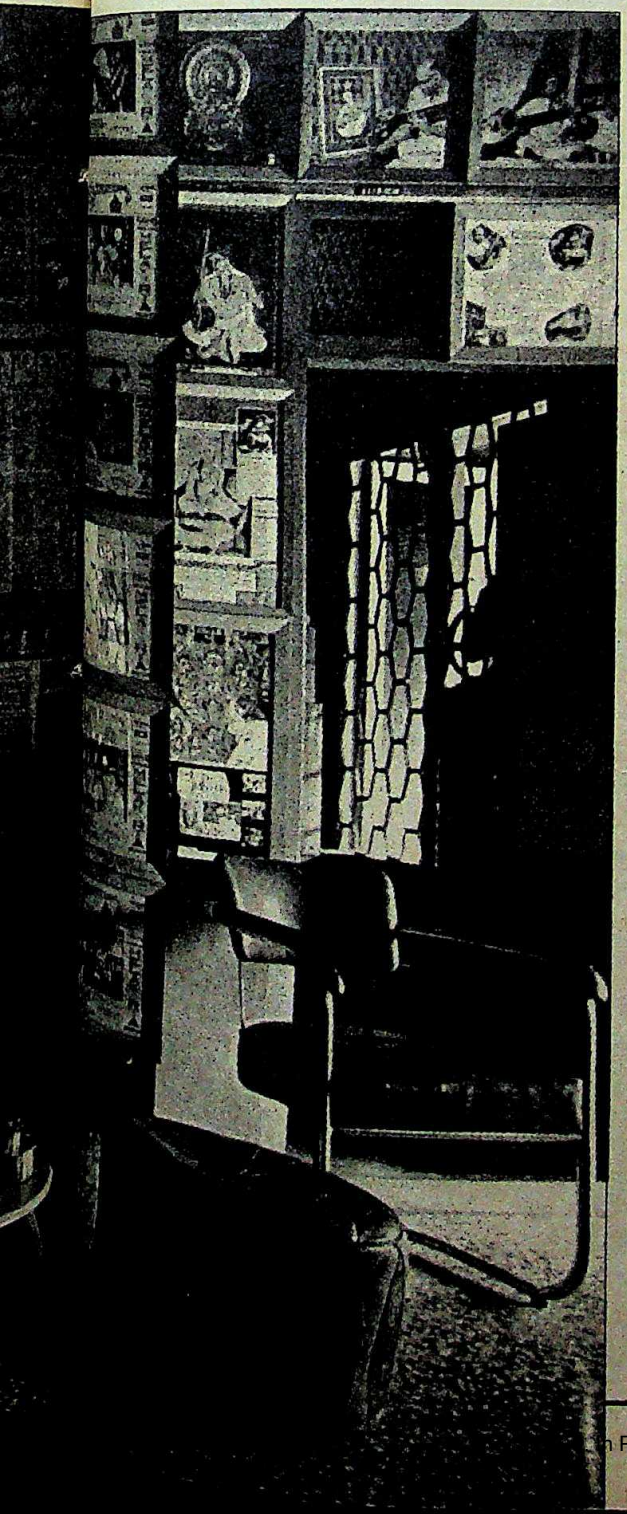
CARNATIC music, he explains, has more *ghamaka* (gliding and oscillation) than Hindustani classical music. "I tried to incorporate this through the sitar but I could not really succeed. I realised that the sitar is not meant to duce Carnatic music. The note of a sitar dies down far abruptly. What I needed was a more elongated note h a single stroke."

In order to express his *gayaki* style in music, he says, "I to choose the veena. It was as if it were beckoning to The sitar helped me as a diving board to plunge into the ocean of the veena. Wasn't this ordained? There have been veenas in the south for centuries. There must have been veenas in my neighbourhood since my childhood. But it was through the sitar that I discovered the potential of the veena to satisfy the needs of Carnatic music."

Balachander considers himself a "strict classicist" in the tradition of Vilayat Khan and the late Nikhil Bannerji. "I proudly proclaim myself a complete traditionalist. I am not prepared to enter into fusion, or jazzify my music or suit my ragas to meet the needs of the audience. A divine art cannot be compromised. When I play I explore my inner soul. In my audience only a small percentage will be receptive to my wavelength. But I am also concerned about the others who are not up to the same level of reception. It is my duty, through this music, to elevate their sense of appreciation by reaching out to them and help them come up and blossom as listeners.

"Some people pander to their audiences through fusion music and *jugalbandis*. Meaningless music has taken deep root, music which misses the purity and innocence of god. Artists who indulge in fusion music are those who have been failures in their basic approach. They have been unable to be true to what they started with and so they took a diverted route through which they found treasures on the commercial level. A duet with

"I'm a proud traditionalist. I cannot jazzify my music or fashion my ragas to meet the needs of the audience. A divine art cannot be compromised."



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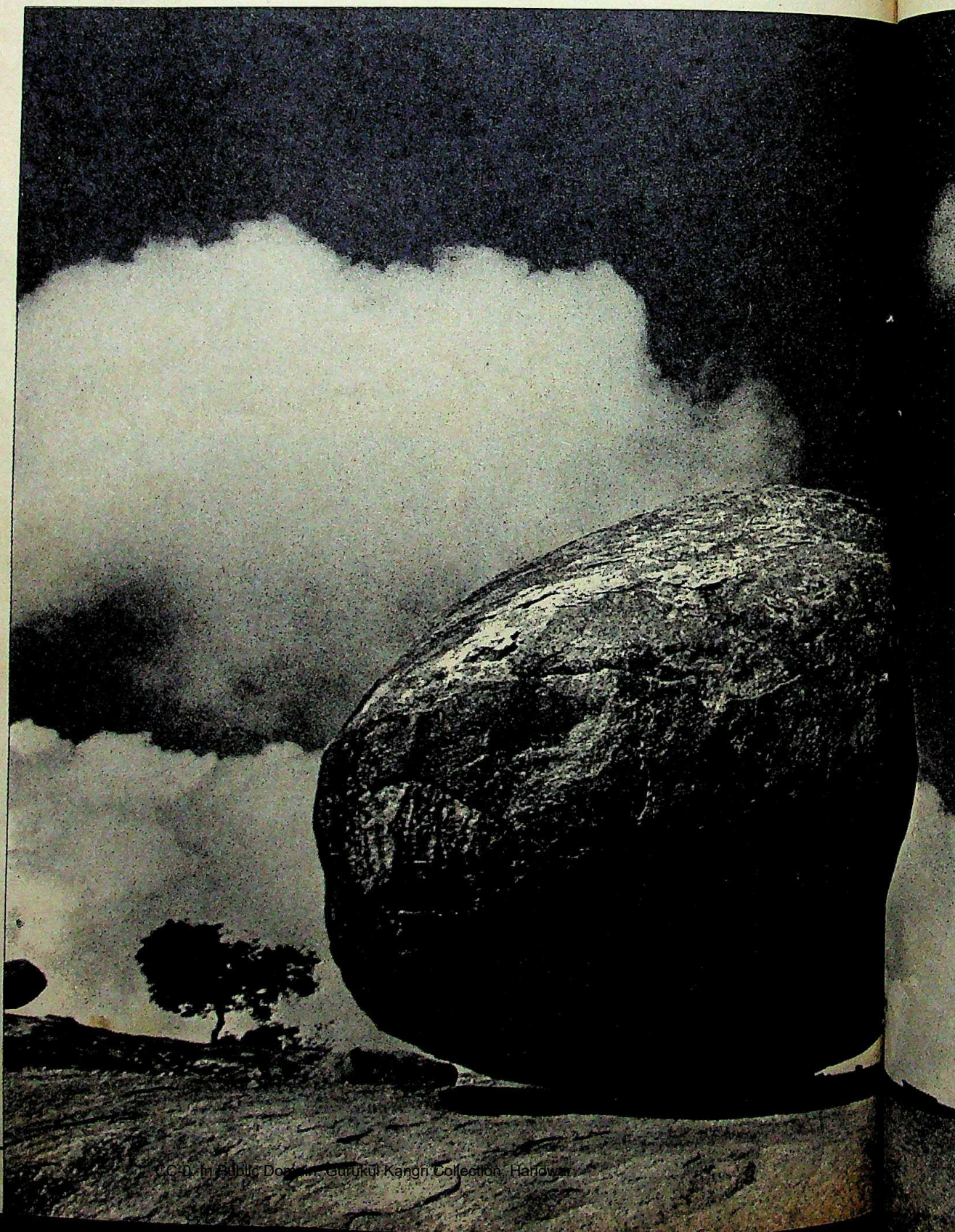
Yehudi Menuhin can bring you gold discs, but how much of it is a contribution to our tradition?"

Tradition, he explains simply, is "oneness with one's own spiritual identity" and it cannot be made into an exercise in musical populism. "Look at the goddess Meenakshi and Lord Balaji. To make them more appealing to the modern age do you dress up Lord Balaji in a Pierre Cardin suit? We have to accept the deity and divinity in its original form and ornamentation, which in itself has infinite variety and which is impossible for us to analyse even in a full lifetime."

And he has no insecurities about not leaving behind, after his death, any definite compositional piece of work. "Symphonic works," he says, "are great works. But they

"The gods chose me to take the music of the Vedas to earth through this divine instrument. What I am doing was ordained. I have been blessed."



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ing to a different school where prepared matter ters the most. But to me the unprepared matter ters far more. Everything is improvisation. What my ic will be doesn't worry me. What is important to me that I satisfy my conscience and stay true to my tions, to my very being."

Two hours before a major concert, Balachander es on a bed in a modest New Delhi guest-house. On other bed, covered with a blue cloth with faded gold embroidery, rests his veena, "my constant companion at whose feet I have placed myself". He is not anxious about the concert to follow. "I do not practise before a performance," he says. "I am not even thinking about it. I don't know what I'll play. I leave it to the moment. I'm a man of the moment. The gods will guide me." And that evening when he played, starting with Raga Machaspati and ending, tearfully, with Raga Lalita, the *sur devatas* had answered Balachander's prayer. *Andavane.*

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SURVIVING MUGHALS

Disputing the Inheritance

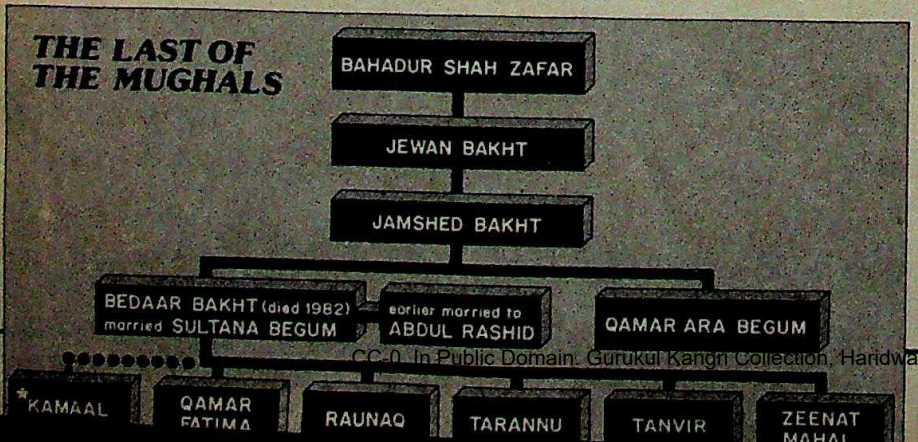
LOST in the steamy slums of Calcutta is a relic of history, the last surviving link of the most powerful ruling dynasty that medieval India produced and which for two centuries was the sole arbiter of its fate. It is the blue-blooded Mughal family, now bereft of all trappings of grandeur, power or riches that the Mughal name symbolised. The sole financial legacy of that past glory is a Rs 400 monthly pension, which too has become clouded in controversy following sordid wrangling between the claimants.

Reduced years ago to slum dwellers, the last of the mighty Mughals have been waging a sorry battle to keep the tattered memories of their imperial glory intact. Mirza Mohammad Bedaar Bakht, the last officially recognised direct male descendant of the Mughals who died in penury six years ago in Calcutta, would often revert to the Mughal style in a pathetic attempt to relive his past glory. Recalls Amitabh Chaudhury, a senior editor of a Calcutta daily: "Bedaar Bakht would occasionally come to our office dressed in splendid shervanis, twirling his majestic cane and holding a rose." But today his wife Sultana Begum has no queenly pretensions. She has moved in with a Sikh in a Howrah slum and her only desire is to see the Government pension pass on to her only son, Kamaal, who she says is Bedaar's son.

Opposing her claims are Bedaar's two daughters—Qamar Fatima and Raunaq. Living with their father's old friend Iqbal Azmi, they claim that Kamaal was born of a previous marriage and hence cannot lay claim to the fabled Mughal name. "Sultana Begum wants to perpetrate a fraud on history by installing her son in the Mughal lineage," adds Azmi, editor of an Urdu weekly, who supported Bedaar and his family for 38 long years. They claim that Sultana Begum was first married to a tailor called Abdul Rashid and that her marriage certificate proves this. Azmi has

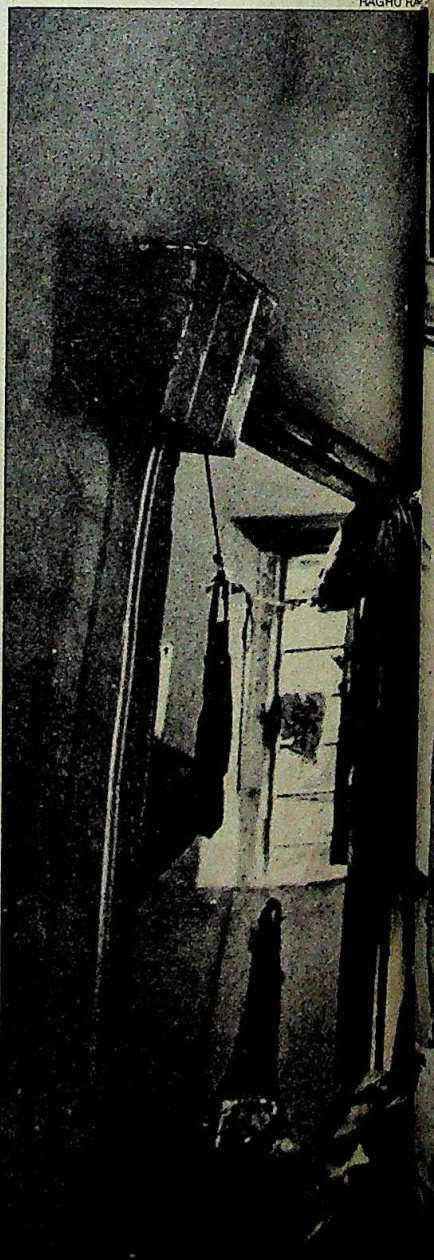
Reduced years ago to the pathetic status of slum dwellers, the last of the Mughals have been waging a sorry battle amongst themselves to keep the tattered memories of their imperial glory intact.

KALAYAN CHAKRABORTY



Sultana Begum and Kamaal; and (below left) Raunaq and Fatima: dynastic row

RAGHU RAI



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petitioned the Government to inquire into Sultana Begum's claims, demanding that either the pension be transferred to Bedaar's oldest daughter Qamar Fatima, or she also be granted a pension.

While the Government is yet to respond to this plea, Bedaar's two older daughters continue to live in abject poverty, sharing box-like windowless rooms with Azmi in a slum near Entally. The girls are uneducated, untrained in any craft and uncertain about their future. But at least, says Azmi, they have not ended up as maidservants as their mother wished. says Fatima: "Now we only wish that our three younger sisters — Tarannu, Anvir and Zeenat Mahal—could escape from our mother's clutches." Tarannu is alleged to have been given away by Sultana Begum to her Sikh paramour's friend in Delhi and only threats from Fatima could persuade her mother to secure her return.

"It is tragic to see the descendants of one of our most glorious dynasties reduced to this state," laments Azmi, who has devoted all his life to petitioning on their behalf. The injustice is all the greater, he says, considering that most erstwhile nawabs and rajas continue to hold on to their ancestral property. Even the descendants of Mir Jafar, whose betrayal paved the way for British rule in India, to this day own a palatial building in Calcutta's Park Street. But the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, after the 1857 War of Independence, was not only stripped of his property, including Delhi's Red Fort, but banished to Rangoon along with his wife, Begum Zeenat Mahal and only surviving son, Prince Jewan Bakht.

BAHADUR SHAH and Jewan Bakht spent their lives in captivity and it was only in 1902 that the British Indian Government lifted restrictions on them, following protests by liberal British parliamentarians. Jamshed Bakht, son of Prince Jewan Bakht, thus got freedom and a princely monthly pension of Rs 450. Jamshed married twice and kept a mistress in between and sired two sons—one legitimate and the other illegitimate. The legitimate son, Bedaar Bakht, was born of Jamshed's second wife, Begum Nadir Jehan, on December 21, 1920.

With Jamshed's death in 1921, the British Government discontinued the pension and instead granted a petty allowance of Rs 16 per month to his legitimate son, Bedaar. Two years later, Bedaar's uncle took the impecunious prince and his sister Qamar Ara Begum to Delhi to request the Government to resume the pension. But British intelligence arrested Bedaar's uncle and released him only on the condition that he meet no Congress leader or disclose his nephew's identity. On the advice of Khwaja Hasan Nizami, a local Muslim leader, the uncle with his two young wards came to Calcut-

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ta and moved into the historic Shahi Imambara. From then on Bedaar started receiving the sum of Rs 50 as pension from the British Government, Rs 50 from the Nizam of Hyderabad and Rs 100 from the Nizamuddin Aulia Trust of Delhi.

BUT so paranoid was Bedaar of the British intelligence that he remained incognito for years. Azmi, who studied in the same school as Bedaar, says: "None of us knew that Bedaar was the descendant of the Mughals. The only thing that intrigued us was the fact that on the first of every month he would dress up like a king and spend money liberally." Bedaar's royal lineage became known when his classmates followed him to the Imperial Bank one day and discovered that he received a monthly pension for being the descendant of the Mughals. So overwhelmed was Azmi by the discovery that he persuaded Bedaar to move in with his family instead of living on the verandahs of the Imambara. After Independence, thanks largely to Azmi's writings, the Indian Government granted Bedaar a monthly pension of Rs 400.

But for Bedaar this sum was barely enough to support his wife and children. He spent his life sunk in depression, occasionally composing poems. Kamaal who believes that he is Bedaar's own son, recalls: "Walid saheb (father) would hardly meet anybody and would spend most of his time reading holy books and praying till late at night." And it was only on occasional visits to Amitabh Chaudhury or at a poetry conference that Bedaar Bakht would try to relive his Mughal ancestry.

Bedaar's stepbrother Sikander, who had remained behind in Rangoon, got a somewhat better deal, although he was an illegitimate son born from Jamshed Bakht's mistress, Halima Bibi. When Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose arrived in Burma in 1941, he financed the building of a mausoleum over Bahadur Shah Zafar's tomb. Sikander was given money to establish a general store and he lived in relative comfort till his death six months ago. Unfortunately, he also left no male child behind, and with Bedaar also dying without an undisputed male heir—controversy clouding Kamaal's claims—the line of Mughal males may well have ended.

However, charges Azmi, "today the legacy of the Mughals has been usurped by Sultana Begum and her Sikh partner and they are making money at the cost of the five true daughters of Bedaar Bakht". They have been receiving donations from various organisations and individuals for being a Mughal, he adds.

But Sultana Begum is anything but cowed. Says she: "It is Azmi who is after my money and has been threatening me for a long time. Only Parvan Singh gives us money to suppport us while the rest of the community just condemns me." According to her, Azmi has stolen all her documents and photographs and is trying to deny her son the rightful legacy. Tarannu, she says, was given to Parvan Singh's friend and not sold. "I am trying to give my daughters a decent life. But who is there to help me?" she asks. Her son, frustrated by poverty, is planning to migrate to Saudi Arabia.

As the unedifying drama continues, with both Sultana Begum and her daughters staking claim to the pension, the last of the Mughals have rightly realised that there is not much in a name, even if it is the Mughal name. Says Sultana: "What is the use of the Mughal name if we can't get enough to eat?" Indeed, it is an unenviable legacy and not many would like to inherit it.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

"What is the use of the Mughal name if we can't get enough to eat?"

SULTANA BEGUM, *widow of Bedaar Bakht*

Photographs by RAGHU RAI

"The legacy of the Mughals has been usurped by Sultana Begum and her partner. They are making money at the cost of Bedaar Bakht's daughters."

IQBAL AZMI, *a friend of Bedaar Bakht*

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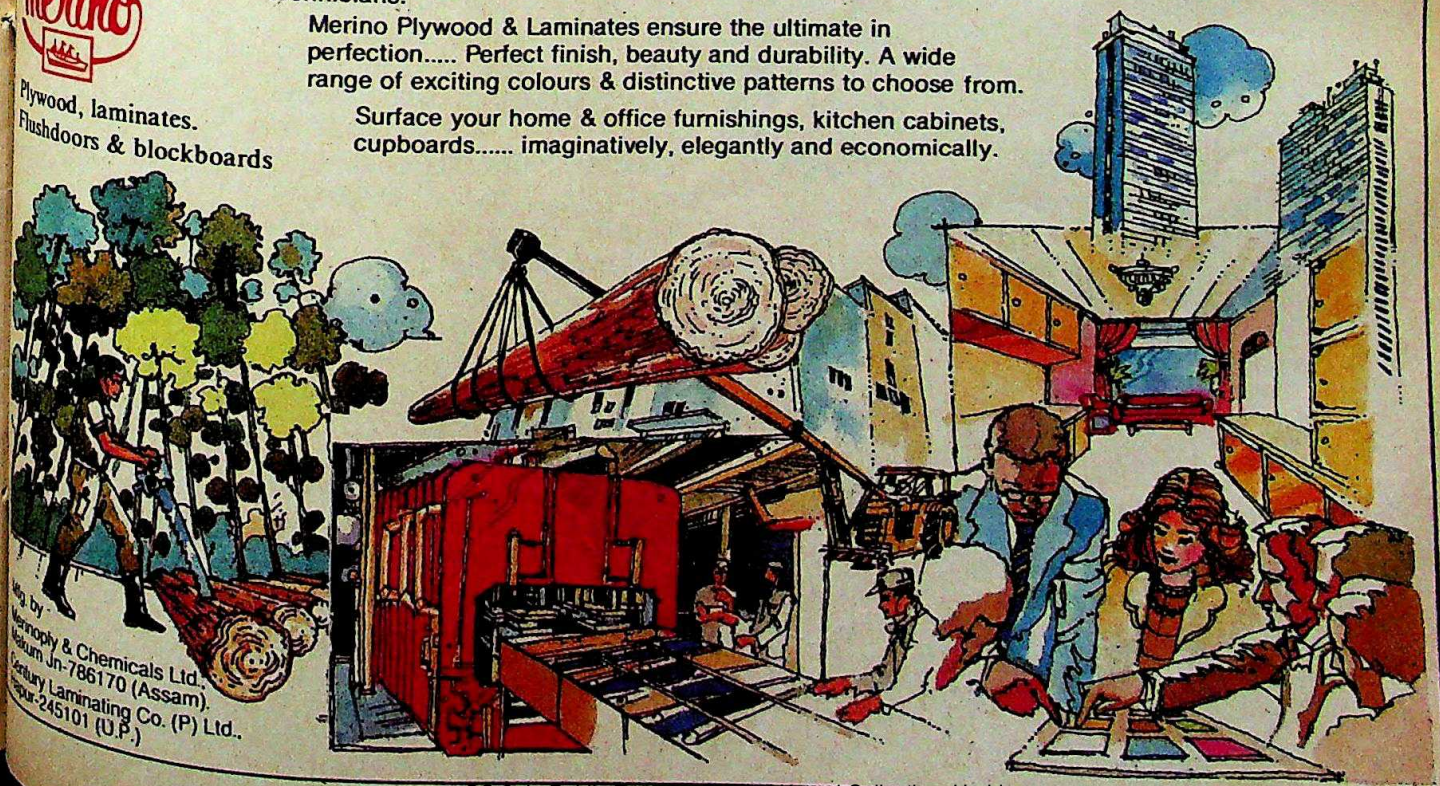

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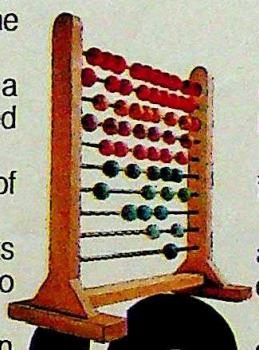

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THE DANIELLS

Lasting Images

PRECISELY 200 years after Thomas Daniell and his nephew William set foot in Calcutta to begin what was to become a European discovery of India, a commemorative exhibition of their work reveals its enduring fascination for the contemporary Indian as for the 18th and 19th century European. A collection of original Daniells at Calcutta's Victoria Memorial has been dug out of storage for the exhibition, which opened in Calcutta last month and comprises some of their finest oils, water and colour aquatints. The Victoria Memorial has the world's largest single collection of Daniells, valued conservatively at over a million pounds (Rs 1.8 crore).

There are a total of 66 displays including a portrait of Thomas Daniell by David Wilkie from the Tate Gallery and one of William Daniell by R. Westall from the Royal Academy Library. The oils displayed have been painstakingly restored and among the 44 original works on display are 12 fully restored oils on canvas, 28 water colours and sketches and 16 aquatints from the memorial's collections of *Oriental Scenery* and *The Views of Calcutta*. The other paintings are photocopies.

"Original Daniells are a rarity because only about 150 of the 500-odd paintings they are believed to have produced are traceable today," says Victoria Memorial's Chief Art Restorer, Arun Ghosh. The prices of Daniells are, therefore, rising steadily. Five years ago, an original discovered by a British farmer sold at Christie's for £40,000. According to art critic Pranab Ranjab Ray, however, "the present-day value of Daniells is the 'historicity' of their work and not any artistic genius".

When the Daniells arrived in India in 1786, the English were ensconced in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. And the colonials' tall tales of the fabulous land they were conquering were shrouded in myth and rumour. Photography had yet to be invented and Indians hadn't yet learnt the art of landscape painting. It was the Daniells' efforts, aided by mass-produced aquatint prints, that provided Englishmen with the first startling glimpses of this mysterious subcontinent.

The Daniells' landscapes were unmistakably in the style of the English school of landscape painting—of Reynolds, Gainsborough and Turner—down to the shape and the texture of the trees. "Most of their trees resembled common English trees and they painted Indian trees, like the palms and the banyan, only when they specifically focussed their attention on them," says Ghosh.

Their chief artistic merit and the reason why Daniells are highly sought after today, was their perfection of the colour aquatint process. "It was this technical achievement that gave the Daniells an edge over other English painters," explains Ghosh. Equally good painters—George Farington, John Zoffany, Thomas Hickey, John Alefonder, Arthur William Davis, John Smart—did not achieve a fraction of the celebrity status the Daniells did.

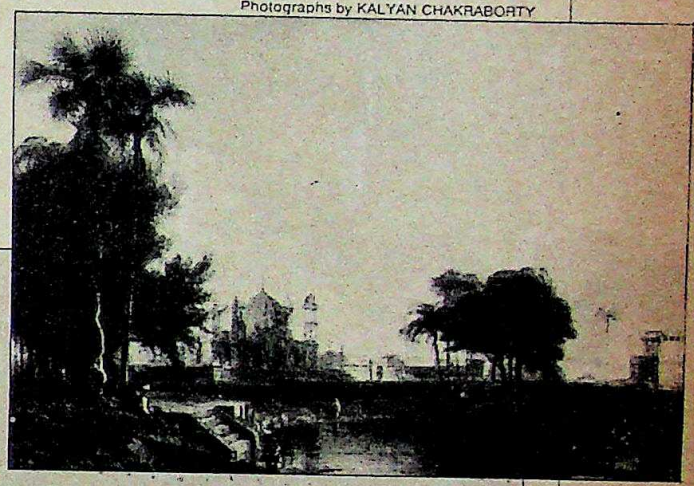
A collection of original Daniells at Calcutta's Victoria Memorial has been dug out of storage for the exhibition. This museum has the world's largest collection valued at over Rs 1.8 crore.

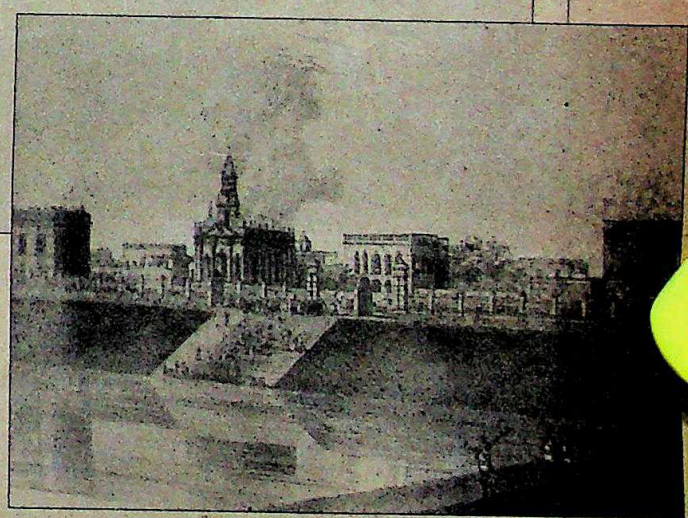
Using resin and acid, the Daniells devised a means to etch lines and tones on copper plates to reproduce their paintings on a mass scale. Each aquatint plate could be used to "print" over 100 reproductions. Yet, each aquatint is considered as good as an original because the "prints" had to be individually hand-coloured and hence each had subtle differences from the others.

The Daniells travelled extensively all over the country, returning to England in 1794. Between 1795 and 1808, they produced their famous six-volume collection of *Oriental Scenery*. Despite the stupendous price of 200 guineas, the set was a sell-out and the painters instant successes. "In these views," remarked the artist Turner, "the East was as clearly reflected as the moon in the lake." The artists have "succeeded in increasing our enjoyment by bringing scenes to our firesides, too distant to visit, and too singular to be imagined...." The East became a rage and one lord hired Thomas Daniell to recreate a Hindu house and landscape.

The East might no longer be a rage in England, and the Indian landscape might have changed beyond recognition. But the scenes they captured—the river ghats, temples shaded by overhanging trees, boats rowed by turbaned coolies, the mosques, palaces and the stretches of languid landscape—endure. Even the Festival of India was not complete without the Daniells' views.

Photographs by KALYAN CHAKRABORTY





View near Najibabad (top); and the great tank, Calcutta

Although the paintings exhibited are some of the Daniells' best works, many of their rare and lesser known works with the memorial have not been displayed owing to lack of space (part of the gallery is affected by a leaking roof) and the need to restore many paintings before they can be displayed. The exhibition could have been bigger and better publicised. But at least this is one of the rare events when outsiders can get to see some of the treasures stacked inside the vaults of the memorial.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

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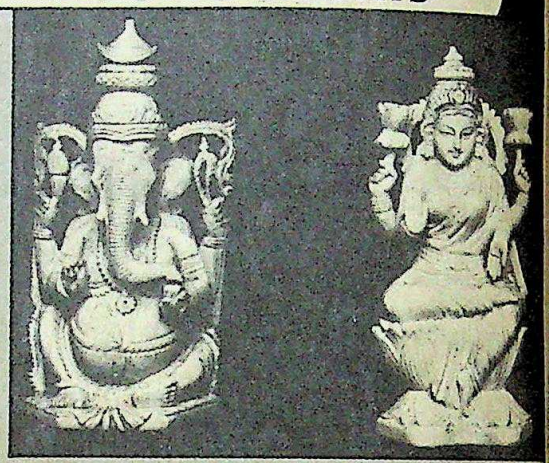

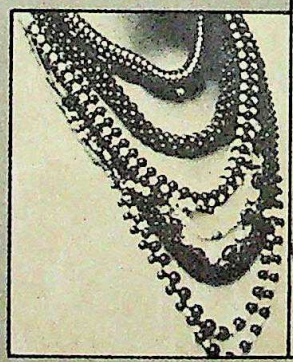

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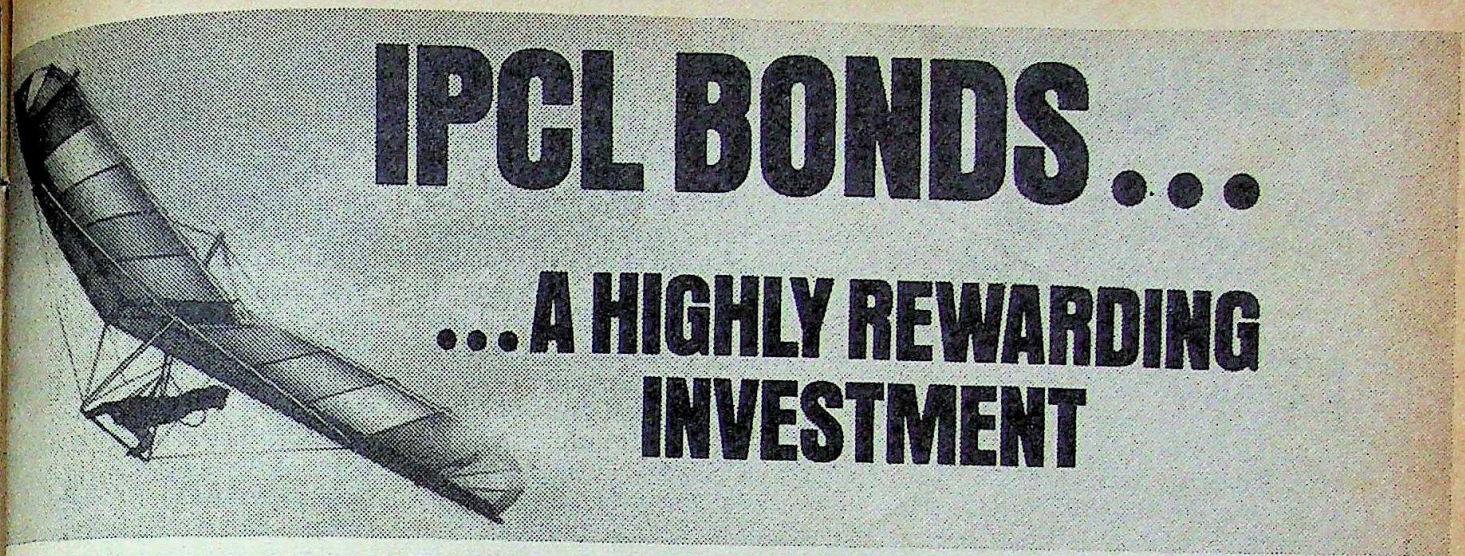

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Pungent Prose

AN UNFINISHED JOURNEY
by SHIVA NAIPAUL
Hamish Hamilton
Price: £ 9.95; Pages: 136

HE buries his hands in his pockets. 'Is it like that in your island as well?'" Those were the last words Shiva Naipaul wrote before his tragic death in 1985. The heart attack which killed him six months after his 40th birthday also thwarted the book on Australia he had just begun. The start of the book (which, typical of Naipaul's oblique approach, begins in Sri Lanka) is one of seven pieces in *An Unfinished Journey*. And as his father-in-law, Douglas Stuart, says in a clipped introduction, these pieces deal with Naipaul's abiding preoccupations—his hatred of humbug and bare-faced sham, his search for identity, his consequent need to travel, his revulsion of racism and unremitting fascination with India, the land of his origins.

Like his celebrated brother Vidia, Shiva Naipaul was a ceaseless traveller labelled by his brown skin as one thing, interpreted by his thoughtful, elegant style as another. Hostile to artifice, flummery and facile shibboleths, he became a sort of upright chronicler not always welcome: he was deported from Morocco and banned from Australia's Northern Land. In his two essays on Australia *(Why Australia* and *Flight into Blackness)* he gives free rein to his toxic and withering prose. In his dry-eyed unforgiving style, Naipaul does a demolition job on Australian morals, its peculiar brand of apartheid, and sees its racial violence as a palliative of social decay. The bilious beer-swilling bigot he runs into is proud of the fact that he is a racist. Rob that man of his racism, Naipaul says, and you rob him of everything.

Anthony Trollope, every dyed-in-the-wool Tory's darling novelist, takes a well-deserved roasting. And Naipaul savages the fact that the aboriginal has been costumed in the haute couture of prevailing intellectual fashion, hailed as an ecological saint, obdurate freedom fighter, mystical dandy. Introspectively, Naipaul muses: "I am, after all, a man of full-blooded Indian ancestry. Should I therefore put on a dhoti? Should I take myself to the contemplation of the transmigration of souls? After a century of separation from the motherland, one of confusion and disintegration, my racial essence has offered no clues to the dilemmas I have had to face." It is sad that what promised to be a bitingly memorable work on Australia was stilled in its womb.

In an elliptical, touching piece he refers to his ambiguous relationship with his famous brother *(My Brother and I)*, a remote and mysterious entity during his childhood. Vidia was often offered as a shining example by elders—Trinidadian scholarship, Oxford and an outstanding novelist. Shiva thus became "sensitised" at an early age to discourtesy and stupidity. He claims that the Hindu Trinidad of his youth was not that of his brother's. He says: "We did not have a shared past. We did not have a shared pool of memory, ancestral or otherwise." After Oxford (reading classical Chinese), he too became a writer since there was nothing else he could do. But, this decision, Naipaul feels was the first step to independence. He was breaking loose of the Doppelganger absolutism which had marred his childhood. But he bore his brother no grudges and generously admires his gifts: "He has served as an example and an exemplar. But we are each our own man."

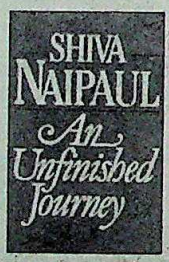
His sharp, sardonic skills are again seen in a pungent essay on the *Illusion of the Thirld World*, where he argues that to blandly subsume, say Ethiopia, India and Brazil under one banner of Third Worldhood is as absurd and denigrating as saying that all Chinese look alike. People only look alike when you can't be bothered to look at them too closely. Naipaul maintains that the Third World is a flabby western concept lacking the flesh and blood of the actual. He writes: "Human beings don't come conveniently packaged in over-ready, identical format. Islamic resurgence is one thing. The excesses of Idi Amin are another. A Marxist *coup d'etat* in Grenada is yet another. A Sri Lankan massacre is a Sri Lankan massacre—nobody else's. It is not some vague Third World event happening to be fitted into off-the-peg categories manufactured by the Third World ideological rag trade." And though all poverty may look alike, there are striking differences. As examples, Chinese and Indian poverty are not the same. What will work in omnivorous, centralised China will not work in fastidious, centrifugal India: neurotic Brahminical sensibilities are very different from those engendered by a mandarin bureaucratic tradition.

The two essays on India—on the death of Indira Gandhi and the Nehrus—lack Naipaul's arresting insights. The first recapitulates the events leading to Indira Gandhi's assassination. His description of New Delhi as a bereaved capital the morning after is evocative enough. But the scenes are familiar: the Hindu-Sikh conflict defying reason and disfiguring history; the British who sowed the seeds of Sikh chauvinism; the Akali agitations leading up to the Khalistan movement. But Naipaul has his good moments, when he "realises" that Marx's doctrines were a kind of Hinduism easily absorbed and adapted by the tradition and teachings of the ancient religions. He marvels: "...communalism is itself one of the forms of illusion: that the communalist is a victim of false consciousness, in other words, of *Maya*. What a perfect Hindu Marx would have made."

The last work with its poignant title, *An Unfinished Journey*, promises the styl-

EXTRACT

"Politically, India seems to have gone full circle, to have regressed to the shallow but deadly intricacies of the Moghul court on the eve of the British conquest. Is it too fanciful to suggest that one can already discern the dim outlines of future civil wars? The dramatis personae exist—one doesn't have to invent them. Maneka has her little princeling, Feroze; and Rajiv has his Rahul. The dynasticism which, to some, has seemed a blessing, offering India stability and continuity, could become a rather messy business if the claimants to the inheritance continue to multiply. Whatever its successes under the benign guidance of 'Captain Rajiv', the intrinsically capricious character of the dynastic principle will ultimately subvert the too cheaply acquired illusions of stability in the foundations of Nehru's 'secular' state. Today, India may embrace the civilised Rajiv; but only yesterday it was recoiling in terror from Sanjay and the demons he had threatened to unleash."



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eloquence of the *Chip Chip Gatherers* *Fireflies*. Set in Sri Lanka, it is full of minating encounters, alternatively rse and amusing, scary and witty, with Sri Lankan bureaucrats and also, the ring evisceration of Tamilian women with broken bottles. He runs into one Goonetileke after another—the Sri Lanan equivalent of a Singh or a Smith. One ch sanctimonious Goonetileke involed in development studies provides ample fodder for Naipaul's acid prose. He also meets an egotistical artiste who dreams of exhibiting in "Roma". And the artiste's penury-stricken friend Tissa who, despite his arrack-ravaged brain, harbours ambitions of becoming a writer. Naipaul warmly takes to Tissa. It is after a rumbustious bus journey to his home that Tissa recalls that the men in his family were failures and the women were the strong ones. "He buries his hands in his pockets. 'Is it like that in your island as well?' "

Shiva Naipaul never returned to his typewriter to answer Tissa's query. If it has been pointed out since his untimely death that there have been others who died young—a Keats or a D.H. Lawrence—it may be said that they had made fulsome contributions. For Naipaul, bristling with ideas and incisive skill, there was the promise of much more to come.

—RAMESH CHANDRAN

SHIVA NAIPAUL

Angry Author

SHIVA NAIPAUL was like a bull in a china shop of perfectly glazed self-deceptions. His words, perfect pellets, shot through all humbug. And he could be merciless with the smug. In India, where he spent a year-and-a-half in long and short stretches from 1973 on, comforting illusions shattered with regular frequency.

Often the victims of the verbal batterings were the WOGs—westernised Oriental gentlemen (and ladies)—who pushed the India of poverty and want to the fringes of their consciousness. Many an evening would end with either the victim (Shiva could use the English language like a whiplash) or Shiva, the shoulders stooping forward slightly, his cigarette, a long curve of ash, storming out into the night. The self-christened Delhi "intellectual" journalist who boasted about being mistaken for an Italian ("North African at the very limit but never an Indian"); the rich and lovely ladies who came and went talking about Husain, buying him by the inch or yard; the almost rich for whom modernity spelt five-star hotels with the latest pop music piped in, "brought in by hotel staff on tour"; or as he wrote in his article *City By The Sea*: "Bombay matrons...(who) will weep over the victims of thalidomide but lose interest when talk turns to the hundred thousand waifs at large in the streets." People like this seldom escaped Shiva's torrent of words.

Anger was what propelled him. Many in India did not understand it; mistook it for arrogance. Shiva carried within him a kind of hurt at what was happening to India. He was almost possessive about the wounded civilisation, as his brother V.S. Naipaul (10 years elder) had described India—a description he endorsed in one of his last articles on India. Furious about western writers who nit-picked India apart (the kind who after a few weeks in the country became experts on the subcontinent), he felt that the journey to the areas of darkness in India ought to be undertaken by the Indians themselves. Angrier still was he with expatriates of undivided India: "The darlings of the liberals of the West" who "performed" on Channel 4 in England.

The areas of darkness for Shiva Naipaul, though similar, were different. The smelly dawn line-up along the rail tracks disturbed him, but it was not an obsession. The target of his attacks was the ugly Indian, the morally and spiritually fouled. Political apathy and indifference to poverty disturbed him more. A people which could be laid supine by a Sanjay Gandhi, a country where politics amounted "to rival forms of vassalage, and lends itself to the most abrupt reversals" got the worst from his pen.

For Shiva, India was not just a metaphor or a journey into the heart of darkness. It was a very personal voyage. He was at heart a Hindu—as best as he knew how. He ate no beef, and strangely enough, no pork either. For his son, Tarun, he wanted a correct Hindu name. And a few days after Mrs Gandhi's assassination, he brooded over the *samadhis* along the banks of the Yamuna on whether the desire to be cremated by a sacred river ran through his psyche as well.

Shiva was not an Indian by birth or passport; nor did Indians claim him. But he claimed India. When India won the Prudential World Cup in 1983, it was a full-throated "we've won". Unfortunately, he was never to write a book about India. He wanted the distance of time before he tackled India. In that year in India he worked on *A Hot Country*, his novel about the West Indies. But had the journey continued, India would have been the next long stop-over. Shiva was midway through his book on Australia when he died suddenly last year, but India was greatly on his mind during those last months.

Irony was an inseparable part of Shiva Naipaul's literary baggage. And it didn't leave him after his death. *An Unfinished Journey* made it to the *Sunday Times* best-seller list last month. Something denied him while alive.

—MADHU JAIN

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SNAPSHOT

BY SWAPAN PAREKH

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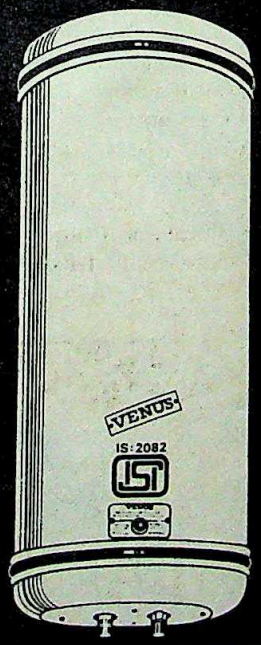

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BHEL

Rudderless Research

THE battle started over the typing of a report, and the combatants were an engineer and a stenographer. But with this minor dispute snowballing into gheraos, agitations, punitive transfers and finally a court case, one of the premier research establishments in the country has been reduced to unprecedented turmoil.

And as the spotlight has stayed focused on the 69-acre research and development estate of the Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) in Hyderabad, startling facts have begun coming to light about the abject state of a research outfit that has spent Rs 139 crore, without BHEL being any closer to reducing its dependence on foreign sources of technology for its primary business of producing power generating equipment. Agitated engineers charge that there has been no systematic attempt to direct research towards indigenising the production of components crucial for producing power. Indeed, a four-member committee set up in August 1983 to evolve a comprehensive research policy has not met even once.

Engineers who have banded together under the BHEL Executives Association (BEA) have been campaigning against this drift since the association was formed eight years ago. But the only result of their protests has been a worsening relationship with the management, of which the court case is now the most obvious manifestation. Consequently, morale at Vikasnagar is at an all-time low. Perhaps nothing sums up the research staff's feelings better than their name for BHEL: the 'be-happy-enjoy-life' company. Observed Justice A. Seetharam Reddy of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, in his judgement on the engineers' case: "It is time for an independent probe into the causes of unrest and discomfiture which, if not arrested in time, will disrupt and cause detriment to the division, if not the entire establishment."

The court case arose last May, out of a petty quarrel over the typing of a report between BEA President and Deputy Manager L.K. Kaul, an engineer, and a stenographer Kistaiah. The issue snowballed in the next two months. Kistaiah got his supporters to gherao the deputy general manager and compel him to suspend Kaul. Kaul went on a fast while BEA members held gate meetings. The BHEL management ordered its own inquiry but the report was never released.

Then, in a sudden move, the management ordered the transfer of four engineer executives who were past or present office-bearers of the BEA. While S.S. Rao, a deputy general manager, and K.D. Udeshi, a senior manager, left for their new postings, the other two—R.K. Murthy Gutta, a manager,

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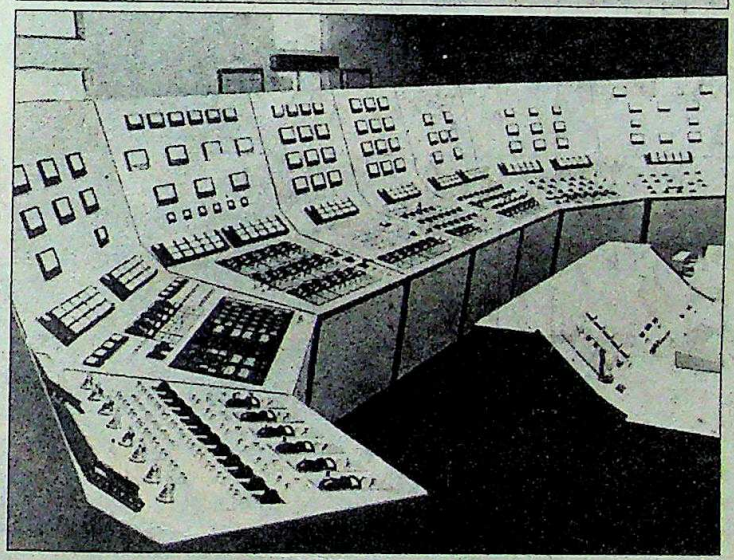

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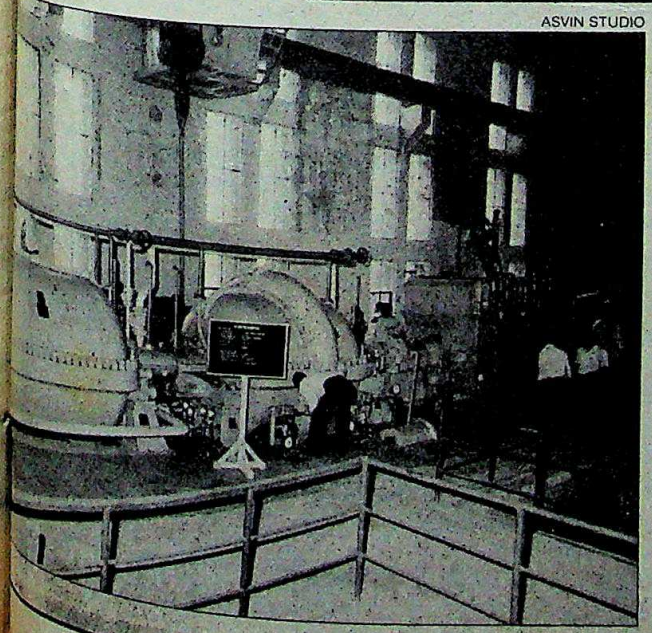
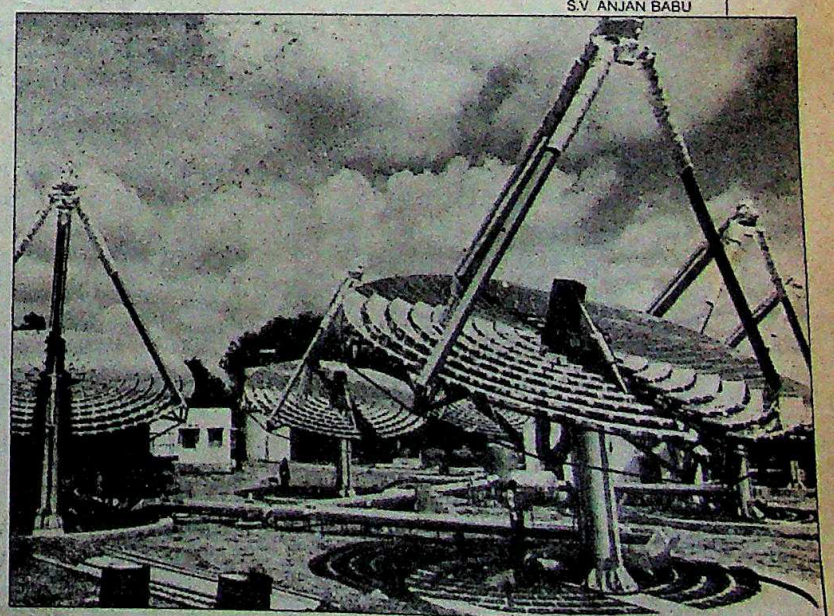


S.V. ANJAN BABU



Unused simulator (right); test facility (below left) and solar power station

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and C.N. Srinivasan, a senior engineer and current general secretary of the BEA—decided to take the issue to court.

In court, the BHEL management argued that the transfers were part of the process of executive development, but Murthy Gutta and Srinivasan accused the BHEL management of mala fide action. This, they said, was proved by the fact that though they were immediately relieved they were not told what they would have to do in their new jobs. Justice Reddy upheld the petitioner's case and averred that the company was preventing BEA activists from functioning in a lawful manner. Remarked Reddy: "The transfer orders are arbitrary and for extraneous considerations and not based on any rational need." Reddy directed BHEL to retain Srinivasan but okayed the transfer of ex-general secretary Gutta since he had partly reconciled to the transfer order, having picked up the travel advance.

IT was in the course of the hearing that the real state of affairs at the research centre came out. Srinivasan and Murthy Gutta told the court that research output was far below expectations because of the lack of a clear policy and the indifference of the company. Though the BHEL management denied the allegations, the testimony and documents presented to the court led Justice Reddy to observe that "the sooner this malady is rectified the better it is for the undertaking. Otherwise, this great divide in thought and action will eventually bring about chaos and calamity which at a later stage may be difficult and even impossible to be cured".

The office-bearers of the BEA argue that research is neglecting the crucial area of developing indigenous capability to make boilers and generators. Engineers say that if BHEL had concentrated its efforts on four or five critical components for turbines and boilers, by now some designs and products may have been developed.

The BHEL management has an explanation for this. Says Technical Director M.K. Sridhar: "The research to develop major power production equipment will cost several hundred crore rupees. We cannot afford this, so the research programmes and projects are tailored to make the best use of available funds." But, counters Srinivasan: "The major problem is that the company is not clear what work we should be doing. We are planning to go in for collaboration to make washing machines and even have research projects on unrelated products like burglar alarms."

In fact, apart from the fluidised bed boiler, the only research breakthroughs have come in peripheral products like the electrostatic precipitator controller and a dual speed induction motor of 50 kw rating. Challenges K. Ashok Rao, president of the federation of BEA's: "Can the BHEL board guarantee that when the collaboration production programmes end in the early 1990s, we will indigenously make a few major products either for the boiler or generator?"

To this Sridhar replies that "our production programmes are conditioned by market forces more than anything else. If the customers want a product made with foreign collaboration, why should we refuse to give it? We are in business." This only seems to bear out the charge of BEA activists that BHEL will look around for new collaborations, or renew the existing ones, when the present tie-ups end in the early 1990s. Says Srinivasan: "Customers feel our product technology is not well proven and consequently want products made with foreign collaboration. Our blood boils when we find Coal India planning to go in for the import of fluidised bed boilers though our coal research group has come up with a successful product."

The fluidised bed boiler apart, nothing of consequence has come out of the Hyderabad establishment. The company has taken on fanciful research projects like setting up a solar power station at Salojipally in Medak district which does not produce even 40 per cent of its 20 kw capacity. At the Vikasnagar complex itself, some test facilities have been lying uncommissioned for years.

The classic example is the Rs 2.5-crore closed circuit test facility to analyse the performance of turbine blades inaugurated by Queen Elizabeth in November 1983. It has been run only 80 times so far with air or carbon dioxide, and not even once with freon gas—which is heavier than air and stimulates higher velocities at lower speeds. This, when the facility was okayed for Vikasnagar by the Public Investment Board only because it would use freon gas; there is already an air test facility at the National Aeronautics Laboratory in Bangalore.

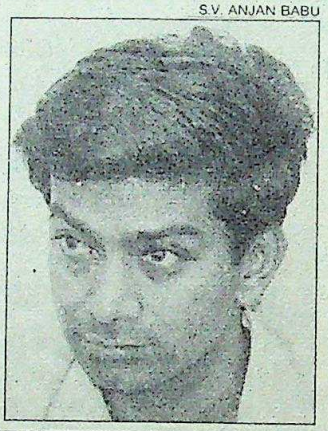
Equally shocking is the story of the Rs 45-lakh generic training simulator to be used in the training of power plant operators. Though it is intended to improve power plant efficiency by training operators, the simulator has not been commissioned for it does not have a start-up facility.

The head office has added to the mess in Vikasnagar by frequent changes of the head of the Vikasnagar complex—in the last 10 years, Vikasnagar has seen eight general managers. Engineers admit to frustration because of the "uncertainty about who is our real boss".

The BHEL management has now gone in appeal to a division bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court against Justice Seetharam Reddy's verdict. The outcome of the appeal is due to be announced soon. But whatever the court's verdict, the main point of contention between the BHEL management and the BEA will remain: the direction of the research to be undertaken at Vikasnagar. No matter what happens to BHEL's proposal to make washing machines, it is certain that more dirty linen will be washed in public.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

S.V. ANJAN BABU



Srinivasan and Murthy Gutta told the court that research output was far below expectations because of the lack of a clear policy and the indifference of the company.

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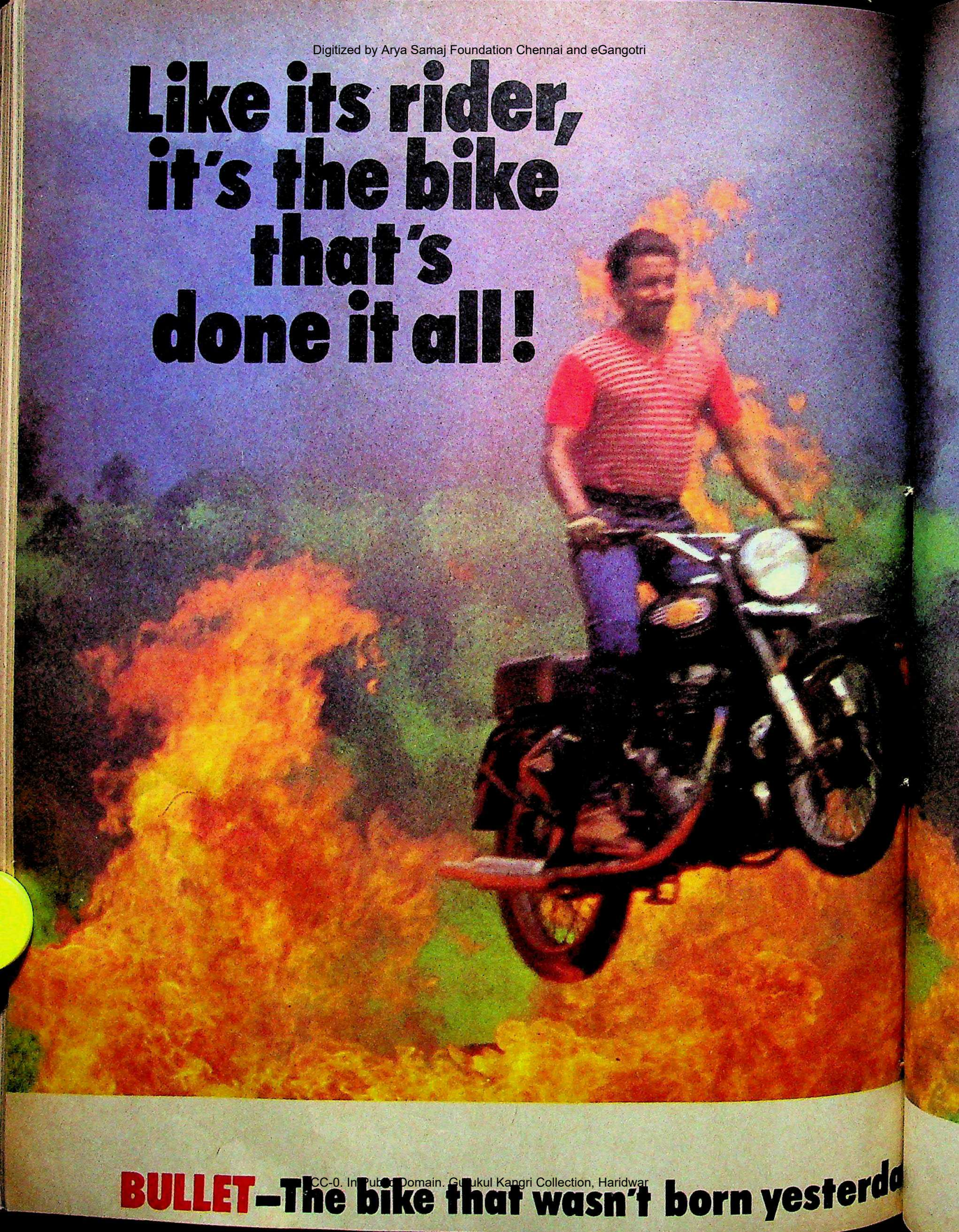
Like its rider, it's the bike that's done it all!



BULLET—The bike that wasn't born yesterda

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Bullet.
Tough. Rugged. Uncompromising.
Like you.
The bike you could depend on
if your life depended on it.
The bike that's used
over the roughest country.
On the toughest assignments.
Sure, it costs more
than ordinary bikes.
But then, you certainly aren't
the kind of man who'll settle for
something just because it came cheap!

Bullet.
From Enfield.

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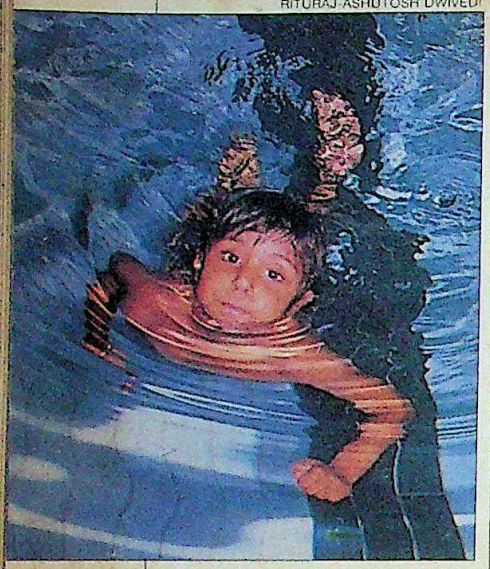
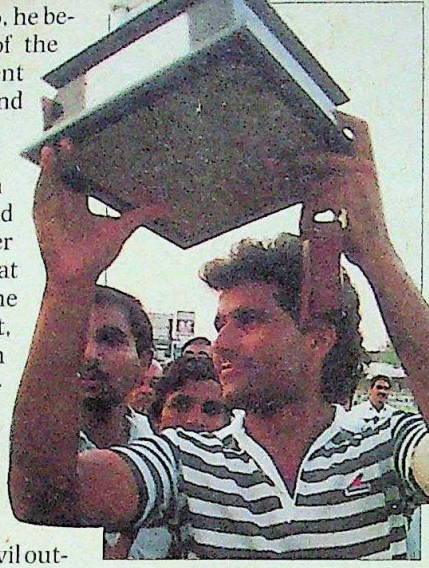


Jain: water baby

◆ "Catch 'em young" is the motto of Gwalior's Laxmibai National College for Physical Education; but it's not always easy. Especially if the young 'un happens to be a skinny four-year-old, all wet behind the ears and slippery as an eel. **Ritesh Jain**, only son of his middle class parents, was probably born with gills for tonsils. At two, when kids his age are still wetting their knickers, the water baby was taking his first strokes in the neighbourhood pond. Today, the pint-sized prodigy can execute a 20-ft dive and a breathtaking 200-ft backstroke. The college finally managed to bait this prize catch last fortnight with a special one-year training course. Says proud father Sumat Jain: "I want the best coaching for my son. I'll even part with him if some national body takes him."

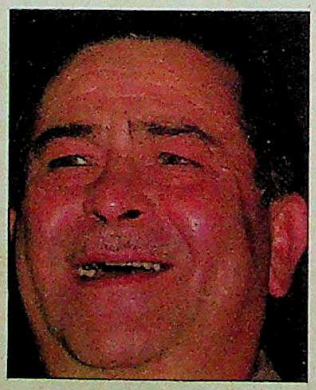
◆ Three months ago, he became the "tourist" of the India XI, because he went all the way to England and came back without so much as lifting his willow. But **Raman Lamba**, 26, was destined to see a darn sight better than the green turf at Lord's. Last fortnight, he was not only seeing it, but showing it to them too—the Man of the Series Trophy for the One-Day Internationals against Australia. With a fiery 74 off 68 balls at Ferozshah Kotla in Delhi, the Delhi devil outswashbuckled swashbuckler K. Srikkanth. Lamba was walking tall at the end of it all with the best aggregate: 278 runs. "I am feeling great; on top of the world," he gloated.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Lamba: walking tall

◆ From the sweat n' grime of footpaths to the spit n' polish of five-star hotels is a long way up the class ladder. But **Saeed Akhtar Mirza** has just rounded the *Nukkad* to *Hotel*—not the streetside 'Taj International—No Branches' but real five-star stuff—and for showmanship, picked up some tips from **Raj Kapoor** on the way. When Kapoor saw *Nukkad*, he was so impressed he wanted to make a film of it. But Mirza had other ideas. And so, the Showman will now finance Mirza's next manifesto on the other metropolitan extreme—the seedy inside of a ritzy hotel, "seen from the viewpoint of my main protagonist, a waiter". After Hailey, it's now the hotel according to St Marx.



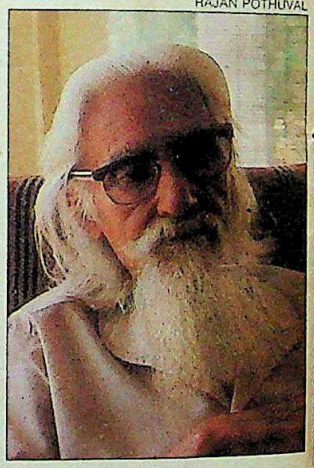
Mirza (left); and Kapoor: the hotel union

◆ It was *Rajani* who started it all. And even after she retired from her shrill crusades to quiet domesticity, Bombay's cabbies never quite forgave Meddlesome Madam for that taxi episode. They'd still be hating her; but for director **Basu Chatterji**, who hailed a taxi recently and was instantly recognised by the cabbie. Flattered, he offered his autograph. But the fella gave a snort, revved up to go and was almost gone before you could say Priya Tendulkar. So Chatterji said sorry and by the end of the scene—shot for *Jalwa*, where Chatterji plays himself—he had finally won over the hostile tribe. "It was fun doing a spoof on *Rajani*," he phewed after the cease-fire.

Chatterji (backseat) in *Jalwa*: paying over the meter

◆ When **Aubrey Menen**, 74, completed his *Four Days in Naples* in 1984, and flew to Kerala—the land of his father and the setting for his next novel—little did he know that he was flying into a trap of red tape. Though he wanted to write a book and not gallivant on Kovalam Beach, the *babus* gave him a tourist visa. Three months later, the visa expired, the police started hounding him and banks stopped cashing his cheques. But he stayed on; only to be evicted from his Trivandrum lodging last fortnight, since the banks were still not paying and the landlord couldn't care less if his broke tenant were Aubrey Menen or William Shakespeare. Only when the harassed writer went to press did the *babus* creak into action. But not before Menen had acidly remarked: "The British have left behind a decaying bureaucracy. I wanted to change India's image abroad, but I've begun to think that it's justified after all."

RAJAN POTHUVAL



Menen: red tape

—Compiled by MOHAMMED ASLAM

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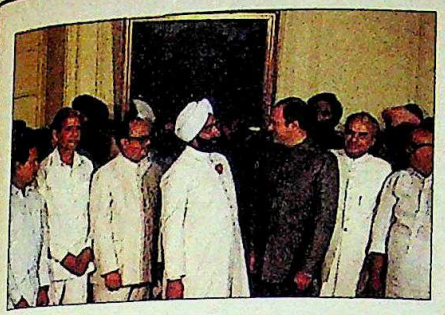
IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT



Shock Treatment

Last fortnight's Cabinet reshuffle, Rajiv's sixth in two years, was designed to give a timely jolt to the party's power-brokers. The cutting to size of hitherto powerful men like Arjun Singh and Arun Nehru indicated a new phase in Rajiv Gandhi's politics.

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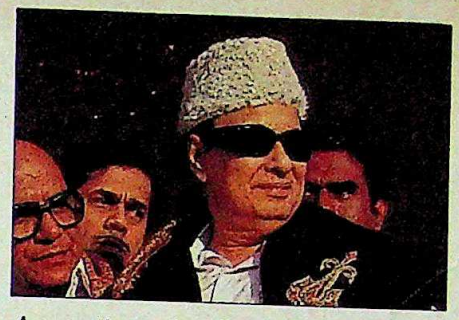

Asserting Authority

Last fortnight's reshuffle by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran came as a startling display of authority. While the axing of information minister Veerappan and his anti-Jayalalitha camp was understandable, the other changes sent mixed political signals.

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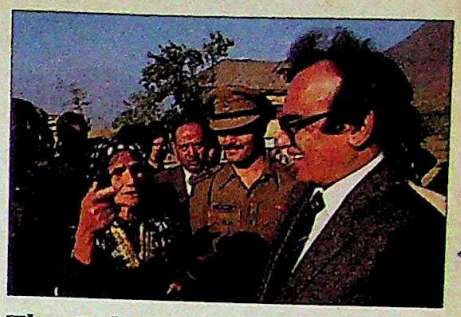

The Politics of Blackmail

The political uncertainty in Jammu & Kashmir is at a crucial stage. Negotiations between Rajiv Gandhi and Farooq Abdullah still continue, and the power blocs are getting restive. And Governor Jagmohan's popularity makes him a tough act to follow.

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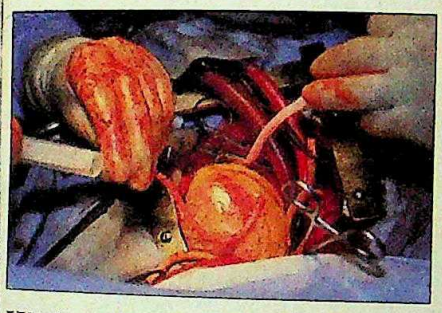

Hitting the Young

Almost without warning, heart disease in India is acquiring the contours of an epidemic. What is alarming is that most victims are relatively young. Despite improved medical techniques, coping with the growing number of patients is proving problematic.

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Changing Gear

For decades, they have been the bastion of conservatism. But now, corporate heavyweights in the south are throwing aside their earlier caution and diversifying into various greenfield areas, investing in major new projects and tying up foreign collaborations.

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The Golden Voices

They are the anonymous voices on radio and TV enticing people to buy various products. But one voice, that of Partap Sharma, dominates the rest. Sharma's phenomenal success has given commercial commentators a new respectability and higher remuneration.

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ITC celebrates 75 years of growth.

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पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय
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In recent times, ITC has diversified into several new businesses. It has followed many different routes with but one single pursuit—excellence.

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ITC's India Tobacco Division makes the largest variety of cigarettes and smoking tobaccos. Relying on intensive research and employing the latest manufacturing technology it offers the consumer the widest choice in price and value.

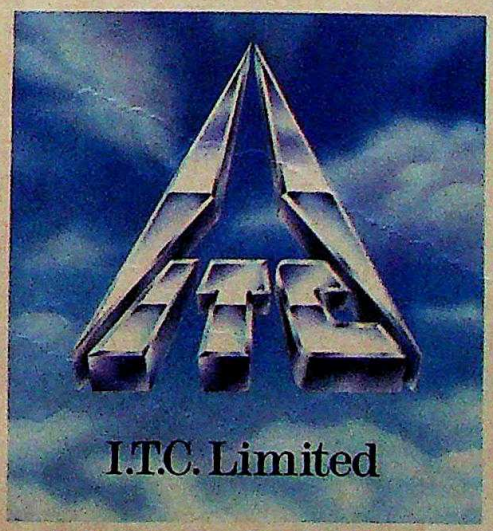
The Indian Leaf Tobacco Development Division of ITC provides the tobacco farmer assistance in agro-technology from seed germination to tobacco curing; it helps him improve land management and crop output. And ILTD is one of the largest buyers and exporters of tobacco.

ITC's Packaging and Printing Division uses paper, board and multi-laminates to create packaging to critical specifications. The Division enjoys the confidence of over 100 brand leaders with disparate requirements ranging from basic designing to machine-packaging.

Welcomgroup, ITC's Hotels Division, is the country's fastest-growing hotel chain. Offering international standard service, ITC Welcomgroup is helping to provide special impetus to India's tourism industry.

Bhadrachalam Paperboards Ltd, founded by ITC, is a core enterprise located in a backward area. BPL has achieved super productivity through its mastery over technology; simultaneously it has acted out of exemplary concern for ecology and environment.

Concurrent with the making and marketing of products and services, ITC consistently contributes to the community from the fruits of its labours.



Platinum Jubilee

Sangeet Research Academy and the ITC Sangeet Sammelans reflect the Company's resolve to rekindle interest in Indian classical music and encourage promising talent.

In sports ITC sponsors numerous events to encourage the pursuit of excellence.

ITC generates massive employment in its own establishments and the ancillary industries the Company regularly works with. Thousands more are self-employed in operating the channels of trade.

ITC, today's multi-business corporation, is a major creator of wealth and surplus; in the last five years it has contributed no less than Rs 2400 crores to the national exchequer. The Company's diverse activities, and their deliberate aligning with national priorities, make ITC one of India's more important corporate leaders.

Now, striding towards the 21st Century, ITC is confident of its resources, and the skills to manage them. Routes will be many and varied, but the focus will unwaveringly be on the pursuit of excellence. The inherited virtues and values of the past will doubtless put their imprint on the future.

Professional Management of Planned Growth

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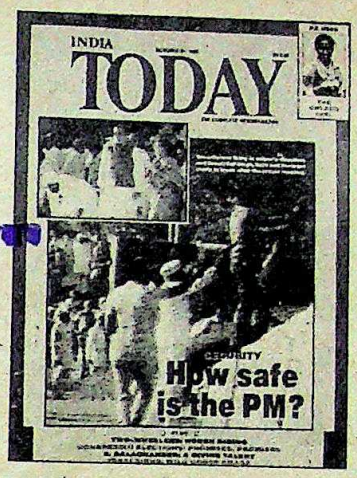

FALSE SECURITY

Your well-researched cover story on the dastardly attempts on the lives of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and J.F. Ribeiro ("How Safe is the PM?", October 31) showed that our intelligence machinery is not up to the mark. The terrorists have again shown that their intelligence tactics, planning and strategy are superior to those of the officials in charge of the security of VVIP's.

Ahmedabad VINOD C. DIXIT

■ Two consecutive attacks on the prime minister and the Punjab police chief are two consecutive slaps in the face of the Indian security system. It is indeed a matter of great shame that even after the assassination of General Vaidya, no lesson could be learnt and no effective steps taken to tighten security. The lax security will definitely boost the morale of the terrorists.

Patna ASHUTOSH GUPTA

■ No prime minster in a terrorist-infested country can ever be safe. Why do we forget the attacks on Reagan, Thatcher, the Pope and the successful one on Sadat in Cairo? But the point is, can we afford to present his life on a silver platter to the terrorists? If the terrorist has to plan and work hard, perhaps we have succeeded to an extent to save the prime minister.

The recent attempt at Rajghat was a mere farce. There are too many loose ends—the country-made revolver and the so-called "missing the target". It was certainly someone's attempt to open the eyes of security. Will those eyes open?

Secunderabad LT-COLONEL R.G. RAJAN

PRICELESS USHA

P.T. Usha's soul-stirring and priceless performance in the just-concluded 10th Asiad ("The Golden Girl", October 31) goes to prove what a single woman can do to enhance the prestige of the weaker sex that women are always shown as. Usha's is a no mean achievement by any standards. We can only stand by and applaud the laurels that she has won for the country.

Madras A.V. GANAPATHY

■ A contingent of 400 heads, out of which 100 were officials, in a country of 800 million people has made a total mess of India's position in the Seoul Asiad. Who should be blamed for this state of affairs—the selection committee of various federations, the participants or the coaches? Reports reveal that the contingent was more interested in shopping, mud slinging and criticising each other's performance.

Kanpur U.R. GUHA

■ Your optimism indicating areas in which Indians could win ("Set for Seoul", September 30) has proved only a chimera. Despite our's being the biggest ever contingent, your medal tally proved foolhardy—without any bad draw or an upset stomach. The Asiad also brought into focus the matter of training and selection of athletes. The officials owe an explanation as to what ails our sports bodies. Is it not a fact that our players qualify by using illegal stimulants at home without being detected by officials, whereas they fail miserably in the final show as they dare not use the same for fear of being disqualified?

Sitamarhi NIRMAL KUMAR GOENKA

LEGAL GRATIFICATION

At least one tax official ("The Reward Bonanza", October 15) has been honest enough to admit that the "reward scheme insulates us against other allurements". Others consider it as an insurance against penury. India is perhaps the only country where one has to bribe an official to do a perfectly legal act. The Government will now have to ratify corruption by formalising gratifications as rewards to a weak conscience.

Bombay N.G. WAGLE

HINDI EDITION

We are pleased to announce that with this issue, we are introducing the Hindi edition of INDIA TODAY, priced at Rs 4.

—Editor

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RESERVATION ROW

It is quite evident that the reservation policy ("The Politics of Reservation", October 15) as originally conceived by our erstwhile leaders has lost its relevance. The need for a workable national policy is paramount and politicians must sink their differences and work out a solution.

New Delhi — S. SANTHAKUMAR

■ I would like to ask just one small question. The rich have their money to protect them and the poor and backward have the Government and politicians to back them through reservations. Where does the middle class go? Are they the only ones supposed to use their brains?

Calcutta — DEEPAK GIDWANI

TRUMPED-UP CHARGES

Your report ("Knocked Out", October 15) gives no indication that the Government's charges against voluntary agencies in Bhopal are trumped-up. The state Government's slander that the voluntary groups are acting for foreign powers is reduced to a matter of mutual name-calling amongst the action groups. This belies the true nature of the problem. Your report also raises questions about the status of the groups and makes inaccurate charges of in-fighting. The ICAR report which Alok Pratap Singh says is confidential is accessible to members of the public.

Bhopal — ARVIND RAJAGOPAL

■ I was working with the Zahreeli Gas Kand Sangharsh Morcha while on long leave from my work in Kishore Bharati. I went back to Kishore Bharati in February this year not because of a 'split' with the Morcha but because I could not allow my earlier work to be neglected any further, nor could I afford to live without a salary any longer. I am still available for consultation to any group, including the Morcha.

Hoshangabad Dist. — ANIL SADGOPAL

■ With reference to your report on voluntary agencies in Bhopal, I am not and have never been a member of the Bhopal Group for Information and Action. I have never made any statement insinuating that the Zahreeli Gas Kand Sangharsh Morcha is an agent of Union Carbide.

Bhopal — SADHNA SAXENA

Our report was based on a statement purportedly signed by Ms Saxena. The signature, it now turns out, was forged. The error is regretted.

—Editor

TONGUE-TWISTING

The so-called anti-Hindi sentiment and agitation in Tamil Nadu ("Tongue Trouble", October 15) is not against learning Hindi as a language, nor as the common link language of the 'bazaar', but against its imposition as the sole official language of administration. Southerners, particularly brahmins, were never against learning Hindi: on the contrary, they took pride in knowing the language. Once you make it the official language of the Centre, you are putting speakers of all other languages, particularly those with Dravidian origins at a disadvantage.

Bombay — K.K. UPADHAYA

■ Though Hindi is taught as a second language in English medium schools in Tamil Nadu, it is not a compulsory second language. Students are usually asked to chose between Tamil, Hindi and a foreign language like French. Also, the Hindi Prachar Sabha is being rather optimistic in concluding that Hindi is becoming increasingly popular in the state. Fifty thousand students may have learnt Hindi in 1985 but the population of Tamil Nadu is 50 million.

Madras — ULLAS KADRI

■ The purpose of any language is communication. What is wrong in using Hindi, Tamil, or for that matter any language, as long as the message is conveyed? The leaders should not favour regionalism in the crucial stage when unity is required.

Bangalore — S. RAJESH

GORKHALAND GAFFE

Your comment on the Gorkhaland stir ("Dodging the Issue", October 15) is a well-timed one. The stand taken by the prime minister not only confuses the whole nation but also shows his own confusion over the issue. Also, this is not the solitary example of the Centre's double-speaking policy. Rajiv is a master of twisting facts for political gains. But he should in this case take a quick review of the history of the country. His mother gifted us with problems like Punjab and Assam. We hope that Rajiv will not give the country another such 'gift' for some political gains.

Ranchi — BISWAJIT DAS

SIGHT AND INSIGHT

Your photo-feature giving an insight into a blind man's mind ("The World of a Blind Man", October 15) was indeed an 'educated' potrayal. After this, one cannot help but wonder who are the really blind—the physically blind like Mr Bhalla or 'normal' people like us.

New Delhi — J.S. KAIMAL

NOBLE DEED

Kudos to Governor Jagmohan for taking long over-due action in arranging to hand over the management of the Vaishno Devi shrine to an independent board ("Transforming the Temple", October 15). It is gratifying to know that many improvements have already been made. In fact, an enactment to take over all temples and shrines of Hindus by state or even Central boards should be made. The offerings can be used, besides improving facilities for pilgrims, to help the poorer sections of society.

New Delhi — GANDHARV SAIN

FANNING FANATICISM

The article on increasing militarism ("Militancy on the Move", October 15) gives a clear picture of India today. It is now the habitat of religious fanatics totally ignorant of religious principles. How else can one explain the encouragement given by religious leaders to their people to accumulate arms, when no religion preaches violence. These trishul-wielding senas represent the vestiges of primitive and animal-like instincts. We seem to be gradually marching towards the stone age.

Pune — PRAMOD TYAGI

COMPLAINTS FILE

In your report ("Bebop Granma", Londonews, October 15), you suggest that 'Bandung File' gave the Khalistanis a platform to voice their 'familiar litany of grouses' without a mention of the fact that Sikh contributors to the programme completely demolished their arguments and demonstrated the politics of J.S. Chauhan and company. There is a familiar argument which puts forward censorship as a solution to a complex political tragedy—as is now unfolding in the Punjab—and the advantage taken of it by a lunatic fringe. We disagree.

London — VASUDHA JOSHI
researcher, Bandung File

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POLL 6 RESULTS—INITIATIVES

Lack of Agreement

IN this, the sixth and final poll in the 'Opinions Today' series, INDIA TODAY invited its readers to rank eight recent initiatives of the Rajiv Gandhi Government in their order of priority in terms of the impact these initiatives have had on the country. A total of 9,760 readers responded to the poll. For an independent assessment of the results, INDIA TODAY commissioned Dr V.L. Mote, founder-professor of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, who also holds a doctorate in statistical methods from the State University of North Carolina in the US. His analysis:

THE role that a government plays in shaping the social and economic environment of the country it governs needs no emphasis. Even in the US, the Federal Government intervenes to provide medical care to its citizens, to prevent environmental pollution, to end racial discrimination and not infrequently to protect its domestic industries from international competition. It is therefore to be expected that in socialised India, the role of the Central Government in the socio-economic development of the country will be all-pervasive.

How do the educated citizens of India evaluate some of the recent government initiatives was therefore a question of considerable interest to INDIA TODAY. The participants were

Charts by B.K. SHARMA

FIG 1

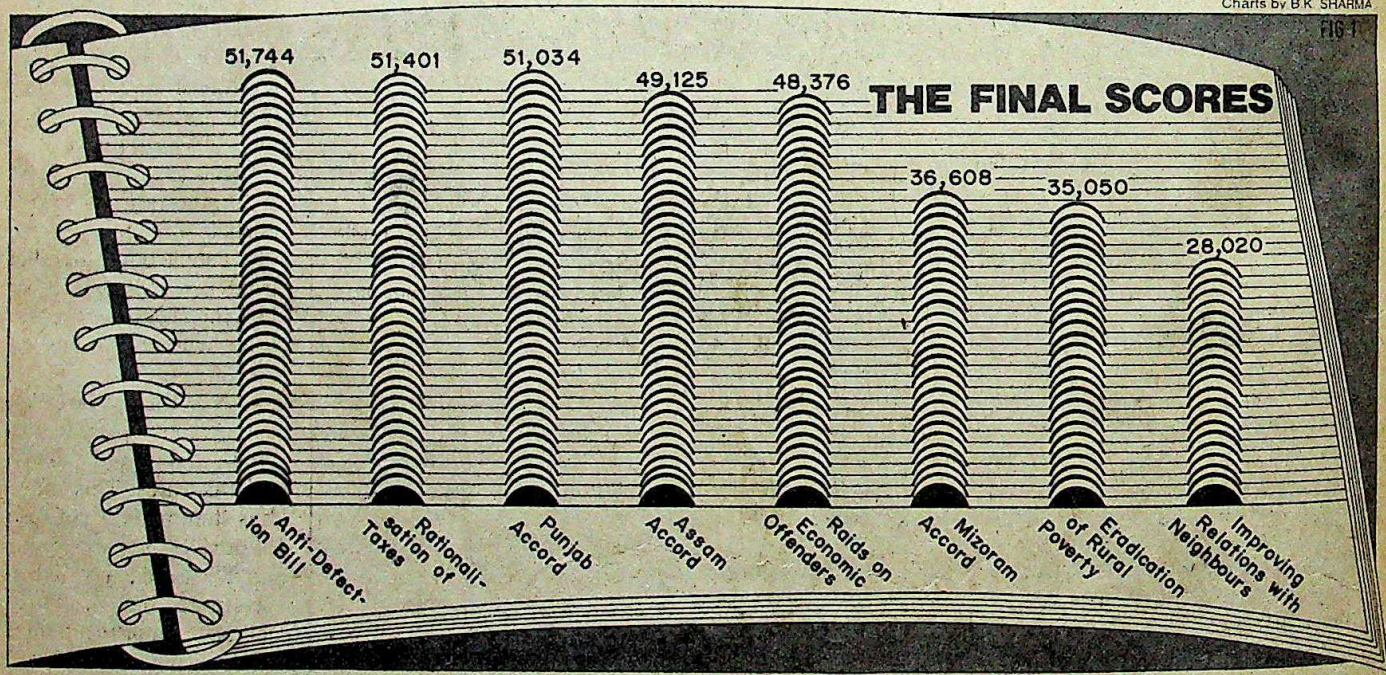

TABLE 1

ASSESSMENT OF GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

The figures represent the percentage of total respondents who ranked each initiative at the various positions

Average Score*	Candidate	Rank	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
5.30	Anti-Defection Bill	1	23.0	14.8	15.1	13.3	9.4	8.7	6.6	9.2	100.0
5.27	Rationalisation of Taxes	2	18.1	18.5	15.0	12.3	11.8	10.6	7.8	5.8	100.0
5.23	Punjab Accord	3	28.1	12.9	10.2	10.5	9.3	9.7	8.3	11.0	100.0
5.03	Assam Accord	4	5.5	21.4	17.2	17.2	16.3	12.1	8.0	2.2	100.0
4.96	Raids on Economic Offenders	5	11.7	17.1	16.3	14.4	13.6	11.5	8.2	7.2	100.0
3.75	Mizoram Accord	6	2.4	5.5	12.8	13.9	17.3	19.1	15.7	13.4	100.0
3.59	Eradication of Rural Poverty	7	9.2	6.0	7.6	9.6	10.9	13.9	21.5	21.2	100.0
2.87	Improving Ties with Neighbours	8	2.0	3.7	5.8	8.9	11.3	14.4	23.8	30.1	100.0
		Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

*Maximum average score attainable is 8.

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asked to rank eight actions that the Indian Government has taken in the recent past, in terms of the impact these actions have had on the country as a whole. The participants have ranked the "Anti-Defection Bill" as the most effective action and "Improving Ties with Neighbours" as the least effective one. Analysis of the rankings given by the participants is presented in Table 1, Fig. 1 and Fig. 2.

The major conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis of the data are:

▶ The degree of agreement amongst the participants in ranking the eight measures is very low. This can be seen from the value of the coefficient of concordance, which is the lowest in this poll; 0.14987.

▶ The lack of agreement mentioned above is because of the disagreement in deciding the effectiveness of the first three measures, namely the Anti-Defection Bill, rationalisation of taxes and the Punjab accord. There is a greater agreement in the ranking of the other measures. The phenomenon can be observed from the average scores reported in Table 1. The successive differences in the scores associated with the first three measures are low and not significant statistically. In this poll also, there is a greater agreement concerning the least effective measures as compared to the agreement concerning the most effective measures.

▶ The young participants (those up to the age of 20) differ in their rankings from the ranking arrived by aggregating the all India rankings. The younger group ranks "Raids on Economic Offenders" as the highest in terms of effectiveness while this is ranked 5th on the basis of aggregate responses.

▶ Rajasthan is the only state where the rankings conform to the national rankings.

The lack of agreement in the rankings is not surprising. Measurement of the impact that a government action has on the country as a whole, is by no means an easy task. The difficulty in rankings is further compounded when some of the Government actions under consideration are similar in terms of the impact that the actions have on the nation.

In spite of these difficulties, the participants have attempted to evolve criteria for evaluating the eight actions. The criteria that seem to have been used are:

(i) Will the action reward the honest and hard-working citizens? Will it thus channelise the energies of the nation in the right direction? Will it remove the discord that is harboured by a large section of society and motivate it to work in the national interest?

(ii) How well has the action been implemented?

The reasons given by the participants for assigning the highest ranks to the Anti-Defection Bill and rationalisation of tax structure provide a good illustration of the application of the above criteria.

Referring to the Anti-Defection Bill, some of the participants observe:

▶ Political defections, which reduced the citizen and his mandate to a naught and enabled power-brokers to form unstable and corrupt governments, would be check-mated by this action.

▶ There is a nexus between corruption and defection. Political support is bought and sold and defectors are rewarded with offices of profit.

Speaking about rationalisation of taxes, participants observe:

▶ People have got relief from taxes. People have become more honest and are willing to work harder.

▶ All the firm-rooted corruption in India had emanated from the colossal tax rates. This move has stemmed the collapse of our economy.

The Punjab accord has been rated high in spite of its poor implementation. The reasons stated are:

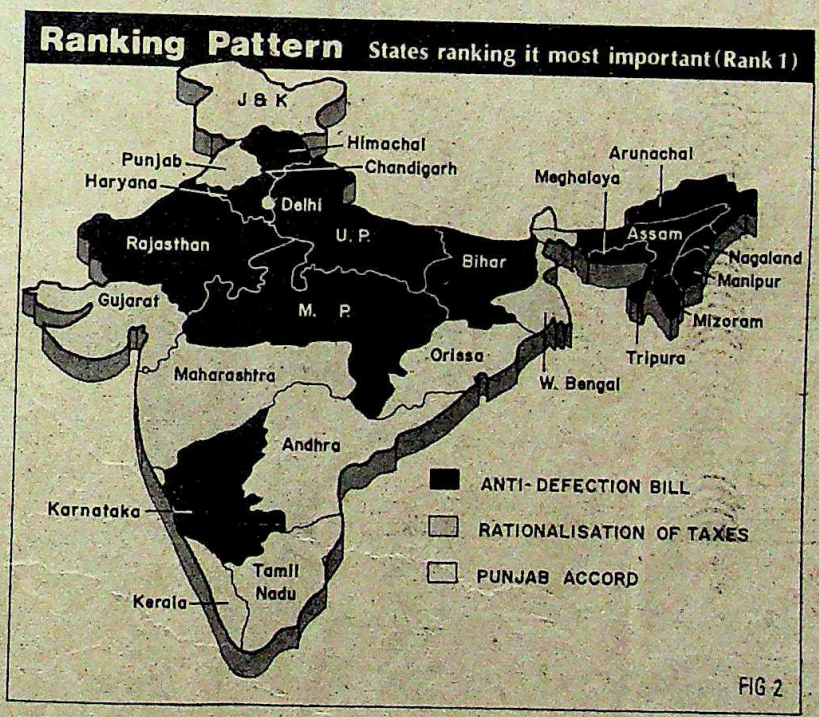

FIG 2

ONLY five readers sent in entries that corresponded exactly with the final national score. To select the three winners, a panel of judges assessed the reasons they had given for ranking the Anti-Defection Bill first.

First Prize: Bhagwat Masani
Gorelal Chowk,
Gondia.
Assessment: "The Anti-Defection Bill is a landmark of bold steps taken by the Government making defections mostly impossible and puts an end to the era of political instability. It has brought a new political culture, thereby creating a new hope and confidence in the minds of the Indian people."

Second Prize: Rama Vyas
D II 84, West Kidwai Nagar,
New Delhi.
Assessment: "Defections of elected representatives were a great malaise in the country. Many talked about doing something about it but none had acted so far. The present Government had the courage to bring Anti-Defection Bill into effect. It has had far-reaching effects in cleansing the political atmosphere of the country."

Third Prize: Harish Padukone
11, Main Road, Malleswaram,
Bangalore.
Assessment: "By far the boldest action in the political arena of independent India as a first step to lifting politics from the morass of corruption and immorality in which it had been mired."

Consolation Prize:
Jayathiratha Pujar (Ghaziabad), Pramod Gupta (Jaipur).

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Rich culture and traditions.

Music and art.

A wealth of science and technology.

Only, make sure the coming generation enjoys all of this by preserving a vital element on which tomorrow hinges.... water.

Your grandfathers enjoyed water in plenty.

You have had to worry a little about it.

Your grandchildren may go through a trauma without it.

Think about it.

Start by closing taps tightly.
Promptly repairing leakages in tanks and pipes.

End Water Wastage.
Come, join hands and work for it.

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▶ Though it is not implemented fully, it has created an impact on the minds of the masses.

▶ Even though the incidents that took place after the Punjab accord caused anguish, the initiative to reach such an accord was very bold.

▶ Though the accord was not fully implemented, it has done a lot to restore communal harmony and eliminate the bitterness in the relations.

Thus, participants are convinced about the soundness of the accord and are willing to be patient in spite of the problems encountered in its implementation.

One of the surprising features of the poll is the low rank assigned to the actions for eradication of rural poverty. From the data at our disposal it is not possible to identify the reasons for this low ranking. It is, however, possible to pose some questions which might help us in finding the answer. The questions follow as a natural corollary of the criteria stated earlier. The questions are:

Are there unsurmountable problems in the implementation of these programmes? As the lead comment on Rural Waste in INDIA TODAY (August 31, 1985) observed: "Political interference or intervention in development programmes tends to make it difficult to keep a proper control of such programmes, leading to lax administration, leakages and eventually corruption of the system."

Are these programmes basically unsound in the sense that these programmes do not lead to the upgradation of the skills of the rural poor? It is needless to add that as the nation marches towards the 21st century people without skills will be left behind.

The answers to the questions are important if the war against abject poverty is to be won by the turn of the century.

SAMPLES of respondents' comments on the seven initiatives other than the Anti-Defection Bill give an indication of why they rate some initiatives ahead of others in terms of their impact on the country.

ASSAM ACCORD

The accord was able to restore the atmosphere of peace and respect for life and property after a prolonged and bloody agitation. The Assam accord is a milestone in the history of India.
Bangalore — J.K. Paulson

It brought an end to a problem which had plagued India for many years and it will lead to the development of one of the most neglected states of the country. An applaudable achievement.
New Delhi — Dinesh Karna

The accord was a vital step considering the importance of the border state in terms of national security.
Vidyanagar — L. Ambujakshan

ERADICATION OF RURAL POVERTY

The Government's most significant initiative since poverty leads to illiteracy and this in turn leads to economic stagnation of the country. The Government has shown undue courage and determination to tackle poverty.
Salem — S. Sendhil

Eradication of rural poverty is essential for ameliorating the living standards of the rural poor since most of the projected population of 270 million people below the poverty line by the 21st century, live in rural areas.
Varanasi — Abhinandan Singh

IMPROVING TIES WITH NEIGHBOURS

In the light of recent happenings like terrorism and communal violence, improving relations with neighbours will ensure the unity and integrity of the nation.
Bhalukpong — R. Ingalhalli

India is a vast country surrounded by hostile neighbours like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, China, Burma, Nepal and Bangladesh. It will be in India's own interests to strive for good relations with her neighbours to lessen external threats and provocations.
Calcutta — G.S. Chatterjee

MIZORAM ACCORD

The signing of the accord has ended two decades of insurgency. The people of Mizoram can now live peacefully and forget the bloodshed and untold misery of the past.
Shillong — Harold Khongsit

Because the activities of the insurgents were backed by external forces and the tough topography, Mizoram could have become a serious national problem. In that context, the accord is the highest achievement of the Indian Government.
Pithoragarh — R.P. Bhatt

PUNJAB ACCORD

The accord was a breakthrough in normalising relations between the Centre and the state. It revived the confidence of the people in the Government.
New Delhi — P. Shahdadpuri

The Punjab problem had all the makings of an inferno. Whatever its shortcomings, the accord was the first worthwhile step towards putting out the fire.
Palghat — C. Pillai

RAIDS ON ECONOMIC OFFENDERS

For the first time there is some accountability for economic offences and justice seems to have crossed the barriers of money, power and influence.
Bombay — Milam Mehta

Big businessmen who had the Government in their pockets have been shown that nobody, no matter how big, is above the law. Recovery of taxes has generated desperately needed government revenue.
New Delhi — Brajendra Singh

RATIONALISATION OF TAXES

In effect, this has reduced the temptation to evade taxes and brought relief to the honest taxpayer.
Bombay — V.K. Iyer

One of the few initiatives of the Rajiv Government which has been rational and liberal. It has effectively curbed the flow of black money and tax receipts are on the increase.
C/O 56 APO — M.C. Kapoor

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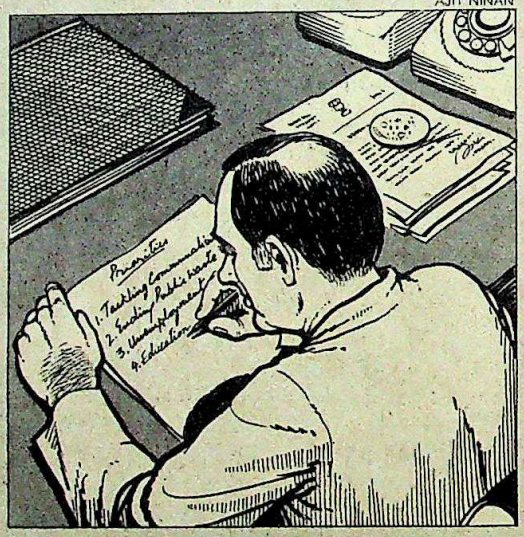
A Time for Priorities

AT long last, the prime minister has acted to give new shape to his council of ministers. The exercise has been essentially political, and more changes and announcements can be expected in the near future. But the primary message has already been conveyed in no uncertain terms: that Rajiv Gandhi is back in command, having re-established his authority after months of drift. Now, he has to get down to the business of addressing with fresh zeal, the problems confronting the country.

Looking back, Rajiv's first two years in office have been marked by an extraordinary number of initiatives. In the political arena, he has pushed for a cleaning up of public life (starting with the anti-defection law), mounted an anti-corruption drive, tried to induct new blood into the Congress(I), and addressed himself with considerable success to the problems in Punjab, Assam and Mizoram. In administration, he has tried to reorganise and trim some of the ministries, streamline and speed up the functioning of the Government, and started re-training the mammoth bureaucracy. In the economic sphere, Rajiv has introduced a new tax policy, greatly liberalised the industrial and trade regimes, and pushed towards modernising the economy. He has also announced a new education policy, redirected the family planning drive, laid new stress on anti-poverty programmes as well as their implementation, and forced the Government to pay greater attention to environmental issues. In foreign policy, he has shown fresh initiatives around the country's borders and even further afield. This list can go on.

AJIT NINAN



Given the scope, range and sweeping character of some of these initiatives, this is a good time to draw up an interim balance sheet. Some of them have clearly delivered handsome results (the new tax policy), others have already shown some returns and can be expected to show more, given time; these can therefore be placed on auto-pilot. Most of the economic policy changes would come under this category. But a good many of the other initiatives have quite simply fizzled out, and not been followed through in order to ensure proper implementation. This is a signal failure. Finally, some of the initiatives have run aground, quite simply because the prime minister himself lost a good deal of his initial momentum. The search for new blood in politics, the attempts at a leaner, more effective administration and a reduction of corruption at the level where the public deals with the Government—all these are examples of perfectly desirable objectives being articulated, accepted and then getting lost along the way to some foreign capital or rural hide-out. And on one very visible point (a less captive and sycophantic Doordarshan), reform is not even seen as desirable any more.

The prime minister may well have been right in opening up so many fronts simultaneously. He was obviously a man in a hurry, a young man who was keen to see his country get somewhere. But at this stage in his administration, when the Government and its chief executive seem to have little time for anything other than fire-fighting on a dozen different fronts, Rajiv Gandhi has to look beyond the immediate problems and decide on his most important priorities, the tasks that he will see through—say in the next one or two years. India is a country beset with problems everywhere, so the question is one of deciding what should and can be addressed immediately. This is not to ask for yet another rehashed 20-point programme. What is needed is the identification of a clear set of issues to which the prime minister and his administration will pay overriding attention, and with which he can galvanise the nation into action. There is really no other way of salvaging at least some of the initiatives of the past two years, and getting them to deliver results that people can at least see in their daily lives.

Tackling the problem of communalism should be Priority No. 1. This is an old dragon with new fire in its breath, and the prime minister has not even donned armour yet to face up to the threat. Only if he shows his own seriousness on this issue will the others. Tackling poverty and unemployment are never-ending tasks that need the stamina of a marathon runner, and Rajiv Gandhi must stay the course on the first and start running on the second. The anti-poverty programme has been revitalised but still has too many infirmities (leakages and shoddy work in the field, for instance), and could be re-focused so as to achieve quick progress in hand-picked areas: say, the provision of water and sewerage in the villages. The employment issue, for one, has not been faced up to at all. Education is yet another subject of prime importance: vocationalisation, the provision of basic facilities in schools, the proper implementation of the new policy.

There should be a sharp attack on public waste in all its myriad forms, whether in public sector industry, government programmes or anything else. The country does not have such an abundance of resources that they can be frittered away through continuing sloth, inefficiency and plain corruption. Finally, the prime minister must realise that he needs lieutenants whom he can trust and to whom he can delegate the many tasks he has at hand. Having cut some heavyweights to size in last fortnight's cabinet reshuffle, Rajiv Gandhi has tended to fall back on old war-horses to give his team a sense of stability. This may be all right as a temporary strategy, but what he really needs is people with the boldness, initiative and ability to seize a problem and wrestle it to the ground, in the same manner that V.P. Singh has set the country's tax administration right.

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● *Naturally, reputations are destroyed every day. He (Rajiv Gandhi) believes anything against anybody—except his favoured ones.*

■ P.C. SETHI in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

● *Quite a few of those surrounding him (Rajiv Gandhi) today are betrayers and ungrateful people who ditched Mrs Gandhi when she was in difficulty. Ninety per cent of the persons who were loyal to Mrs Gandhi are not around Rajiv today.... It looks like he did not like his mother.*

■ GUNDU RAO in *Probe India*

● *There is an alternative political model for India, resting on the decentralisation of power.... This is the time to make a fundamental reappraisal. A time to explore the desirability and feasibility of creating a United States of India.*

■ RAJINDER PURI in *The Sunday Observer*

● *I always say that the insect of violence (hinsa ka keera) will perforce breed on the garbage that is the Congress(I) today. This party has criminalised politics and politicised crime.*

■ KARPOORI THAKUR in *The Telegraph*

● *I regret that our security was lax in certain respects.*

■ ZIA UL HAQ, Pakistan President, to American reporters, on the Pan Am hijack

● *Let the Government protect the people. The Gods can take care of themselves.*

■ JAYENDRA SARASWATI SWAMIGAL, Shankaracharya of Kamakoti Peetam, in *Indian Express*

● *If the prime minister is so upset with the press, why doesn't he complain to the Press Council? He has a paid press adviser to take care of such things.*

■ M.V. KAMATH in *The Telegraph*

● *There are some national dailies and columnists, and leaders like Subramaniam Swamy who seem to feel that their prime minister is Zia ul Haq, not Rajiv Gandhi. Most of our national dailies are lobbyists for the nation's number one enemy, Zia ul Haq.*

■ RUSSY KARANJIA in *The Sunday Observer*

● *I want them (ex-armymen) in the movement not for their training in arms but for their discipline. Politicians can be bought for five thousand rupees. A soldier will never do that.*

■ SUBHASH GHISING in *Onlooker*

● *Darjeeling was a part of Sikkim once. But I am not asking for it back. It is now a part of West Bengal. Whatever the Centre decides on its future, it is their headache. Darjeeling is not my baby.*

■ NAR BAHADUR BHANDARI in *Sunday*

● *I have focused attention of the Government and the press on the abuses taking place in the corporate sector. I believe I have also spawned the concept of corporate honesty in this country.*

■ SWRAJ PAUL in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*

● *We can't afford to lose against Pakistan. It's not exactly like going to war, but we play at our peak.*

■ DILIP VENGSARKAR in *Gentleman*

● *But I still shake. My problem is really not trying to act but trying not to shake. So all my preparation is really preparation to try and forget the shakes!*

■ ROSHAN SETH on film acting in *Society*

● *When I started out I found myself in a brand new world. But then it became just another monotonous job. I felt like a postal clerk stamping envelopes.*

■ PADMINI KOLHAPURE in *Sunday Review*

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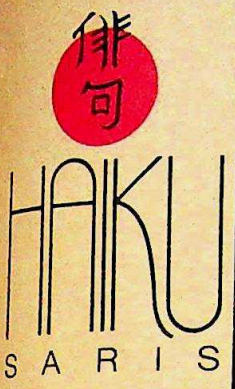

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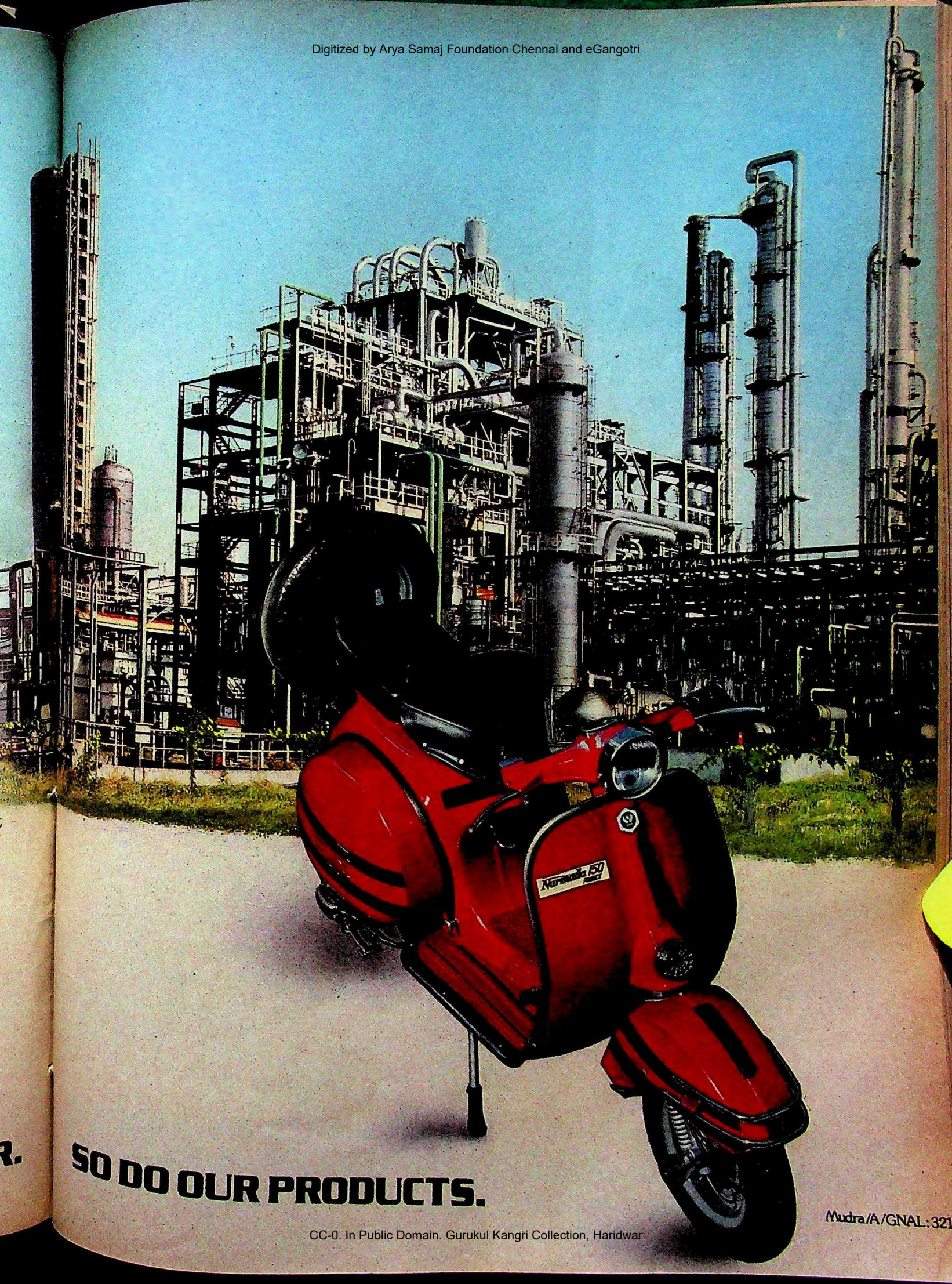

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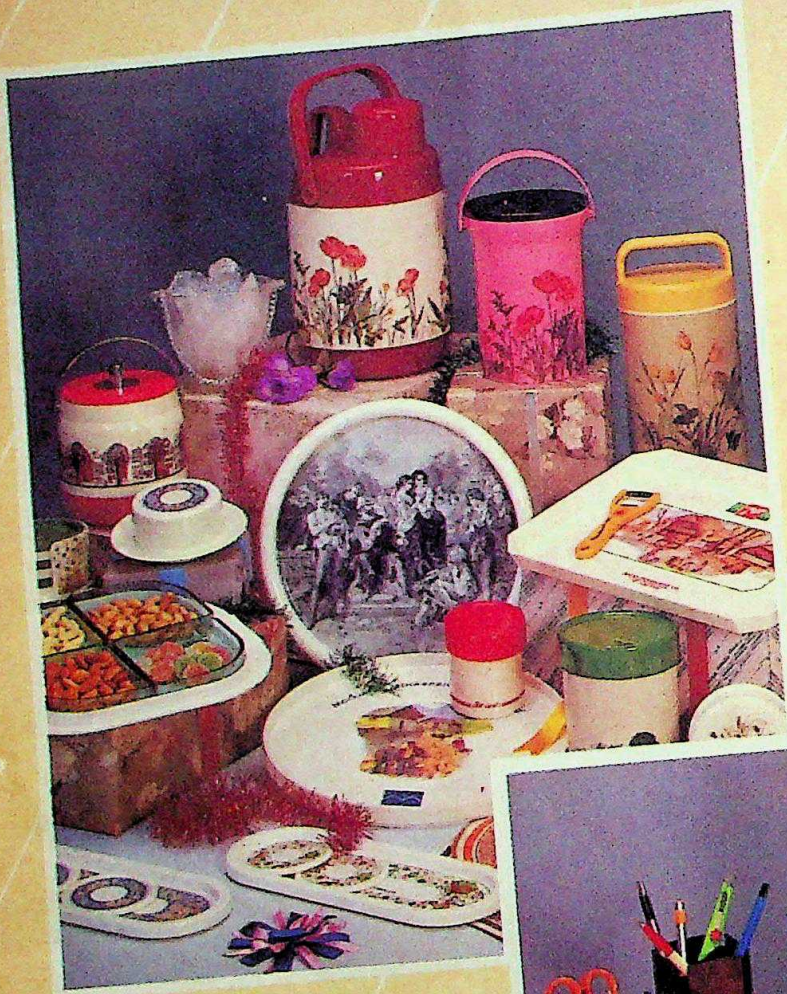

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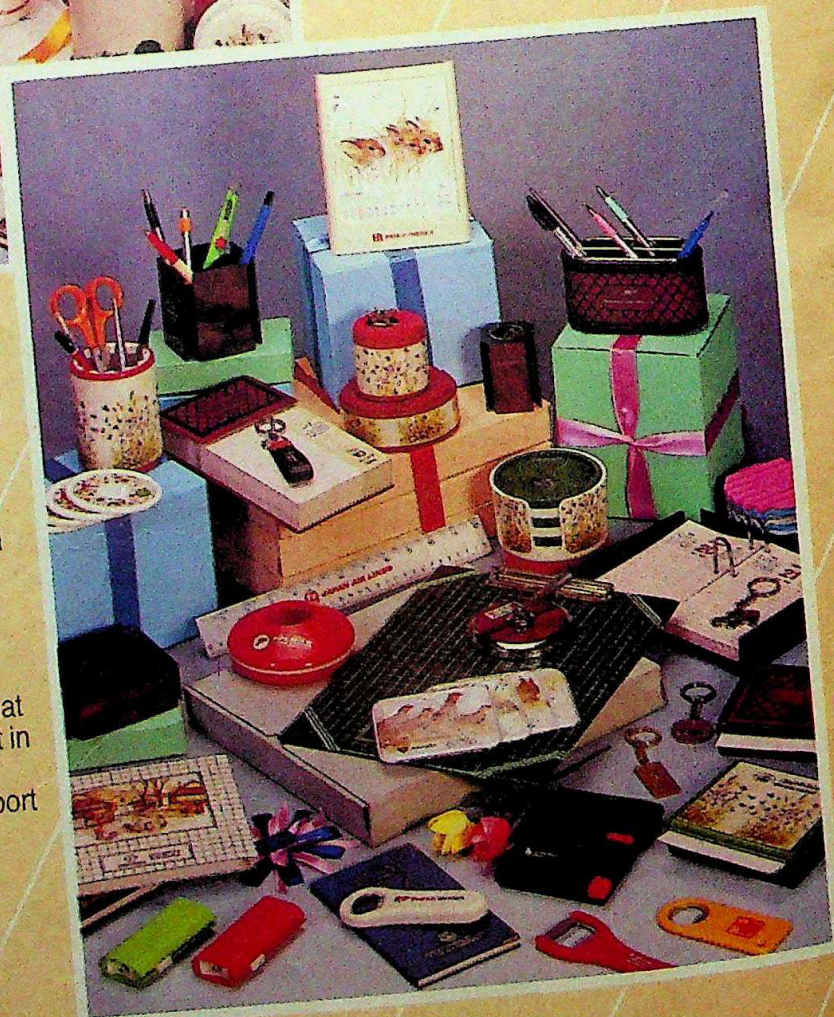

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DEITY DUES

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

■ There is news that will comfort a middle class beleaguered by the price rise. Incredible though it may seem, even God came close to postponing a journey last month in Nalgonda district of Andhra Pradesh due to a shortage of hard cash. And He could proceed only after His personal effects were auctioned.

According to rather agitated sources in heaven, residents of Golanukonda had installed an idol of Lord Vigneswara in their village. Nothing wrong there. And on a certain day in September they happily assembled to take the Lord for the ritual immersion. That was where the trouble started. The priest was not about to have any of it, not until some outstanding dues were settled: who was going to pay him for pooja expenses over all those days was what he wanted to know.

Shocked and indignant faces were all very well, but the answer the man of God really wanted wasn't forthcoming. So, he immediately set about proving that the practice of religion had also inculcated a fine practical sense in him. He auctioned the idol, along with dhoti and sacred thread, and even the offering offruits and sweets to the deity. Only after he had Rs 99 safely in hand was God allowed to proceed.

CHROME HOME

■ In Delhi, where shortage of space is a perennial problem, the son of a businessman set out to prove that one doesn't need too much of it to be able to accommodate the basic necessities of life. If you think hard about it, all you really need is a trusty two-wheeler. Plus, of course, a certain amount of time, ingenuity, spanners, nuts and bolts, and lots of money.

The enterprising young schoolboy has turned his motorcycle into a veritable home and it has almost everything except a roof and rooms. He has managed to find the place to install not only a tiny television on the fuel tank of his two-wheeler, but also a cassette deck stereo system, with speakers in the front as well as behind, a cordless telephone and even a battery-operated

mini-refrigerator.

What is more, the thing actually moves, and reportedly has been driven all the way from Delhi to Agra and back recently.

The real problem that is being posed is presumably for the insurance companies, who will have to decide whether they should register the contraption under the head of vehicle insurance or household insurance.

SECOND SIGHT

■ There is life after death. Though doubtless, the nature of it could always be a point of debate. A youth from Madhya Pradesh's district town of Sehore has indeed gone a step beyond in deciding that if he simply cannot manage to do the things he intensely wants to during his lifetime, he will just have to postpone doing them until after his death.

This young man, a clerk in a government office, is clear in his mind that what he would really like is to get around the world and, particularly, visit the West. But aware of the financial limitations he has to contend with, he knows that travelling abroad is easier said than done. After pondering over the matter, therefore, he decided ultimately that he just couldn't manage it.

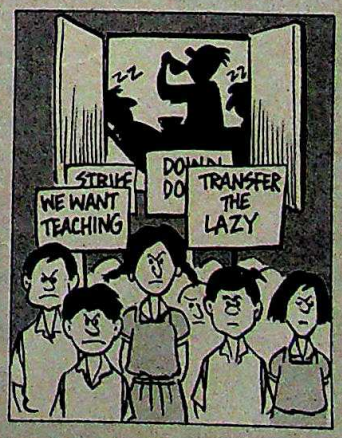
So he figured out a unique alternative. When a social organisation arranged an eye donation camp in Sehore last month, the young government servant was a willing donor. He had only one precondition, however, to the use of his eyes after his death. This was the stipulation that they be given to a millionaire—so that at last he would be able to see the world. A fitting case of keeping an eye open for opportunities, if there ever was one.

BATTLE BABIES

■ There is so much talk among academics of having to deal with uninterested students that it is easy to be misled. The truth, however, is that students have rarely been more keen to absorb knowledge.

Take, for instance, the village primary school in Rajasthan's Bhilwara district. Eager children would stream into class every morning and find nobody there to tell them about the mysteries of either the world or the Hindi language. More often than not, the teachers were having a quiet chat in another room—probably discussing the lack of student interest over tea.

Last month, the little fellows decided that enough was enough and a public servant couldn't be allowed to get away with this kind of



thing indefinitely. Taking a cue from their betters, they went on a little strike of their own demanding that their teachers come on time and teach them regularly. They wanted those teachers who refused to change their lazy ways to be transferred immediately. Chances are that the humiliated teachers are now looking forward to settling scores at the next exams.

—Compiled by SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

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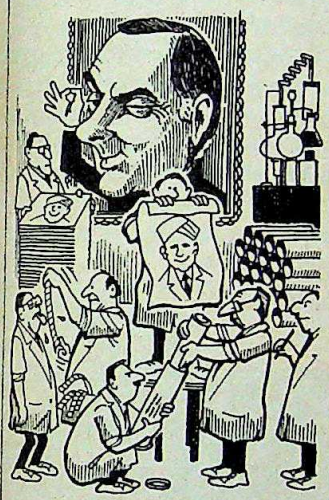
Prime Portraits

● The prime minister is known for his spontaneity, but there's a dangerously thin line beyond which it degenerates into impetuosity. Recently a well-known scientist from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), calling on the prime minister in his office, showed him a portrait of the famous Indian scientist C.V. Raman, done within the council. Rajiv was impressed by the high-



tech lithographic depiction of Raman. Could it be reproduced in large numbers, he asked. The answer was yes sir.

Rajiv thereupon ordered that copies of the portrait be sent to every government-funded high school in the country—there are nearly a lakh and a half of them. And then he had a second thought. He decreed that similar portraits of other Indian scientists be made and sent each month to all the schools. The visiting scientist replied that the special paper on which the portrait was done needed to be imported from Japan. No problem, said the prime minister.

But there are other logistical problems as well. How should the portraits be despatched? They cannot be folded, and they cannot be sent flat by post. They can, of course, be rolled up. So the answer: special cylindrical containers for packaging them. But these also must be imported from Japan, it seems. So now it looks as if several officials of the CSIR are going to spend their time licking stamps and stuffing posters into protective cylinders—about 1,50,000 each month.

Model Show

● Westland, the ailing British helicopter firm that was virtually bailed out of bankruptcy by India's purchase of a fleet of helicopters, seems to have staged a remarkable recovery. Top officials of the company were back in New Delhi last fortnight to do some aggressive marketing of their new model of helicopter, due to become operational in 1990. An audio-visual show of the new chopper and its computerised avionics was presented to senior Indian defence and civil aviation officers over an elaborate lunch at a prestigious five star hotel.

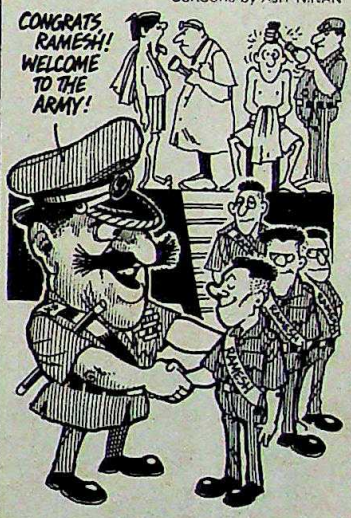
Westland is hoping that the newly-formed Helicopter Corporation of India will, under its ambitious expansion plans, be interested in upgrad-

ing its fleet of helicopters which includes the earlier version of the Westland. The newer model, larger, more efficient with highly sophisticated avionics, is being manufactured in collaboration with the Italian aviation company, Agusta, and seems to have impressed the Indian officials present, though, like the earlier purchase, any decision by the Indian Government is certain to carry a political price tag.

Recruits Racket

● Army Headquarters has been trying to resolve a problem to which the brass-hats so far have found no solution. They have received several well-documented reports that the army recruitment centres

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN



in many parts of the country are ridden with fraud and scandal. One common racket involves what is known as a "benami test". It goes like this: Ashok, 20, wants to join the army as a jawan. But he is illiterate and perhaps undernourished and will surely fail the exam if he appears. So he asks a more likely candidate, Naresh, to front for him. Naresh submits an application, puts a thumb impression on it, calling himself Ashok, and passes the tests. At recruitment time, the real Ashok simply enlists with no questions asked. The racket was detected when an alert army doctor, on double-checking, found that the man who was about to be inducted was shorter than shown on the certificate of the preliminary medical exam. An inquiry established that another person had taken the exam by proxy.

Herring Bureau

● The Intelligence Bureau (IB) is getting increasingly involved in fishing for red herrings deliberately placed in its path by people with motives far removed from national security. On at least five occasions in the last two months, they have received letters or telephone calls from so-called "informers" who have warned them about the impending arrival of foreign-based Sikh "terrorists" at Delhi's Indira Gandhi Airport. On each occasion, teams of IB sleuths have arrived at the airport and hustled off the "terrorist" to the hyper-active interrogation centre at Delhi's Red Fort for questioning, where the suspect is then kept cooling his heels while further inquiries were conducted. On each occasion, it was discovered that the suspect was in no way remotely connected with terrorists and was innocent. The "informers" turned out to be relatives who were involved in property disputes in Punjab with the people taken in for questioning who were non-resident Indians. Sources

in the IB, however, say that they have no way of dealing with the time-wasting problem since all such information has to be acted upon—keeping in view the prevailing situation—regardless of the background or antecedents of the informers.

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CABINET RESHUFFLE Shock T

FOR months the country had been waiting for the reshuffle. Ministers had been on tenterhooks, and at least two of the most important ones had even been sounded by the prime minister about changes in their portfolios more than a month before the reshuffle actually took place. But when D-Day came, it caught virtually everyone unawares.

When Rajiv Gandhi returned from his tour of the Far East on October 20, among the papers that he devoted some attention to was a folder marked 'secret'. It had a detailed report on the political squabbling between Arjun Singh and former home minister P.C. Sethi, along with newspaper comments and intelligence reports about the domestic political situation. The reports emphasised the deep schisms within the party because of caste alignments, and even talked of potential threats to his leadership.

Though his colleagues did not know it, Rajiv Gandhi had apparently made up his mind even before he went abroad. And soon enough his aides were putting through long-distance calls to Calcutta, Bhubaneswar and Trivandrum, trying to locate people who had to reach the capital by the next morning. Indeed, Cabinet Secretary B.G. Deshmukh had already spoken to officials at Rashtrapati Bhavan about a possible swearing-in around lunch time the next day.

Arjun Singh had bathed quite late on the morning of October 22 and was about to settle down for an AICC(I) meeting with party secretaries when his RAX instrument rang and he was summoned to the prime minister's residence at 7 Race Course Road. The portly Singh, it seems, had already got wind of the coming change, and had said as much to a journalist friend who wanted to interview him as party vice-president. Also summoned on the RAX to Race Course Road was Arun Nehru.

Soon, urban development minister Abdul Ghafoor, transport minister Mohsina Kidwai, ministers of state V.N. Gadgil and Khurshid Alam Khan and former Haryana chief minister Bhajan Lal found themselves waiting outside the prime minister's office room at his residence. Nehru was the first to go in and meet Rajiv Gandhi, followed by the others. In the space of half an hour, Rajiv Gandhi had outlined to some of his colleagues his most important cabinet reshuffle after being elected to office nearly two years ago.

None of the ministers had come with a resignation letter. All of them were told to take pieces of paper from M.L. Fotedar, Rajiv Gandhi's political aide, and write out their resignations. Ghafoor pulled out a blank slip of paper from his pocket and, after a heated argument over his performance with the prime minister (Ghafoor asked which other minister had been able to successfully tackle the problems of cities like Delhi and Calcutta), finally submitted his resignation. Mohsina Kidwai in turn protested strongly against being shunted from one ministry to another (she was assigned transport only a few months ago, and was now being given urban development). The last to go in was Sitaram Kesri, who wrote out his resignation in Hindi. Barring Khurshid Alam Khan, who addressed his type-written resignation to President Zail Singh, all the other letters were addressed to the prime

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minister. Rajiv wrote "Accept" on each of the letters before forwarding them to the President.

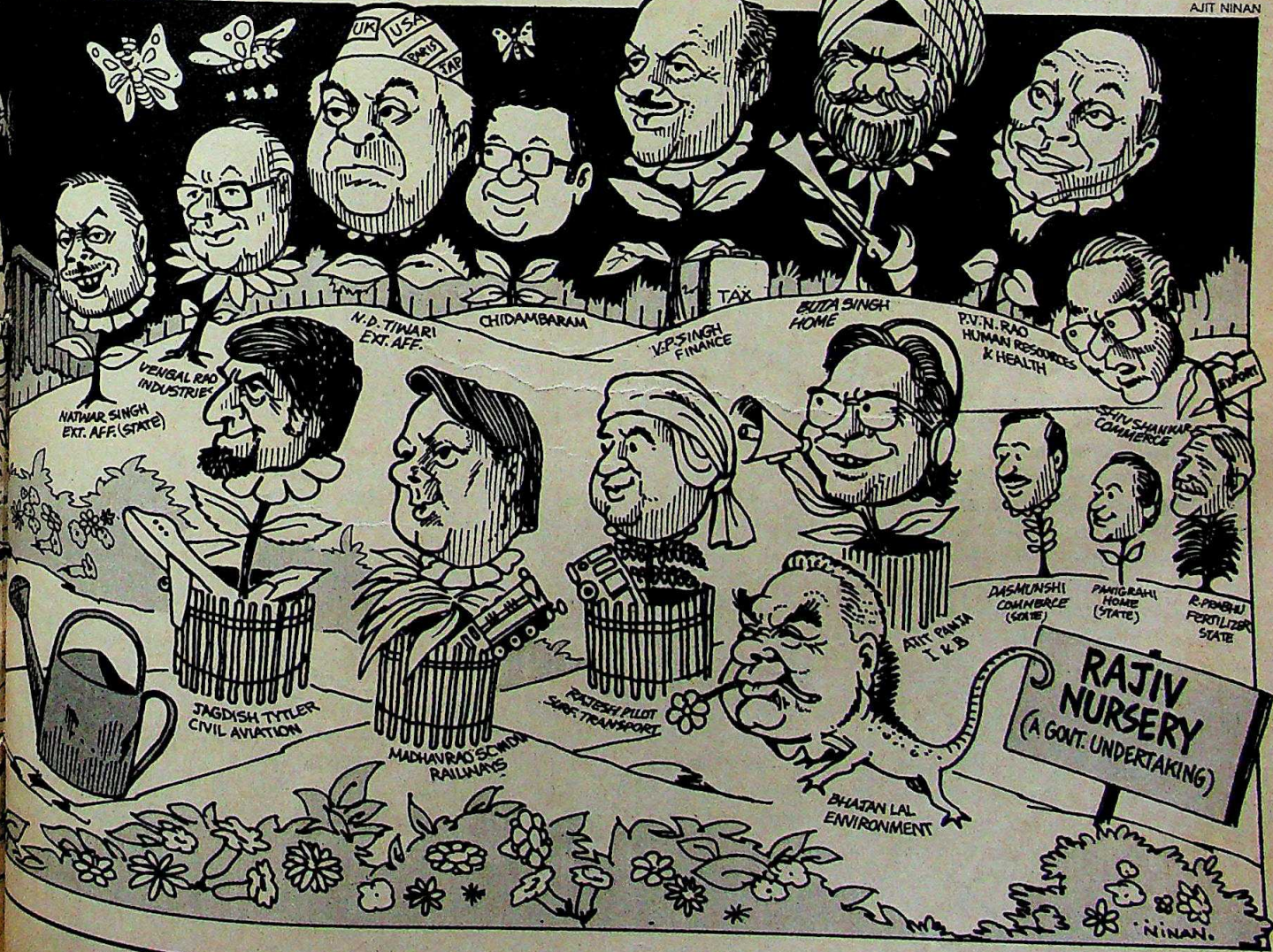
But there was a small variation in the case of Arun Nehru. While everyone else said in his letter that he would be ready to work under Rajiv's leadership in whatever capacity he wanted, Nehru wrote in stiff, managerial style: "I thank you for the opportunity you have given me to work with you." The prime minister wrote in large lettering and with some emphasis: "Accepted".

When the scene shifted to Rashtrapati Bhavan, there was confusion. In the Yellow Room, chairs were kept even for the ministers who were dropped. And those who were to be sworn in came 10 to 15 minutes after the prime minister himself had arrived. President Zail Singh, who began walking to the hall at 1.45 p.m., had to be escorted back to his room because the ministers to be sworn in had not yet arrived.

After the half-hour swearing-in, it quickly became obvious that this reshuffle was different from its five predecessors. Any cabinet reshuffle involves juggling with three or four factors: administrative efficiency, political compulsions, honesty and the need to ensure regional representation. In his previous chopping and changing, Rajiv Gandhi had sought primarily to put together a team which was performance-oriented, with political considerations taking a back-seat. But this one, in contrast, had basically political objectives. In one fell stroke, Rajiv had uprooted what he obviously perceived as the budding parallel centres of power, including cousin Arun Nehru (who had held a key portfolio) and Arjun Singh, who had used his party vice-presidentship to try and expand his personal power base by enrolling new Congress(I) members and appointing hand-picked party office-bearers in a number of states. Also cut to size was Shiv Shanker, till then a constant presence in the inner circle around the prime minister, who had to pack his bags and leave the Ministry of External Affairs in South Block and confine himself to the Commerce Ministry in Udyog Bhavan.

So, while the prime minister said that performance had been a yardstick in his decision-making and that heavyweights had been brought into the Cabinet "as we did not have enough", the biggest heavy-

AJIT NINAN



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weight of them all—Arun Nehru—was now out in the wilderness. The other political heavyweight, Arjun Singh, had been pointedly given a lightweight portfolio. Clearly, the prime minister was consolidating his hold over the party in a decisive fashion. And the shape of things to come was evident in the fact that four of the seven new ministerial inductees were not part of any of the known lobbies in the party.

Rajiv's experiment in delegating vital tasks to hand-picked deputies had obviously not worked to his liking. It was soon after the landmark AICC(I) centenary session in Bombay that Rajiv had created the post of party vice-president, so that he himself could devote more time to the Government. But he did not define the powers of either the vice-president or the working president (neither post existed in the party constitution). And as the days passed, Working President Kamalapati Tripathi was deprived of even routine information about party affairs as Rajiv allowed Arjun Singh to run the party independently of Tripathi. One indication of this was the relative expenses on the working president and on the vice-president. In the case of Tripathi, the expenditure was no more than Rs 6,000 a month. But for Arjun Singh, it went up to an astronomical Rs 1.4 lakh.

SINGH was soon asked to push through with the party's organisational elections, and trouble quickly followed. He was accused of helping his people to flood the party with bogus members on caste lines and inducting his own protege at the district level. In addition, he came in direct confrontation with the chief ministers, whom he summoned twice for meetings on communal harmony and programme implementation. Meanwhile, Rajiv appointed him convenor of the party's cell to monitor the benefits being given to the weaker sections—a post that gave him the excuse to visit states that were not actually under his direct charge. Thus he went to politically sensitive states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and questioned the state governments on various official issues. Not only this, Singh was also given charge of all the frontal organisations. As his control over the party grew, so did the number of his detractors. And he came into serious confrontation with Nehru over Punjab as well as Jammu and Kashmir. On both these issues, Nehru advocated a tough line, which Rajiv ignored as he sided with Arjun Singh. And by the time Nehru suffered a heart attack last summer, his decline had begun.

But Nehru's battle was taken over by Tripathi, the man who had once complained about him to the prime minister when party election tickets were being given out in 1984. The real problem, of course, was that no one in the party was willing to take orders from anyone other than Rajiv. Since he was not accessible to the majority of them and Arjun Singh tried to fill the role in his own way, he came under increasing fire. Initially, Rajiv backed him to the hilt, but he slammed the brakes when it came to taking punitive action against Arif Mohammed Khan (the former Nehru protege who resigned in protest against the Muslim Women's Bill) and finally P.C. Sethi, who had lashed out at Singh in a couple of magazine interviews. Meanwhile, Arjun Singh had also run into an impasse at the AICC(I) headquarters, where he failed to carry with him his team of general secretaries, many of whom had begun to openly express their antipathy to the vice-president.

When the break finally came, both Tripathi and Sethi gleefully welcomed Rajiv's decision to shift Singh from the

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RAGHU RAI

President Zail Singh arrives for the swearing-in: delayed proceedings

vice-presidentship. Said Tripathi: "Arjun Singh now is the right person in the right place." Added Sethi: "I do not know on whose advice the prime minister has removed him, but I am very happy at this development." With the timing of Arjun Singh's demotion, the prime minister had also sent a clear message to the party that he was willing to listen to criticism, and that he was receptive to calls for change.

In some senses, the prime minister-cum-party president was now trying to start again with a clean slate by pushing aside all the warring satraps in the party. If Arun Nehru was sacked and Arjun Singh sidelined, Rajiv tried to remove Tripathi from the working presidency too by offering him the chairmanship of the Ganga Development Authority. Tripathi promptly declined the offer, and it now remains to be seen whether a new, tough Rajiv Gandhi would go ahead with what he had in mind regardless, or whether he would tread gingerly. Meanwhile, one thing was clear: the prime minister was now supreme, and both the men who had at one time or the other during the past year been touted as "the most powerful men after Rajiv" had been cut to size.

Others in the political arena read the signals quickly. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Bir Bahadur Singh, who partly owed his high office to Nehru, had seen the signs of Nehru being out of favour some months ago and quickly started building bridges with others in the prime minister's household. In the context of his past loyalties, he declared significantly last fortnight that "on my part I can assure Shri Rajiv Gandhi that the entire state of Uttar Pradesh is solidly behind him".

It would, of course, have been difficult for Rajiv if he had not been so even-handed, and had struck at one faction and not the other. Rajiv had been receiving reports that his cousin was trying to build his own political base and even that Nehru was encouraging dissidents against him and Arjun Singh. Nehru's gesture of sending flowers to ailing opposition leaders like S.S. Mohapatra was seized upon by his detractors to argue that he was even wooing the Opposition. But Nehru's apologists said that he was doing no more than reciprocating gestures that they had made to him when he was sick himself.

NEHRU'S meetings with chief ministers and other politicians created their own problems in this context. Once again, the Nehru apologists argued that since it was difficult for them to meet the prime minister and they were disliked by Singh, they used to drop by at Nehru's office for discussing their problems. In fact, most of the Congress(I) chief ministers have complained of the prime minister's inaccessibility, and his seeming reluctance to spend time with politicians. One chief minister said last fortnight: "The prime minister seems to prefer spending time with his friends rather than with us, and chooses to spend three hours at his friend's engagement ceremony."

For all that, it is alleged that Nehru might have been trying to build his own power base within the party: he certainly used his influence to good effect at the time of handing out party tickets for elections to the Lok Sabha and the state assemblies. And by one count, there were at least 100 MP's and several hundred MLA's plus 50 state ministers whom he had helped at one time or another. Viewed from the prime minister's camp, there was the distinct possibility that Nehru could, at some point in time, become the focal point

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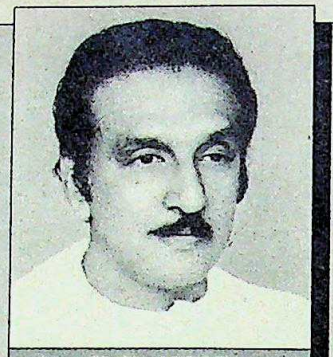
BHAJAN LAL

P.R. DAS MUNSHI


M.M. JACOB

AJIT KUMAR PANJA

A subsidiary objective of the reshuffle was to give greater representation to the states—Haryana, Kerala and West Bengal—where assembly elections are due.

of dissident activity.

Certainly, Nehru also had his detractors, and he was far from being a very popular politician. Among the people who could barely hide their satisfaction at his ouster last fortnight were an influential governor and a Central minister. Rajiv himself had started talking disparagingly of Nehru, with the word being spread that he had not been very efficient in the Home Ministry. Many Congress(I) politicians failed to read the signals about the estrangement between the two cousins, and some continued to see Nehru in the belief that they were meeting the prime minister's right-hand man.

At its root, the problem with Nehru may have been his attitude to Rajiv. Five years ago, he started out by ushering Rajiv into the world of politics, helping him through the initiation process. Then, circumstance saw Rajiv Gandhi catapulted into the prime minister's chair. Nehru continued to deal with Rajiv as an equal. Now the prime minister has told him in no uncertain terms who is the boss. Although a political observer quipped that "earlier Nehru was down, but not out; now, he may be out, but is he down?", right now the signal is unmistakably thumbs down.

Over the last few months, according to one well-informed source, Nehru had

ARUN NEHRU

"I need complete rest"

HE had just finished jogging for an hour on his manicured back lawns. A team of doctors was waiting in his spacious living-room to carry out the weekly health check on Arun Kumar Nehru, the man who till some months ago was considered the most powerful in the country after the prime minister. Outside, a couple of cars carted in groups of politicians from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Nehru's supporters in the Congress(I) were visibly demoralised last fortnight. But the former minister of state for internal security was relaxed and showed no outward signs of concern. "You see," he said in explanation for his thunderous exit from the Council of Ministers, "I am still exercising and can't strain myself beyond a point."

Nehru has been advised to reduce his weight from 90 kg now to 80 kg in six months, and to keep strict control over his diet. His doctors allow him a few cups of lemon tea and lightly-cooked food. Cricket, a major passion, is banned. Above all, he has been advised to talk as little as possible. But he finds it difficult to keep away the stream of visitors, and the telephone rings constantly. He tells his friends that he will be out of action for four months (which, coincidentally, is when assembly elections might be held in three states).

Excerpts from an exclusive, hour-long interview with PRABHU CHAWLA:

Q. *How do you feel now that you are not in the Government?*

A. Excellent. The fact of the matter is that during the last few months I have attended office for only 75 days. And even then I used to attend work for only two or three hours a day. The work of the ministry was suffering. Till I resigned I was only handling the paramilitary forces and police training. The reality is that for the next couple of months I have to take it easy. I could not have put in a 100 per cent effort. So I had to decide to work half-heartedly or quit.

Q. *So you decided to resign, or the prime minister asked you to resign?*

A. If I was honest to myself and my job, that was the only alternative.

Q. *There is no bitterness?*

A. There is no question of any bitterness. It is the prime minister's prerogative to choose his team. For me personally, I feel I am having a bit of a holiday now after almost five years of active politics. I am catching up with my reading. During the last four days I have finished two volumes of Churchill.

Q. *People say that you were emerging as an alternative to the prime minister.*

A. This is utter nonsense. There is no shortage of rumours in politics. Both at the official level as prime minister and at the personal level as my cousin, I will make every effort to strengthen Rajiv Gandhi and the party, in whatever capacity I am there.

Q. *But isn't it a fact that numerous politicians in power were loyal to you personally?*

A. I am not aware of those who are claiming to be my people. I have always maintained that in the organisation there is one group—the Congress group. If someone goes out of the way to announce his loyalty he is also to be

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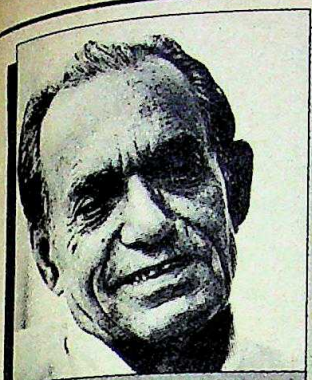
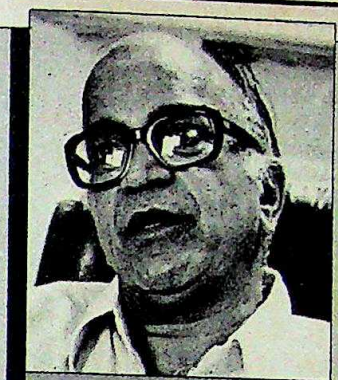

ABDUL GHAFOOR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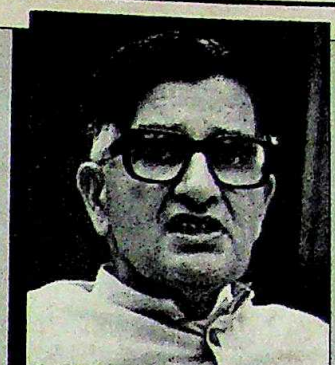
KHURSHID ALAM KHAN

SITARAM KESRI

The sacked ministers often reacted with surprise. Ghafoor argued with the prime minister about his record in office, and Gadgil had been expecting promotion.

submitted his resignation to the prime minister no fewer than four times, provoked partly by health problems and partly by the humiliating manner in which the Government announced that some of Nehru's important portfolios had been taken away from him. Some party spokesmen say that Nehru was offered a light portfolio, which he declined on the plea that he would not be able to do justice to it. Nehru himself disclaimed last fortnight that "the question of an alternative portfolio never came up, because I would not have been able to do a proper job."

If putting an end to the factional squabbles and putting the rival centres of power in their place was the primary objective of the reshuffle last fortnight, there were subsidiary objectives as well. Rajiv had a point about inducting senior members (three are former chief ministers: J.Vengal Rao from Andhra Pradesh, Bhajan Lal from Haryana and Arjun Singh himself from Madhya Pradesh), but he seems to have been selective in his rewarding of performance and punishment of non-performance. One other factor must have weighed heavily with him, because he gave substantial new representation to the states expected to go to the polls early next year: Haryana, West Bengal and Kerala.

The extent to which the coming elec-

watched. Loyalties and commitment are not proclaimed but practised.

Q. *What is your opinion on the Kamalapati Tripathi-Arjun Singh confrontation? Are you with Tripathi?*

A. I am a Congressman. There are many challenges before the party. Each one of us must behave in a manner that makes the leadership stronger.

Q. *Why are senior leaders fighting?*

A. I have always believed in what Mrs Gandhi said, that individuals do not matter. It is the policies which are ultimately important. And no one should ever project himself as someone who is individually powerful. The Congress(I) derives its strength from the leadership and from the workers in the villages. And 99.9 per cent of these committed workers share power in neither the Government nor the party. That is where lies the power of the party and the leader.

Q. *Does the prime minister act on the basis of a set of advisers around him?*

A. This constant talk of four or five

BHAWAN SINGH

advisers to the prime minister is absolute nonsense. Anyone sensible will realise that in any sphere of life you achieve results by delegation. And if there are a few hundred subjects, there will be a few hundred individuals being consulted. Sometimes this confusion is deliberately created because people keep passing the buck and don't want to own it up. My personal feeling is that if everyone keeps doing his job honestly this nonsense about a set of advisers will stop.

Q. *What do you think about the postponement of party elections?*

A. I am not authorised to comment on it. It is for the AICC to react to this. I believe they are doing something about it.

Q. *Do you think that dissidence has increased in the party?*

A. When was there no dissidence in the party? It is a big organisation. But all the Congressmen are loyal to the leadership. The party office-bearers are taking care of the minor problems.

Q. *Do you have any personal problems with the prime minister?*

A. No. I have the best of personal relationships with him. And there is no misunderstanding; this seems to be a media creation.

Q. *What role do you see for yourself now?*

A. I need complete rest now. Soon I have to go abroad for a medical examination. I will be out for a few months. Let me get back to normal.

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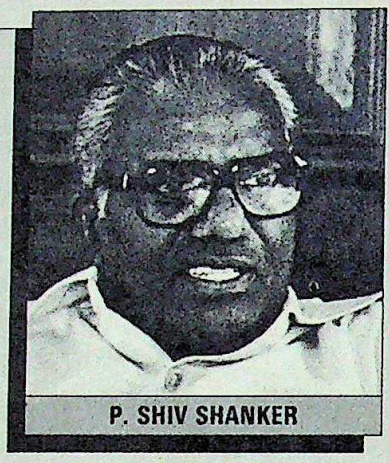
tions preyed on the prime minister's mind was revealed by the rehabilitation of Bhajan Lal, who had been earlier forced to resign as Haryana chief minister following the road-blocks he put in the way of implementing the Punjab accord. But now Bhajan Lal was back in office. Rajiv must have kept in mind the fact that he had already dropped Rao Birendra Singh in September last year and annoyed the Ahir lobby in the state. Now, if he kept out Bhajan Lal, he would have a difficult time wooing the non-Jat vote at a time when the Jats themselves were rallying round the Lok Dal's Devi Lal.

But even while obliging Bhajan Lal, the prime minister gave the former Haryana chief minister the politically insignificant portfolio of environment and forests, which so far has not been a Cabinet-level post. This was done at a time when eight important ministries were being looked after by ministers of state with independent charge during the last few months.

Electoral considerations weighed equally heavily in the case of inducting Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, who was in fact the first to be informed of the reshuffle, a day in advance. West Bengal now has no fewer than four ministers at the Centre, out of 10 MP's. If performance were to be the main criterion for the reshuffle, Rajiv would have given marching orders to both Programme Implementation Minister A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdhury and Law Minister A.K. Sen. But both have survived the axe. For good measure, Ajit Panja was given independent charge of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry. According to opposition leaders, Panja's induction was motivated by the desire to use the official media for the coming election campaign.

In the case of Kerala too, three of the 10 party MP's are now Union ministers. M.M. Jacob, who has become the eighth minister in charge of parliamentary affairs during the last two years, is known to be close to the faction led by AICC(I) General Secretary A.K. Anthony.

But when Rajiv says that performance has been a yardstick used for judgement, he strains credibility. Certainly, Ghafoor had little to show for spending nearly two years looking after urban development. And Shiv Shanker had manifestly been unable to carry the double load of external affairs and commerce. So there was reason for these people being dropped. But V.N. Gadgil at information and broadcasting had been happy with kudos from the prime minister, and was in fact expecting a promotion when he got the axe. Neither


P. SHIV SHANKER

Shiv Shanker, who had been a constant presence in the inner circle around Rajiv, had his role circumscribed by having external affairs taken away.

ARJUN SINGH

"The ultimate test is loyalty"

At Arjun Singh's sprawling, heavily-guarded bungalow on Tughlaq Road, the expected sense of gloom was strangely missing. Two days after being removed from the vice-presidentship of the Congress(I) and being sworn into an innocuous ministerial post, Arjun Singh continued to play host to politicians from almost every part of the country. Ministers and civil servants from Punjab and Madhya Pradesh continued to be permanent fixtures. When Kunwar Saheb (as Singh's admirers call him) was away, his sons Abhimanyu and Ajay Singh (who is an MLA in Madhya Pradesh) ushered important visitors through the ubiquitous metal detector and into Singh's tastefully furnished study. They engaged other callers in conversation at the entrance to the main house, protected by commandos. A small mountain of files from the AICC(I) office and the Ministry of Communications began piling up on the desk inside. And in the annexe to the main building, Singh's six-member personal staff found it difficult to cope with the simultaneous, strident ringing of three telephones. The aides continued to give five- and 10-minute appointments to even the chief ministers and PCC(I) chiefs.

Taking a break from the unending press of callers and congratulators, Singh sat back and discussed the latest political developments with PRABHU CHAWLA. *Choosing his words and threading his way through the questions carefully, he maintained that his political aspirations were "circumscribed" by the wishes of the prime minister. Excerpts from the interview:*

Q. *How do you interpret the recent actions of the prime minister?*

A. With this cabinet reshuffle and his other actions, the prime minister has tried to ensure better cohesion, unity and accountability in the Government and in the party.

Q. *What do you mean by unity? Was there disunity in the organisation?*

A. I am referring to the total concept of unity in the Congress. This is where the real test of all Congressmen lies. Each one of us has a different perception of himself. But ultimately the test is unquestioning loyalty to the leader, and keeping a united image in the face of all kinds of provocations.

Q. *Don't you think that by inducting you into the Government the prime minister has succumbed to pressures from people like P.C. Sethi?*

A. This is not true. With all humility and with my experience, I can say one thing about the prime minister. Shri Rajiv Gandhi may be polite, but he can never be pressurised by anyone.

Q. *The move to remove you from the party post seems to be a step taken to oblige the Kamalapati Tripathi faction in the party.*

A. I don't think so.

Q. *Is it not a fact that the party was split vertically between two factions—one led by Tripathi and the other by you?*

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N.D. Tiwari paid the price for going slow on the industrial liberalisation front but his foreign policy stance may prove to be somewhat pro-Soviet.

N.D. TIWARI

P.V. Narasimha Rao in human resources development nor B. Shankaranand in water resources have a sparkling record. K. Natwar Singh may belong in external affairs, but his record in both steel and fertiliser has been fairly dismal. Margaret Alva has also survived despite getting the stick from the prime minister for the sports ignominy at Seoul.

In fact, barring Finance Minister V.P. Singh, there are few ministers with a very creditable record in the Government. Ironically, Singh's own future seemed uncertain for a while; somewhat shrewdly, a few days before the reshuffle he called a press conference and gave out figures of sharply rising tax revenue. Meanwhile, Rajiv indicated in an interview that Singh was unlikely to be dropped. The finance minister spent the best part of an hour with the prime minister two evenings before the reshuffle. Nevertheless, he was sufficiently on tenterhooks immediately before the reshuffle, and rushed to New Delhi from Bombay after cancelling a dinner meeting with Bombay Congress(I) chief Murli Deora and a medical check-up at Jaslok Hospital.

It was evident, meanwhile, that the whole plan was implemented without thinking things through fully. As industry minister, Tiwari may have been going slow on liberalising industrial policy (one example being the interminable delay in framing a new automobile policy), but in external affairs he is likely to introduce a pro-Soviet shift—which can hardly be what the prime minister intends, given the manner in which Bali Ram Bhagat was dropped from external affairs last May following his anti-US tirade over the Libya issue. Natwar Singh's presence as minister of state could cause some delicate problems of protocol: Foreign Secretary A.P. Venkateswaran was a year senior to him in the Indian Foreign Service before Natwar Singh decided to join politics. Also, Natwar Singh has in the past been identified with one particular faction in the Foreign Office.

On the plus side, Vengal Rao had a good administrative record as chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, and may be able to do a repeat performance in the Industry Ministry. But then again, Narasimha Rao is still left with the additional charge of health and family welfare, while H.K.L. Bhagat has both parliamentary affairs and food and civil supplies. Some of the untidiness remains.

Among the few sitting ministers to benefit from the reshuffle are those looking after the various forms of transport:

A. This is absolutely incorrect. Why should I lead a faction in the party? I don't need one anyway. I never had groups or factions even when I was the chief minister in Madhya Pradesh, where I could have encouraged personal loyalties.

Q. *The party seems to be divided on caste lines too—between Brahmins and Thakurs.*

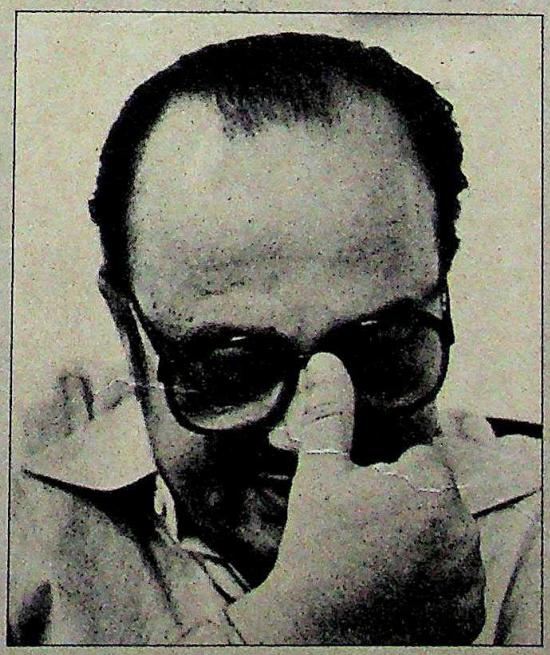
A. The caste lobbies are a non-event in the Congress. Caste has no political relevance in modern India.

Q. *You have been accused of mustering personal support so that you can be an alternative candidate for the prime ministership.*

A. This is the biggest piece of humbug going around now. I don't think anything like that even came to my mind. My loyalties are known to my leader. And I have no problems with him.

Q. *But a powerful section in the party has accused you of not defending the prime minister against the recent opposition attacks on him?*

A. This is contrary to the facts on record. As vice-president of the party I did contradict the Opposition's allegations and defended the party and the prime minister.



Q. *Kamalapati Tripathi keeps referring to a group of people surrounding the prime minister who advise him on all important matters. Who are the members of this group?*

A. Well, this group is not visible to me at least. Maybe someone else has better eyesight for spotting individuals who are invisible. The prime minister takes the advice of anyone whom he thinks is useful for a particular matter or issue.

Q. *Do you now feel that you would have been better off if you had not been inducted into the organisation? It has affected your image adversely, hasn't it?*

A. Nothing can be more painful and farcical than conducting yourself in politics with ifs and buts. I had earlier maintained that my politics began and ended at the doorsteps of Mrs Gandhi. And now I want to reiterate that my desires and aspirations are circumscribed by the wishes and commands of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. I have no illusions about myself. It is for the leader to assign any role, and it is immaterial whether one gains or loses in that role.

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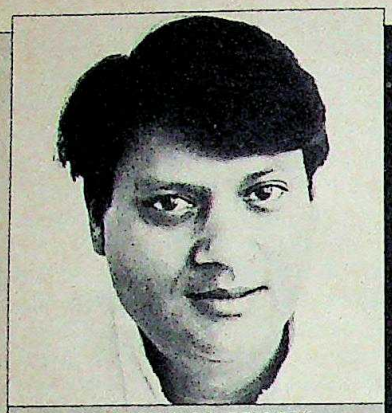
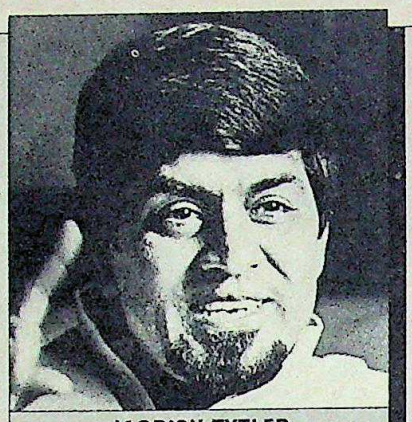
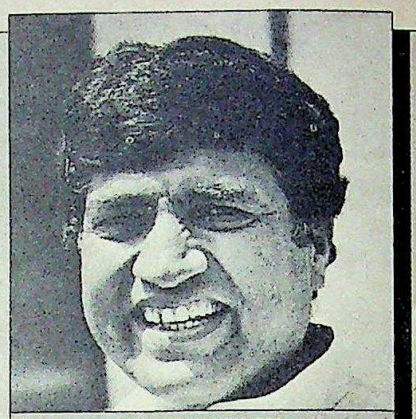

MADHAVRAO SCINDIA


JAGDISH TYTLER


RAJESH PILOT

The three ministers of state in charge of transport were rewarded with independent charge on the basis of their past performance.

Madhavrao Scindia in railways, Jagdish Tytler in civil aviation and Rajesh Pilot in surface transport. In the past, all three reported to a Cabinet minister for transport. Now they have independent charge on the strength of their performance. Another rising star with an expanding portfolio is P. Chidambaram.

STABILITY in the various ministries has been one of the casualties under Rajiv Gandhi. If people have come and gone from external affairs as though it were a railway platform, even parliamentary affairs has seen as many as six ministers of state come and go in less than two years. In the sensitive Home Ministry, there have been as many as three Cabinet-rank ministers and seven ministers of state, in commerce three Cabinet ministers and five ministers of state, in textiles one Cabinet minister, five ministers of state and a deputy minister, and in petroleum two Cabinet ministers and four ministers of state have come and gone during the last two years. Barring the law and finance ministries, almost every ministry has been bossed over by an average of four ministers in the past 24 months.

Geographical representation in the Council of Ministers is not fair either. States like Bihar, Gujarat and Maharashtra would have expected to get better representation. In fact, Maharashtra with over 40 MP's has only one Cabinet minister. Rajiv has not filled the vacancies caused by the return of S.B. Chavan to Maharashtra and the resignation of Gadgil. In the case of Bihar too, the 'vacancy' caused by the death of Chandrashekhar Singh has not been filled while Ghafoor from Bihar had to resign. Arjun Singh is technically a Delhi MP, so Madhya Pradesh is without Cabinet representation, as is Rajasthan. In fact, the north—which has over three-fourths of the party strength in Parliament—has got less than 30 per cent of the ministerial berths.

Inevitably, the Opposition was critical. Said Bharatiya Janata Party President L.K. Advani: "If you analyse his cabinet changes, you get the impression of a child getting tired of handling toys and throwing them aside." Added Janata Party leader Madhu Dandavate: "Not only is the political functioning of the prime minister casual and ad hoc, even his ministerial appointments are casual." And Lok Dal Chairman H.N. Bahuguna said: "It is a tragedy that a young man with a parliamentary strength of over 550 members can't put a stable team together."

Such criticism is perhaps to be expected. But it is clear that, two years into his term, Rajiv Gandhi has come to the end of one phase of his political development. He started out two years ago with the two Aruns (Nehru and Singh) as his immediate lieutenants. One has now been dropped, the other has preferred to be a back room boy. Then came the reliance on a handful of senior politicians as trusted aides: the likes of Arjun Singh and Shiv Shanker, to whom he wanted to delegate responsibility. But with faction-fighting and dissidence surfacing, and the men who were given a chance using it to build their own bases, Rajiv Gandhi has now clearly embarked on a new course. In a sense, Rajiv the politician has been born.

Immediately, there is no question of a "number two". In some senses, Rajiv Gandhi seems to have fallen back on a group of old non-political friends. In other ways, he shows signs of having opted for Mrs Gandhi's system of functioning: allowing everything to filter up to him through a variety of channels, so that no rival centres of power develop. Somewhat surprisingly, a growing tribe of Congressmen has begun saying that the prime minister has yet another channel of information and judgement now: his wife Sonia.

But the prime minister cannot but realise that he needs lieutenants whom he can rely on, and to whom he can delegate tasks. He seems disinclined temperamentally to spend time with political animals, but now has no one else assigned to do the job for him. And in the new climate of one supremo reigning supreme, questions of loyalty can become questions of overriding importance—and to the country's detriment. In this watershed period, the prime minister is also faced with the grim task of recharging his batteries, rekindling the country's faith in his abilities and showing that he can deliver the goods. If there have been no great hurrahs over the Cabinet reshuffle, it is partly because he has only half done the job at hand: in the sense that he has only swept the board clean, but not put in place those who will shoulder the new responsibilities. The next few weeks will show whether Rajiv Gandhi has thought things through, and found solutions to the problems that he has taken in hand after months of drift.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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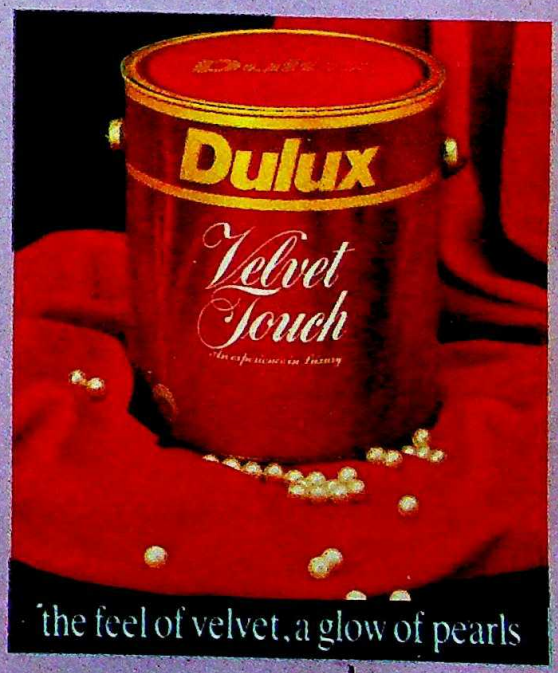

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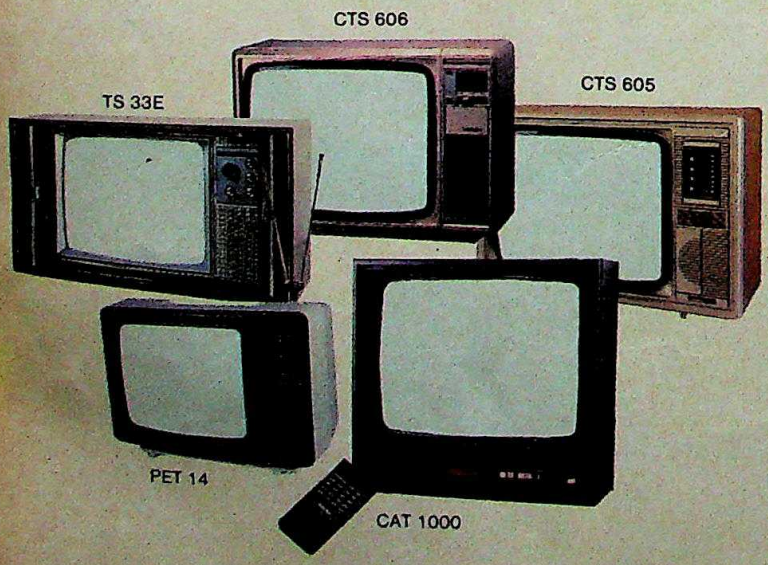

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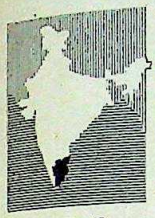
TAMIL NADU

Asserting Authority

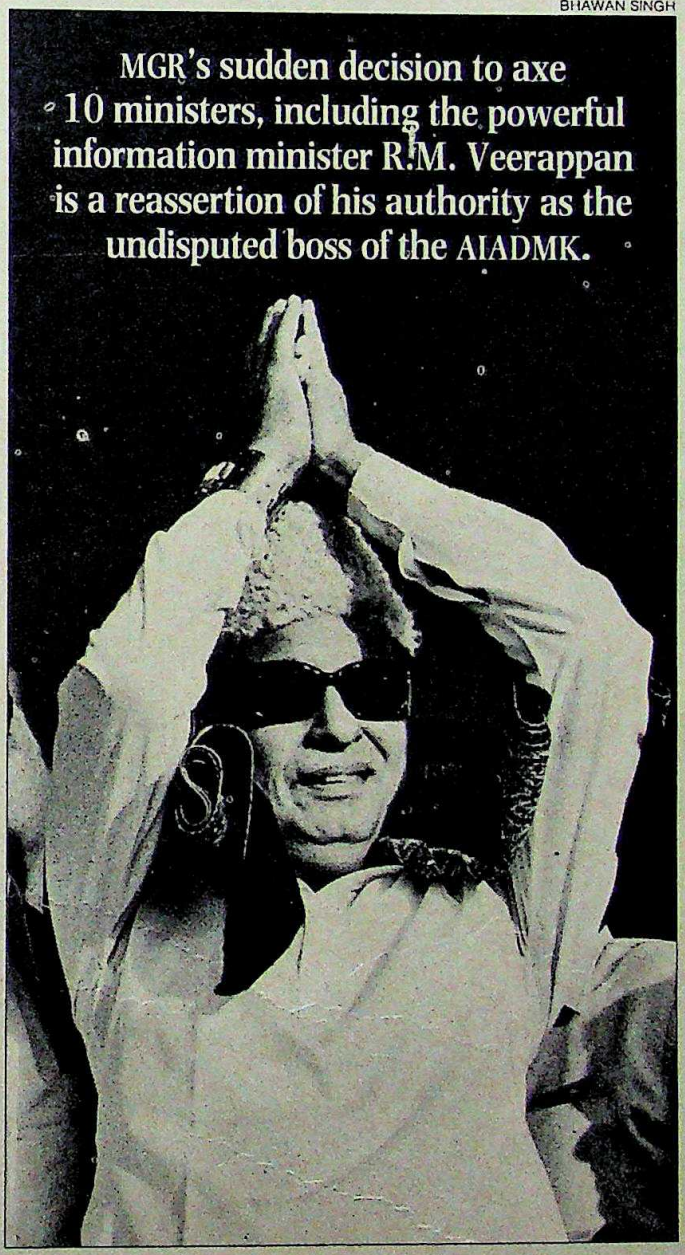


VIDWAN V. Lakshman, a popular astrologer in Madras who goes by the trade name of Balajosier and claims to be close to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran, is perhaps the saddest man in the city these days. Just the other day—in fact, in the Independence Day issue of his magazine *Balajothisam*—the pundit had matched the horoscopes of MGR and his close aide R.M. Veerappan and proclaimed that the two leaders have been inseparable companions for countless births and forecast that they would continue to be so for many more lives.

Last fortnight, however, the unpredictable leader of the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) decided to prove everybody wrong: the stars, astrologers and political pundits. In a stunning and totally unexpected display of political authority, MGR axed 10 of his 23 ministers, including Veerappan, the powerful information minister who was clearly on the inside track in the 'after MGR who?' race. Adding insult to injury was the fact that seven of the sacked ministers were known to be in Veerappan's camp, which has long been waging an open war of succession against the faction loyal to party Propaganda Secretary Jayalalitha. Prominent among the Veerappan loyalists shown the door was agriculture minister K. Kalimuthu, who showers equal venom on Jayalalitha and at attempts to impose Hindi on the state.

Ramachandran tried to play down the political significance of his dramatic move by saying: "The services of senior party leaders like Veerappan and Kalimuthu are now required to give the party a new thrust and enthusiasm. That is why I have spared them ministerial work." But the disclaimer fooled no one. Veerappan himself refused to comment, but an AIADMK MLA who is a staunch Veerappan-loyalist admitted: "The Cabinet changes are a direct hit at Veerappan and his followers." Noted another Veerappan camp follower, V.V. Swaminathan: "The whole exercise has shown that MGR is the undisputed leader of our party. And there is absolutely no questioning that."

BHAWAN SINGH



MGR's sudden decision to axe 10 ministers, including the powerful information minister R.M. Veerappan is a reassertion of his authority as the undisputed boss of the AIADMK.

If the sack orders amounted to a guillotining of the Veerappan camp, the portfolio changes effected among the other ministers sent thoroughly confusing political signals. For instance, V.V. Swaminathan, who was earlier handlooms minister, was given the infinitely more important information, tourism, prohibition and electricity portfolios despite being in the Veerappan camp. On the other hand, former electricity minister S. Ramachandran, a Jayalalitha-loyalist who was thought to be an MGR-confidant, has now been handed the insignificant charge of food. To confound the confusion, MGR not only reinducted former minister K.A. Krishnaswamy into the Cabinet but also gave him back his old labour portfolio. Krishnaswamy was the only minister who had gone after MGR announced dramatically last March that 10 or 11 corrupt ministers would be dropped.

Veerappan's unexpected humiliation comes barely a couple of months after MGR went out of his way to ensure Veerappan's entry to the Assembly. MGR not only gave Veerappan, a member of the legislative council slated for abolition, a ticket for the by-election to Tirunelveli two months ago, but even hit the election road—the first time after his paralytic stroke in October 1984. DMK President M. Karunanidhi echoed the doubts in a lot of minds when he asked: "If the chief minister wanted to remove Veerappan from the Cabinet, why did he make him contest the Tirunelveli by-election in the first place?"

The state's other political parties were divided in their interpretation of the motives behind the 'Tuesday night massacre'. The Congress(I) has an electoral alliance with the AIADMK, so it was perhaps natural that TNCC(I) President M. Palaniyandi should decline comment. State CPI Secretary P. Manickam felt the chief minister's move "shows that the factional squabbling in

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the ruling party is at its peak". The CPI(M) and the Tamil Nadu Kamaraj Congress, however, read a deeper meaning into the reshuffle. Referring to MGR's March announcement, the State Secretary of the CPI(M) A. Nallasivam observed: "The chief minister has tried to create the false impression that the Government has been cleansed with the removal of these ministers." Argued Tamil Nadu Kamaraj Congress President P. Nedumaran in the same vein: "MGR should conduct an inquiry into the activities of these 10 ministers while in office. Otherwise, these cabinet changes can only be construed as an eyewash."

In fact, two main reasons are put forward for the sudden decision to sack the 10 ministers. All the dropped ministers had recently raised virulent anti-Hindi slogans. Kalimuthu, in particular, had made any number of blood and thunder speeches denouncing the Centre's attempts to 'impose' Hindi on Tamil Nadu. Former education minister Aranganayakam had also voiced public disapproval of the Centre's move to set up Navodaya schools in Tamil Nadu, saying that these schools would be used to thrust Hindi—so perhaps there was some prompting from New Delhi before the reshuffle took place.

It is also plausible that MGR started giving credence to the reports that Veerappan was trying to emerge as a potential threat to him. At some public meetings after his election victory, Veerappan's fans are reported to have hailed him as the future chief minister. He is also reported to have mustered the signatures of 95 of the 132 AIADMK MLA's for a memorandum demanding that Nehru's assurance on Hindi should be incorporated into the Constitution—the motive was to demonstrate the support he enjoyed among the MLA's. Significantly, Veerappan had got most of the MLA's their tickets to fight the December 1984 assembly elections because MGR had been away in the US for treatment. AIADMK sources, therefore, say that the chief minister decided to cut Veerappan down to size before matters got out of hand.

Willy-nilly, then, the chief minister has succeeded in bringing about a situation where the senior leaders and founder members of the AIADMK have all been sidelined, with the solitary exception of Labour Minister K.A. Krishnaswamy. Veerappan, Kalimuthu, S.D. Somasundaram (who was dismissed from the AIADMK in 1984 and who has now formed his own party, Namathu Kazhagam), K. Manoharan (who was the number two man in MGR's first cabinet formed in 1977 and is now the assistant general secretary of the DMK) and S. Raghavanandam (the former AIADMK general secretary who was stripped of his post last month by MGR, who took charge of the post himself), were some of the first people to join MGR soon after he formed the party in 1972. Most of the ministers who are still surviving in MGR's Cabinet joined him only after he became chief minister in 1977.

Late last week, MGR rubbed more salt into Veerappan's wounds by ordering the summary expulsion from the AIADMK of Pazhakafai Pandi, the Madurai district secretary and known to be a close associate of Veerappan. And, sources say MGR also admonished Kalimuthu for his virulent outpourings against Jayalalitha. Demanding her expulsion from the party, Kalimuthu had reiterated his charge that Jayalalitha is an agent of the Centre and maintained that the Cabinet reshuffle had been done at her instance. But had clarified: "I am not cribbing about my having lost the ministerial post. I will serve my leader MGR to the end and will do whatever he ordains."

For the time being, the Veerappan faction is lying low, not uttering a word against MGR. Said an AIADMK MLA from Madras city, who is a close confidant of Veerappan: "We see this as a test of loyalty that MGR has imposed on us. We will remain solidly behind him whatever our status in party and government. It is only a question of time before we are taken back." Barely 30 MLA's have backed Veerappan—a steep fall from the high figure who joined him in his anti-Hindi appeal.

The propaganda secretary and her followers are also tight-lipped on the changes, although they cannot but be pleased. Two months ago, when Veerappan had stormed home in the Assembly by-election, it had seemed that Jayalalitha was on a losing wicket. With the rival camps' fortunes changing so rapidly, it is now certain that the factional war in the party is going to hot up in the coming weeks. But both the squabbling groups and the observers can do little else but wait for the next chapter to unfold in MGR's puzzling political game. For the moment, MGR has left nobody in doubt about who is the undisputed boss of the show.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

BHAWAN SINGH

While the Veerappan camp has not dared to utter a word against MGR, Jayalalitha and her loyalists are also tight-lipped but it is certain that the reshuffle will intensify infighting.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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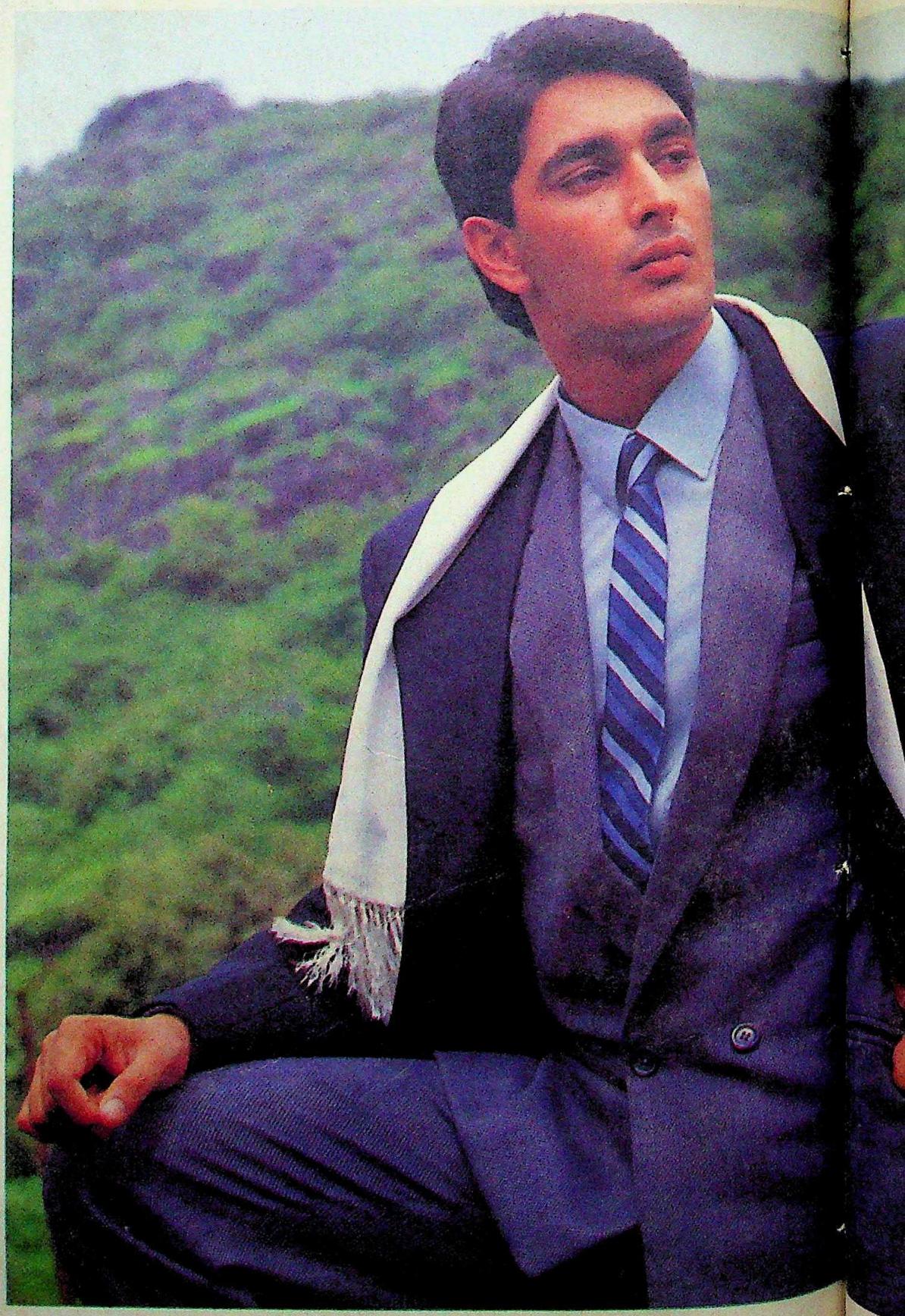

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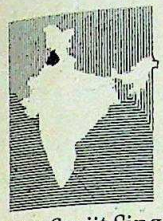
PUNJAB

Controversial Outburst



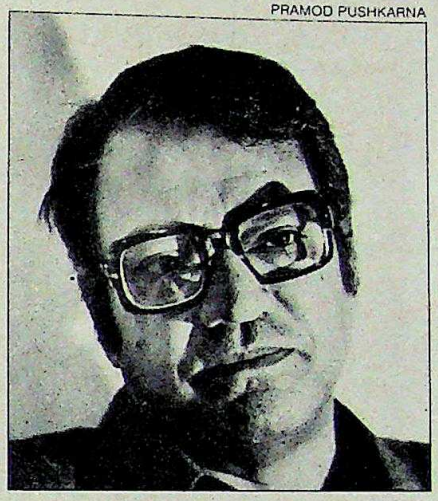
NO other action of Punjab Governor Siddhartha Shankar Ray has brought him as many brickbats as his one-page statement last fortnight asking Chief Minister Surjit Singh Barnala to ensure that there is neither any meeting on October 25 at Malout by anyone nor any blockade of the town. Certainly, the statement had the desired effect: the Parkash Singh Badal-led Akali Dal decided to postpone its scheduled meeting at Malout. But Ray's strongly-worded statement drew sharp criticism from Badal and his colleagues and disturbed the members of the ruling Barnala-led Akali Dal.

Most important, Ray's outburst has brought a sharp halt to his growing acceptance in the role of mediator between the two Akali Dals. To that extent, the governor's statement has harmed the cause of peace in the state at a time when there were clear signs that the Badal group—under pressure from Amarinder Singh—was resiling from its hawkish stand.

Ray had earlier flown to Malout, the once-peaceful cotton trading centre in Faridkot district, where the killing of three prominent Hindus by terrorists had created communal tension. Ray told INDIA TODAY: "It was an explosive situation, and the proposed meeting of the Badal-led Akali Dal just outside the curfew-bound town would have had grave consequences. Officials believed that the militants would take advantage of the public meeting and try to stage a Batala-type blockade."

On his return to Chandigarh, Ray first spoke to Barnala and later in the evening shot off his warning letter saying: "I was surprised to learn that there was the threat of a blockade or gherao in Malout. I could not believe that any person can possibly give such a disastrous call unless he is a lunatic." Mincing no words, the governor added: "No government could possibly be a silent spectator if such a thing happened. Everybody should realise that much water has flown in the rivers of Punjab since the Batala episode some six months ago."

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Ray; and (below) Amarinder and Badal

BHAWAN SINGH

Ray's warning to the Badal Akali Dal from holding a meeting at Malout has called a sharp halt to his role as a mediator between the two Akali Dals

Finance Minister Balwant Singh met the governor to protest, while defending the right of the governor to advise the Government. Later, Balwant Singh termed Ray's statement "violative of constitutional propriety", but added: "He must have been touched by the situation in Malout." The Badal group's General Secretary, former minister Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, showed no such restraint in his criticism. Declared Dhindsa: "It is now clear that Ray is the real chief minister and Barnala only a puppet. We are a democratic party and have a right to hold a public meeting."

The Badal group also protested that it had no plans for a blockade—Ray had apparently been misled by a mischievous item in a Jalandhar newspaper. In fact, Badal revealed later that the very day that Ray was in Malout, the group had met at Muktsar and decided to postpone the meeting. Ray realised that he had been too harsh, but Raj Bhavan officials continued to maintain that "but for his statement, Barnala would have allowed the conference in the same manner that he allowed Baba Joginder Singh to preach violence. The public meeting would have ultimately resulted in a blockade and added to the communal flare-up. It was no senseless act but a well thought-out statement forcing the postponement."

Still, it will now be a while before leaders of Badal's group walk into Raj Bhavan. In the recent past, many Badal group leaders—including Amarinder Singh, former speaker Ravi Inder Singh and even Badal—have had prolonged talks with the governor. Ray had even succeeded, to some extent, in dissuading them from meeting militants after the assassination bids on Rajiv and Ribeiro.

The most significant evidence of this came in the five-page letter from Amarinder Singh, who heads the Badal group in the Assembly, to Badal asking him to discipline Akali leaders who have been helping the militants. "Some of our colleagues like Gurdas Singh Badal, Sukhjinder Singh and Youth Akali Dal leader Sher Singh have been making irresponsible statements vis-a-vis the attack on the prime

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minister and Ribeiro....This has to be stopped if the Dal is to survive," Singh explained later.

Amarinder Singh's letter has had immediate impact. Last week, in a departure from their earlier policy, the Badal group's leaders avoided lauding the militants' role at a conference held at Pattran in Patiala. "We cannot run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. We have to condemn all terrorism—individual, state or group," said Sucha Singh Chhotepur, a Gurdaspur MLA.

As the Badal Akalis meet next week to work out a cohesive party line, the initiative undoubtedly has passed into the hands of Amarinder Singh and his group. "Those who go the militants' way are free to leave the party," Amarinder Singh warned. In this changed atmosphere, it is a moot point whether Ray should have been so critical of the Badal group's plans.

—GOBIND THUKRAL

ATTEMPT ON RIBEIRO

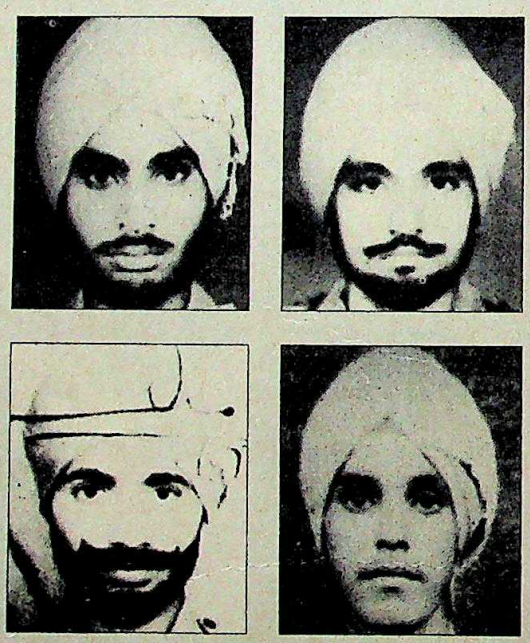
Well Planned

WITH hindsight, Punjab police chief Julio Ribeiro's escape from the assassination attempt early last month in Jalandhar can only be credited to providence. Investigations into the episode in the high-security Punjab Armed Police (PAP) complex at Jalandhar have revealed that the terrorists' penetration of the complex was complete, and their plans meticulously drawn up. Most of the revelations have emerged from the confessions of PAP sub-inspector Gurbachan Singh, 41, who provided minute details of the mess to the killers.

Dhanna Singh and Wassan Singh, two of the five notorious (and now underground) members of the panthic committee which masterminded the operation, had set up a four-member cell of policemen three months ago, with the specific objective of assassinating Ribeiro. The cell comprised PAP head constable Ajit Singh, PAP constables Dalwinder Singh and Sardul Singh, and Balwinder Singh, who was posted at the Police Training School at Phillaur, 35 km away. Balwinder is a cousin of Gurbachan Singh Manochahal, the Damdami Taksal-appointed acting jathedar of the Akal Takht, who is also absconding.

The four used to meet at the house of Ajit Singh in the PAP complex to plan the details of the attack, the weapons to be used and the escape route. Often, they were joined by the self-proclaimed 'General Labh Singh' of the Khalistan Commando Force (actual name: Sukhdev Singh alias Sukha Sipahi) and an as yet unknown emissary of Wassan Singh. The last meeting, three days before the attack, was held in the house of Sardul Singh. Dhanna Singh and Wassan Singh got a Tarn Taran tailor to stitch the uniforms. The weapons were chosen by Balwinder Singh.

The near-success of the assassination attempt is a clear indictment of the intelligence agencies. The PAP complex should have been under the closest possible watch. It is no secret that PAP personnel are unhappy because they work harder for less pay than their compatriots in the Punjab police. Besides, they live in one complex, where the dissatisfied can easily get together. In the past two decades, there have been two revolts on the campus. Understandably, it did not take Dhanna Singh and Wassan Singh too long to identify a group that nursed grievances against their seniors and was sufficiently fundamentalist in its religious beliefs. By all accounts, the religious views of the three PAP conspirators, as also of Balwinder, were no secret.



(Clockwise from top left): Balwinder, Sardul, Ajit and Dalwinder: absconding conspirators

The four policemen, who have been absconding since the attack, again hit the headlines last fortnight when their handwritten resignation letters were dramatically delivered to two Amritsar journalists. In their letters, written in Gurmukhi, they accused Ribeiro of wanting to "finish the sons of Guru Gobind Singh", and added: "You are sadly mistaken. We have never tolerated injustice and life is never dear to us. We are joining the Khalistan Commando Force and quitting the butcher Punjab police."

The attack on Ribeiro has also scarred the reputation of the Punjab police, which has had a mixed record in fighting terrorism. In the last two years, one inspector, three assistant sub-inspectors, 12 head constables and 13 constables have been dismissed for allegedly aiding terrorists. But against this, in 1986 alone, 37 policemen have lost their lives in fighting terrorism. Conscious of this, Ribeiro insists that his force is still largely disciplined, with just a few "treacherous" black sheep.

Clearly buoyed by the assassination attempt and the propaganda fall-out of the resignation announcement, terrorists stepped up their violence last month, capping it with the shootout in Khuban where seven people were shot dead by five terrorists. Even Ribeiro conceded that the attacks showed that the terrorists had scored "a marginal gain". But there's been no dent in Ribeiro's courage. Referring to the assassination bid, Ribeiro declared at a meeting of PAP officers and jawans at the same Jalandhar complex: "This incident is a big insult and the entire Punjab police is ashamed of it. Revenge this insult." It is easy to see why the terrorists consider Ribeiro a bigger threat than either Rajiv Gandhi or Chief Minister S.S. Barnala. It is also just as apparent that Punjab still needs Ribeiro.

—GOBIND THUKRAL

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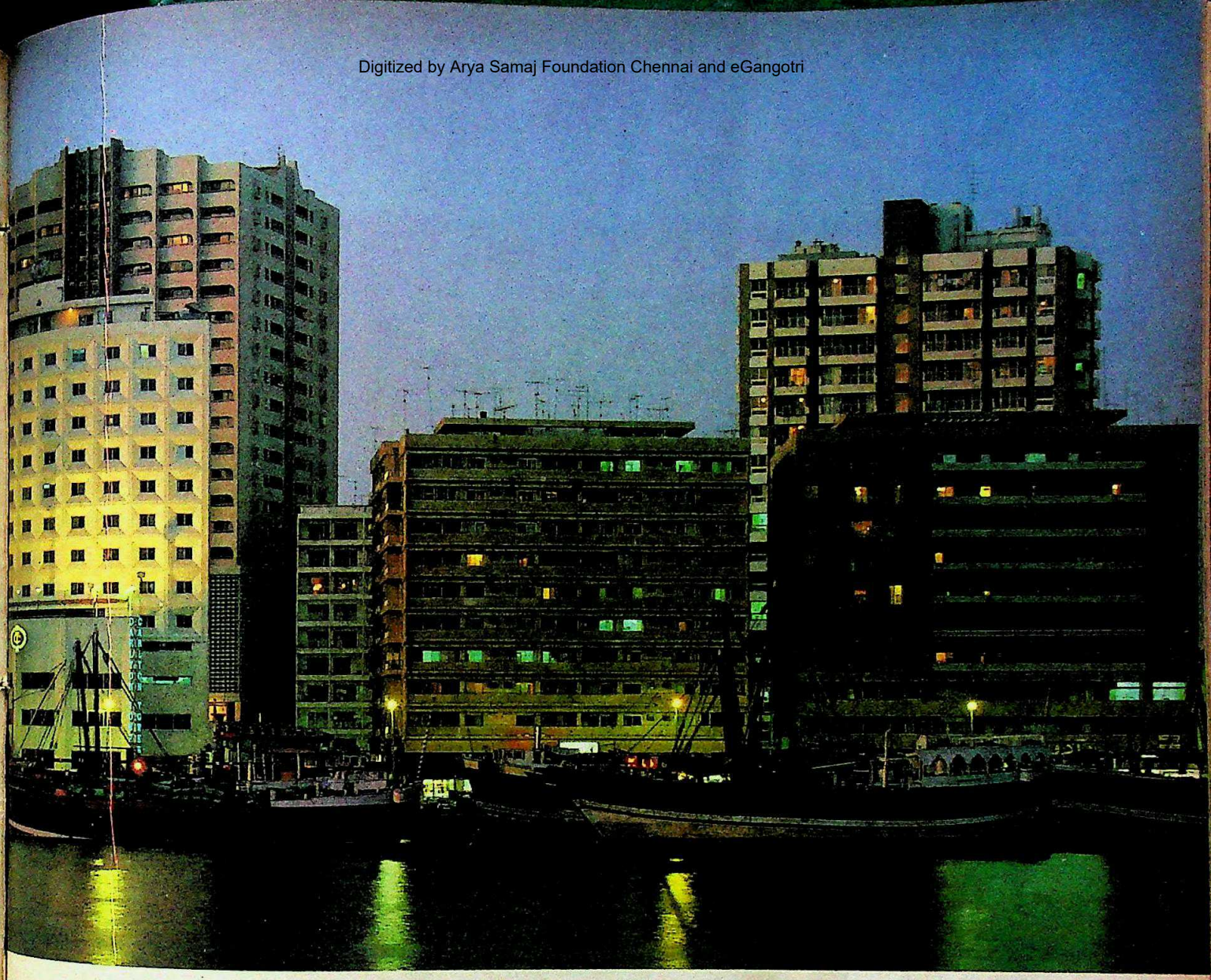

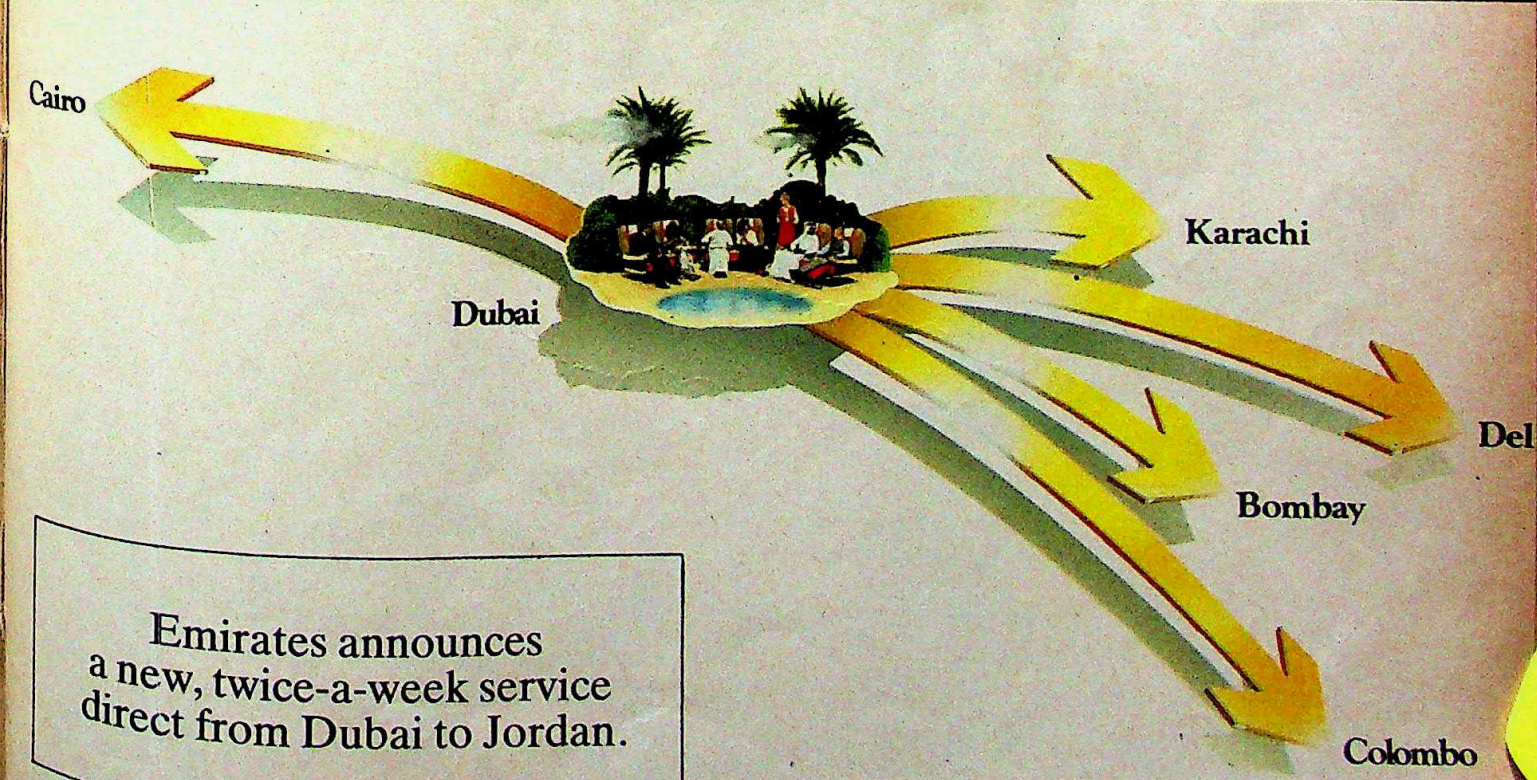

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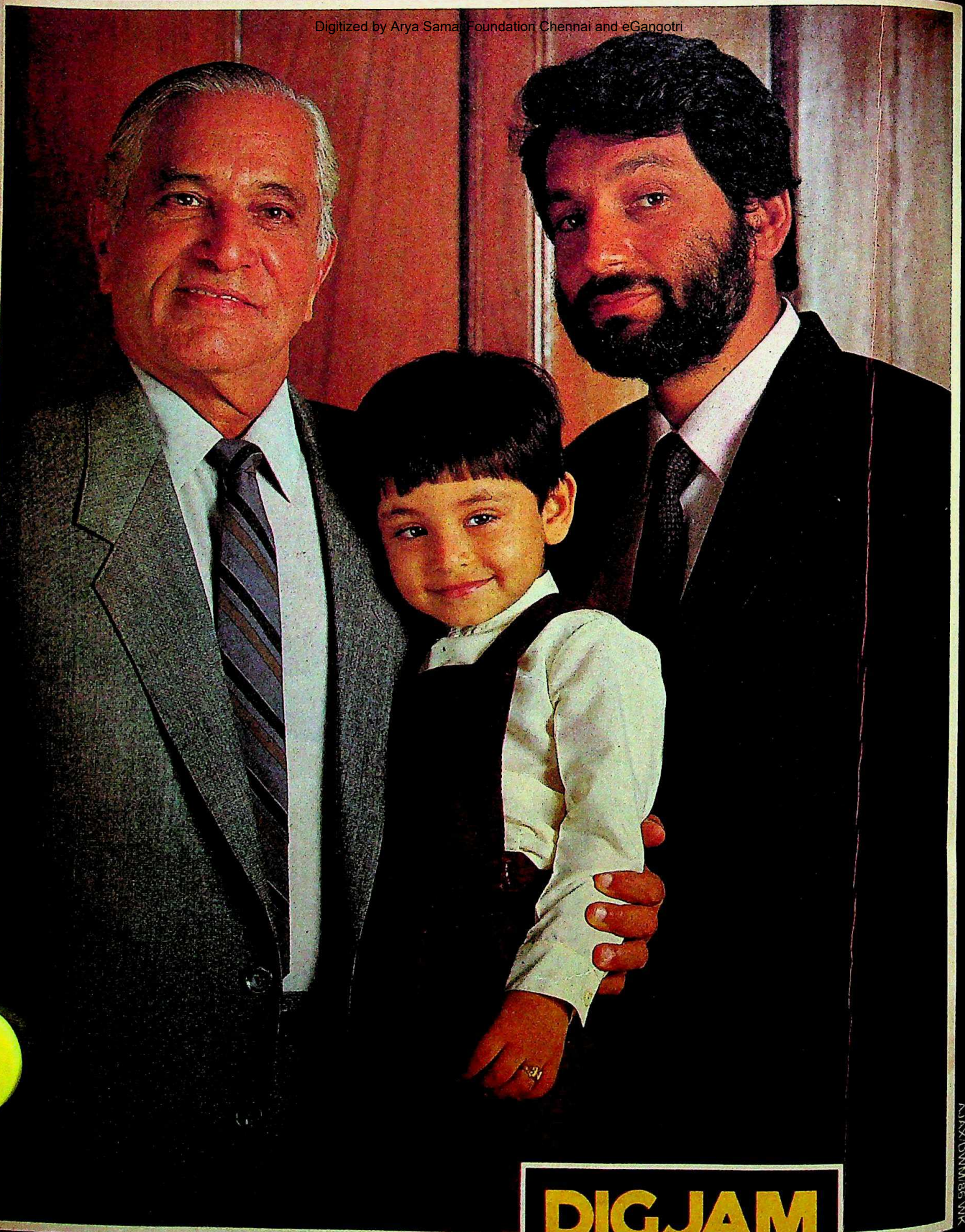

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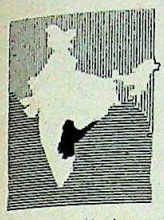

LAST year, the New Year's greeting card sent by the Andhra Pradesh Civil Supplies Commissioner Charan Das Arha had featured a reproduction of the bronze statue of Annapurna, the goddess of food, holding the *Akshayapatra*, the mythical vessel of food that never runs dry. Ten months later, the search has begun in the state for a real *Akshayapatra* to supply 25 kg of rice under the famous Rs 2 a kg scheme to all poor families.

It is certain that the state's public distribution system (PDS) cannot maintain the full supply in the new agricultural year which began last month. A shortfall of 1.50 lakh tonnes in procurement for 1985-86 (October to September) has eaten into the state's buffer stock of 2 lakh tonnes and with kharif arrivals in the first month far less than normal, N.T. Rama Rao's Government is faced with a crisis. Says Arha: "The situation could not be worse. Before long, we will be scraping the bottom of the barrel."

The state needs at least 22 lakh tonnes of rice to meet the annual demand of the PDS. This amount is to be procured jointly by the Food Corporation of India (FCI)—whose target is 15 lakh tonnes, of which a third is meant for the national pool—and the Andhra Pradesh State Civil Supplies Corporation (APSCSC), which is to procure the rest. But there is little hope of the two agencies meeting their target because of the floods that devastated the Godavari delta in August and the continuing drought in 12 districts. Procurement from the Godavari delta—traditionally over 6.5 lakh tonnes—is expected to be no more than 1.5 lakh tonnes.

Ironically, the problems faced by the scheme have arisen because of its success. Under the scheme, announced in April 1983, green cards were given to families with an annual income less than Rs 3,000 entitling them to be given 25 kg at Rs 2 a kg. Later, in fulfilment of Rama Rao's pre-election promise, the income limit was raised to Rs 6,000. Consequently, the number of green card families swelled to a staggering 10.2 million—seven out of every 10 families in the state. Apart from providing them rice at Rs 2 a kg, the PDS also provides rice at Rs 2.75 a kg to families above the income limit who have been provided with yellow cards.

Today, there are some 34,000 shops under the PDS in over 27,000 villages. The state Government spends Rs 24 crore annually merely on transporting the rice. The amount of rice sold through the PDS has risen dramatically from 13.7 lakh tonnes in 1983-84 (November to October) to 21.95 lakh tonnes in 1985-86 (October to September). Says Arha, who is also concurrently managing director of the APSCSC: "The PDS has brought the concept of the welfare state to the very doorsteps of the poor and needy."

M. RANJITH RAO

The state, faced with falling buffer stocks and poor arrivals, is finding it increasingly difficult to supply rice under NTR's popular Rs 2 a kg rice scheme.

Meeting the demands of the PDS produced no problems till 1984-85 because the procurement was so high (27.38 lakh tonnes that year) that even after the FCI met its commitment to the national pool, there was enough left for the PDS. Warning signals were flashed when procurement last year dropped to 25.51 lakh tonnes. But the PDS managed by drawing on the buffer stock of 2 lakh tonnes. Now, there is nothing left in the kitty.

Fully aware of the perils of a cutback in the scheme, Rama Rao has taken several steps to prevent the possibility, but to little avail. Soon after the floods, he waived Rs 36 crore of subsidies given to the flood-affected delta's farmers and directed collectors to encourage farmers to sow paddy during the current rabi season. But shrewd farmers, fearing a water shortage in the pre-harvest months because water flow in the canals is traditionally uncertain after January, decided against taking any risk.

Rama Rao also asked Delhi to permit FCI to hand over the rice it procures to the APSCSC—and not meet its commitment to the national pool first—but granting this request may not amount to very much because the FCI's godowns are practically empty. The state may then have to resort to importing rice from Punjab, pushing up the subsidy on account of the PDS from Rs 80 crore in 1983-84 to an estimated Rs 230 crore in 1986-87.

Rama Rao is also pleading with Delhi to let him buy rice for the PDS at the procurement price notified by the Agricultural Prices Commission instead of negotiating a price with the millers. Says Arha: "We will be on the millers' backs to make sure more rice is available for the PDS." Rao has also asked the Reserve Bank of India to give cash credit at the concessional rate of 14 per cent interest on the purchase price for the PDS. If Delhi approves both the pleas, the state stands to save almost Rs 22 crore.

The APSCSC has suggested raising the price of rice to Rs 2.50 a kg but Rao will have none of that. But the situation is so grim that Rao may well be forced to cut the allotment to 12 kg like in Tamil Nadu. Alternatively, the offtake could be reduced by making it mandatory to buy a kg of wheat for five kg of rice. Posters on the nutritional value of wheat have already been designed by the College of Home Science in Hyderabad.

Rama Rao has still to resolve his dilemma of how to convincingly tell his electorate that the state cannot meet its commitment for subsidised rice. But no matter how he resolves it, one thing is certain: the familiar V-sign with the left hand to symbolise the Rs 2 a kg scheme will soon fade out from Rama Rao's bag of histrionics.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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EVEREST HOUSE

Tourist Spot

THE ruins are perched on the edge of a cliff, home to a host of bats, snakes and lizards. The once-sprawling estate has long been decrepit, crumbling from ages of neglect and disrepair. But the peeling walls and cobwebbed fireplace bear testimony to times of glory and discovery, when a man called George Everest came looking for the hidden folds of the Himalayas and left his name on the highest of the world's snow-clad peaks.

For decades, the rambling estate of the legendary surveyor in Mussoorie's Hathi Paon has been a sort of no-man's-land, a historic landmark shrouded in the mists of time. But around it has now arisen a controversy of mountainous proportions, on its ownership and restoration.

Last fortnight, the Central Government announced a Rs 10-crore scheme to restore the estate and develop it into a tourist spot. Coming as it did after an earlier announcement by the Uttar Pradesh Government of a Rs 17-lakh scheme for the same purpose, it only muddied an already hazy issue: what exactly is to be done? And by whom?

The seeds of the controversy were sown early last year when the Nehru Yuvak Kendra of Dehra Dun held a folk dance festival at Everest House. The wide coverage of the festival and scathing criticism about the state of the estate in the regional press compelled the state Tourism Department to wake up. In July last year, the state Government sanctioned a project for the restoration and development of Everest House—built on 40 acres of core estate land—and Assistant Director, Tourism, K.L. Shah approached its present owners with a purchase offer. However, Chaudhary Puran Singh of Dehra Dun and his family, who claim to have owned the land since 1968, refused to sell, terming the offer—for reasons of their own—as "premature".

Meanwhile, Mussoorie Subdivisional Magistrate (SDM) Vinod Sharma came up with the 'discovery' that the land actually belonged to the state Government. The land, he claimed, was given to Everest under the Crown Grant Act in 1830, giving him all ownership and transfer rights in perpetuity and succession. Dehra Dun District Magistrate Ashok Khurana says there have been successive owners after Everest and most of the documents about its changing ownership cannot be traced, leaving its exact ownership in doubt.

An infuriated Singh, however, refutes this claim: "We bought the land, including the house, through proper deeds duly registered with the authorities." As proof, Singh says that he has been depositing the ground rent of the land with the Government ever since his family bought it.

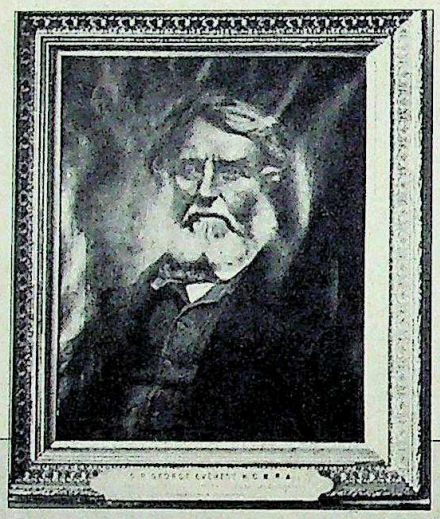
The scrutiny of the documents related to the property has now been handed over to the state Government's legal cell. Khurana feels that the acquisition of the land would pose no problem. "The process cannot be delayed by the interested parties. All one can fight for is higher compensation," he says. However, Chaudhary, a lawyer by profession, has threatened to take the matter to court where he promises to make it "linger on for so long that Everest House may even collapse in the meantime".

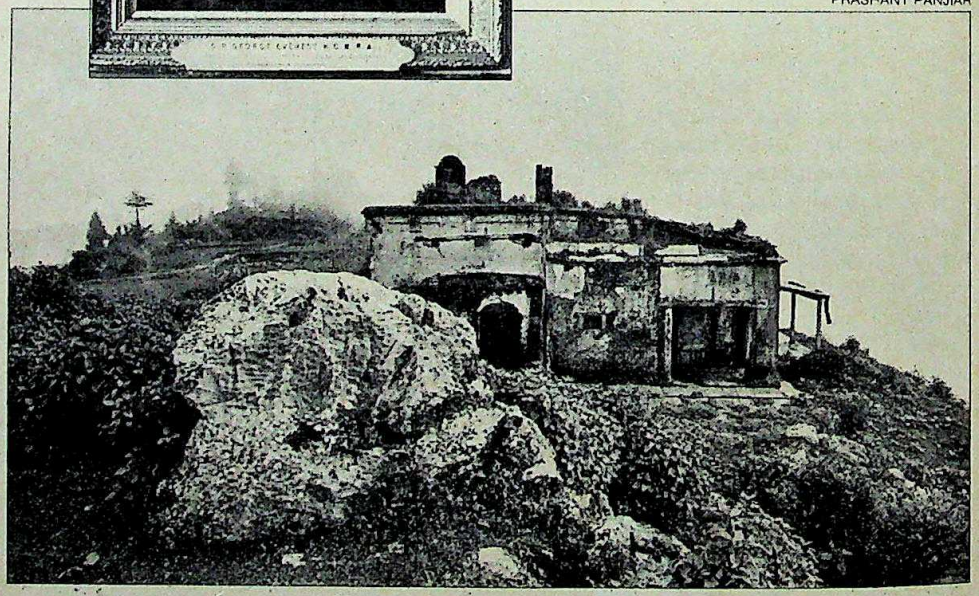
The announcements by the Central and state governments of their respective grants and schemes have only served to confound the confusion. The original development plan prepared by the state Tourism Department and Sharma, envisaged developing the entire estate as a tourist spot with Everest's name serving as a historical peg. The plan included an open air restaurant, children's park, picnic benches, honeymoon huts and a zoo. This plan was apparently accepted, according to a letter written by the Assistant Director Shah to Singh on October 10 last year.

But the subsequent announcement of the Rs 10-crore scheme of the Centre has raised fresh doubts as to who exactly is in charge: whether it is a joint Centre-state venture or the Centre alone or the local administration? Says Prem Thadani, a hotel-owner who was one of the first to recognise the tourism potential of the estate: "The whole series of announcements of funds is very confusing. I am worried about what will eventually happen to the place."

It all depends on who will be in charge, and how they will go about it. If the place is developed into yet another pleasure park, with zoos and honeymoon huts, poor George Everest may just end up being relegated to a stone plaque. Which, given the historical value of Everest House, would clearly amount to a Himalayan blunder.

—SHEKHAR KUMAR JHA





Everest House (below); and (inset) Sir George Everest: remembered relic

PRASHANT PANJIAR

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LOK DAL

Power Play

THINGS are rarely what they seem in the Lok Dal. For all appearances last fortnight, the fight in the party was over the expulsion of dissidents led by former MP Ram Bilas Paswan. And the group seemingly settling into the saddle was the collective leadership presided over by party Working President H.N. Bahuguna, which has taken charge of the party's reins ever since Charan Singh's paralytic stroke in November last year. The expulsions came when Paswan and his cohorts had been readying for a convention. Though Paswan claimed that the convention amounted to a split in the party, the party leadership duly dismissed this as a flop because none of the Lok Dal's 166 MLA's attended.

In reality, this skirmishing and the dissidents' breaking away was no more than a side-show. Paswan and the other leaders who went out with him were never predominant leaders in their states. And if they were expelled last fortnight, they were merely paying the price for challenging the might of the collective leadership—which is dominated by the 'subedars' who have consolidated their hold in the states after Charan Singh's eclipse. Paswan clashed with Karpoori Thakur in Bihar, Rajendra Singh with Mulayam Singh Yadav in Uttar Pradesh and Bhim Singh Dahiya with Devi Lal in Haryana, even as they swore by Charan Singh's leadership. But, by taking on the subedars head-on, they committed political harakiri.

The real battle for leadership will be between the state chieftains and Ajit Singh, Charan Singh's son who formally entered politics in May and quickly got a Rajya Sabha nomination and the post of a general secretary. Singh's camp has always acknowledged that he cannot take over the reins of the party until he acquires the stature of his father among the party's following in the Jats and the backward castes and among the party activists. And, away from the spotlight grabbed momentarily by Paswan and his men, this battle has already started.

The Ajit Singh camp's initial strategy was to take him to the people soon after he took the plunge into politics. But then Singh got bogged down in helping the collective leadership tackle the infighting in the party over the Rajya Sabha nominations—which culminated in last fortnight's split—and in patching up with his mother (Gayatri Devi) and sister (Saroj Verma), who were openly supporting the dissidents while Singh backed the disciplinary measures against the dissidents. But in late September, Singh unobtrusively initiated his mass contact programme, kicking off with a convention of the Yuva Lok Dal. Then the former computer specialist addressed huge public meetings in Baghpat (Charan Singh's parliamentary constituency), Sonepat, Muzaffarnagar and Etawah in just three weeks.

The response, claimed Singh and his closest aide, Ajay Singh (elected as an MLC in Uttar Pradesh with Ajit Singh's help) was "overwhelming, beyond all expectations". In Muzaffarnagar, Ajit Singh was presented with a purse of Rs 3.5 lakh and a Maruti car; in Sonepat, he stole the show despite the presence on the dais of Devi Lal and two former chief ministers, Bhagwat Dayal Sharma and Banarsi Das Gupta; in Baghpat it was like a homecoming with a hundred arches to welcome him—far more than the Chaudhary ever got. Both Ajit Singh and the other speakers evoked the dynastic theme, and a chastened Saroj Verma introduced her brother to the audience as "the future hope of the Lok Dal".

The mass contact programme, say Singh camp insiders, is calculated to attain two objectives. By demonstrating his hold among the masses, the 'subedars' will be made to see that Singh is well on his way to becoming as popular as his father, and that he is the only leader with the ability to draw crowds in all the states—unlike the 'subedars' whose appeal is confined to their own individual states. This is already happening, they claim. The Rajasthan state party chief, Nathu Ram Mirdha, had said in an interview given before Singh's trip to Jaipur that it would take Singh at least a decade before he was given the party's leadership. But after seeing the overwhelming reception given to Singh by the Yuva Lok Dal members, Mirdha's speech at the convention was an unadulterated paean in praise of Singh.

Once his hold among the masses and

Chhaya Kendra

Ajit Singh addressing meeting at Sonepat; (left) dissidents at Delhi convention: leadership vacuum

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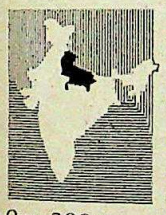
the party activists is acknowledged, Singh will be in a position to take over the party's reins, hopefully with the subedars' consent. Said K.C.Tyagi, a party general secretary: "The purpose is to take the party along, not usurp power. Had we gone for the jugular in June itself, the party would have faced a real split, not the fake one brought about by Paswan and his men." In the next few months, the Singh show will move to east Uttar Pradesh and, finally, Bihar. But till such time as the son finally takes over the mantle of command of the party, the power vacuum will continue and the Lok Dal will continue to have convulsions.

—AJAY KUMAR

UTTAR PRADESH

Killer Bridge

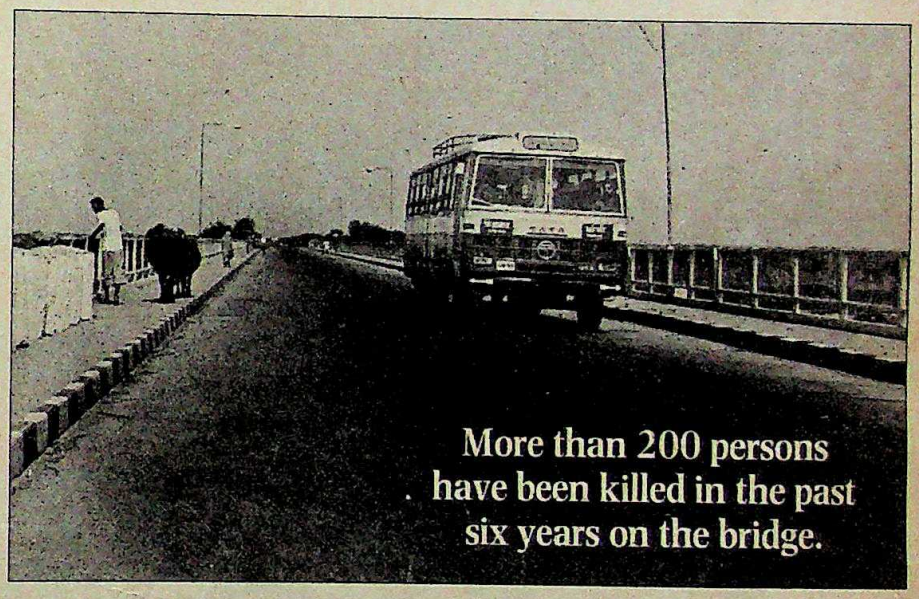


THE 712.23 metre Jajmau bridge on National Highway 25 in Uttar Pradesh which links Kanpur to Lucknow and other districts is fast becoming a death-trap. Over 200 persons have been killed in the past six years on the bridge. Four major accidents have occurred on this stretch, the latest being on October 9 in which 69 persons were killed. On three occasions, Uttar Pradesh Roadways buses, overloaded with passengers, have nose-dived into the river from the bridge with its protective parapet and railings crumbling under the impact of the collisions.

Despite ample evidence in the Public Works Department (PWD) files and inquiry reports of previous accidents of a major design defect, state Government officials vehemently deny this possibility and proposals for modifications made in October 1984 have been gathering dust for nearly two years now.

The latest incident, however, in which an overloaded bus again plunged into the river without the slightest resistance from the parapets, has rattled the Government, specially since many proposals to prevent recurrence of such accidents have always been reduced into a tug-of-war between officials of two politically powerful departments—the PWD under Chief Minister Veer Bahadur Singh and the Transport Department under its minister Sanjay Singh. The Transport Department accuses the PWD of not carrying out suggested improvements which in turn, clinging to the theory of "no design defect", blame rash driving by the Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC) drivers and overcrowding for the accidents.

The proposal for amending the design of the bridge was made in an inquiry report submitted to the Government in May 1984 after the September 27, 1983 accident in which 71 passengers were killed. PWD experts were asked to prepare new designs, incorporating higher footway kerbs, another protective railing and speed-breakers on either side of the bridge. The drawings were completed in August but were soon forgotten about. Earlier, in September 1981 a UPSRTC bus had hurtled past the railings killing all 60 passengers on board and in September 1979, a truck had fallen from the bridge killing six persons.



Jajmau bridge linking Kanpur to Lucknow: death-trap

Despite this alarming background, PWD officials have not implemented any of the schemes for strengthening the protective system of the bridge, which is used by more than 10,000 vehicles, including 2,570 heavy vehicles, every day. PWD officials say that the proposal to carry out design amendments of the kerbs and parapet were referred to the Bridge Committee of the Indian Road Congress, Ministry of Transport on August 22, 1984 but admit there was no need for such a move. The state Government was empowered to order any amendments in the bridge design in view of the recurring accidents.

Even to a layman, the bridge appears an invitation to disaster. Experts inquiring into the latest accident say that the actual roadway is 7.5 metres, thus making it a two-lane highway. The width of the kerbs is 1.5 metres on either side and the height is 228.6 mm, a "surmountable height" for vehicular traffic.

Adding to the danger is the fact that the bridge has a straight approach road which fuels the urge to over-speed. "If you see the bridge from a distance of 500 yards, it appears to be more broad than it really is because of the insufficient height of the kerbs," said a UPSRTC inquiry officer. There is also no restraining obstacle for a vehicle which hits the kerb, except for the weak 1.1 metre high railing which is designed only to provide some measure of safety to pedestrians. "Once a vehicle hits the kerb with even a speed of 40 kmph there are at least 90 per cent chances that it will climb the kerb and fall into the river," say officials. A preliminary UPSRTC report filed with the state Government recommends raising the height of the kerb to 380 mm and the provision of a stronger railing.

Officials of the Uttar Pradesh Bridge Corporation which built the bridge in 1977 concede that some modifications are necessary. Said N.C. Saxena, chief engineer of the corporation: "In view of the recurring accidents, raising of the height of kerbs has to be considered, besides provision of more protective parapet railings." Corporation experts also admit that the two-lane bridge cannot handle the density of two-way traffic on this highway and a possible solution is to build another two-lane bridge near this one. But despite three major disasters, the infighting within the various departments has so far stymied any action. Jajmau will continue to live with its sobriquet of "The Killer Bridge".

—DILIP AWASTHI

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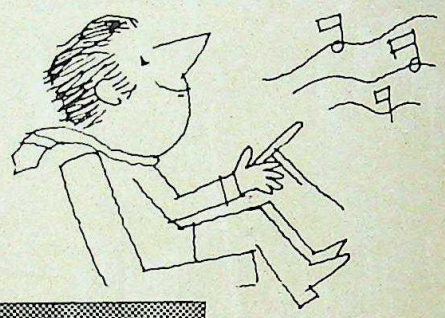
The milestones of music on wheels



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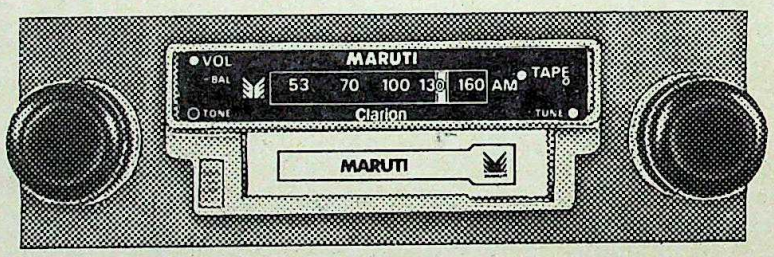

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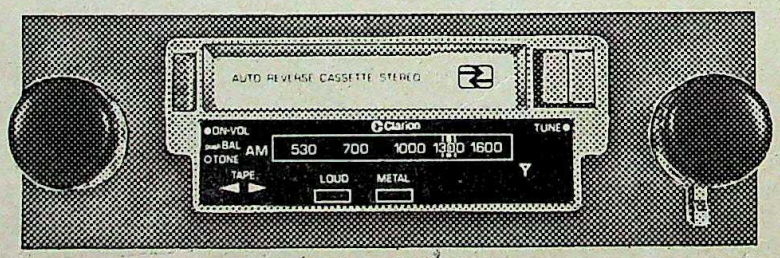

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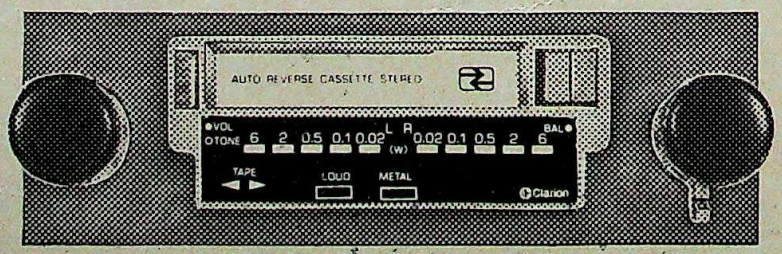

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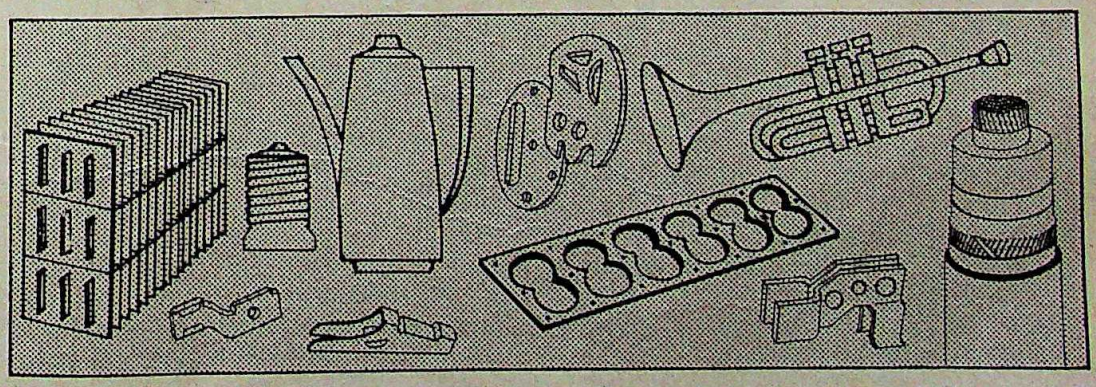

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SHIV SENA

Striking Out

FOR the first time in its chequered 30-year-old history the militant Shiv Sena led by Bal Thackeray is poised to make its mark as a state-level party in Maharashtra. So far restricted to Bombay and a few smaller urban areas, the Sena has seen a rapid expansion of its influence and organisation in the last two years. Last month, following its first major state-level conference of party workers, the controversial organisation announced that it would contest—entirely on its own—the forthcoming elections in a majority of the 29 zilla parishads in Maharashtra. Said the Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray: "I am confident we have reached deep into the hearts of people in the villages. The public mood is in our favour."

Certainly the mood at the conference, attended by an estimated 5,000 delegates from newly opened branches in a majority of districts, was distinctly upbeat. Reflecting this, Thackeray said: "The zilla parishad elections will be a kind of test. How many we win is not the question; they will show how far we have reached." Later, at the annual Dussehra rally of the party, Thackeray declared that his ambition was to "see the saffron flag of the Sena on the legislature after the next elections".

There is no doubt about the upswing in Shiv Sena's fortunes. Following its success in the Bombay municipal polls in April last year—when it successfully capitalised on a controversy fuelled by the then beleaguered Congress(I) chief minister Vasantdada Patil that the Centre was considering converting the state capital into a Union territory—the Shiv Sena launched a concerted drive to expand in the districts, opening hundreds of units in all regions barring a few districts in Vidarbha. The Sena claims that just in Marathwada, the region to which Chief Minister S.B. Chavan belongs, it has established 200 units, and that the response has been similarly encouraging in the sugar belt of western Maharashtra and coastal Konkan.

The Sena's claims are not exaggerated. Large, freshly-painted boards of the Shiv Sena, with its intimidating symbol of a roaring tiger and a flying saffron flag can be seen even in remote areas. The party's main support comes from young, semi-literate men belonging to underprivileged castes.

The Sena's growth is primarily a result of a shift in emphasis of its political platform. Till two years ago, it was content to project itself as the champion of the rights of Marathi-speaking people—an emotional issue which could strike a chord only in the multi-lingual cauldron of Bombay. But following communal riots in the state capital and neighbouring towns in 1984, the Sena began building up an image of a party aggressively committed to the cause of Hindus. Asked, last fortnight, what the Sena's strategy would be in the zilla parishad poll, Thackeray replied candidly: "Our plank will be simply Hinduism." At the Dussehra rally, Thackeray even called on Hindus to arm themselves to safeguard the community from "possible attacks".

The Sena's rise has not gone unnoticed. Chief Minister Chavan has openly wanted to know from where the Sena got the money to expand like this. Chavan's reference was obviously to the popular belief that the Sena was financing its expansion through its control of the Bombay Municipal Corporation—the richest in the country with a budget larger than that of many small states. "We have been complaining to the Government about the Sena's corrupt practices in the corporation for a long time," said a prominent Congress(I) leader. "But only now when it sees the threat in the districts is the Government waking up to the problem."

The Sena's role in the corporation also came under a shadow when it refused to give permission to the Municipal Commissioner S.S. Tinaikar, to prosecute two senior civic engineers (who happen to be Marathis) for their role in a building scandal involving Yusuf Patel. But Thackeray defends his party's stand by insisting that a minister behind the building scandal should be prosecuted first, though he admits that the Sena is committed to protecting the interests of Marathi-speaking people. As for the Sena dipping into corporation funds, Thackeray says: "The party's expansion is being financed by donations from local people, from ordinary people like those who flocked to hear my speech at the Dussehra rally."

The Shiv Sena's performance in the zilla parishad elections will be a good indication of the response to its 'Hindu platform'. Its success will also depend a great deal on how the ruling Congress(I) and Chief Minister Chavan respond to the challenge in the districts. Chavan is known to be strongly committed against the growth of communal organisations in the state. As of now, the indications are that the Shiv Sena is likely to make its presence felt primarily in three districts—Thane, Raigad and Nasik—where it has had pockets of influence in the past. Clearly, politics in Maharashtra is headed towards a more exciting, if not ominous, future.

—M. RAHMAN

NAMAS BHOJANI

Ever since the Shiv Sena decided to espouse the Hindu cause there has been an upswing in its fortunes and now the party is poised to contest the elections in a majority of the zilla parishads.

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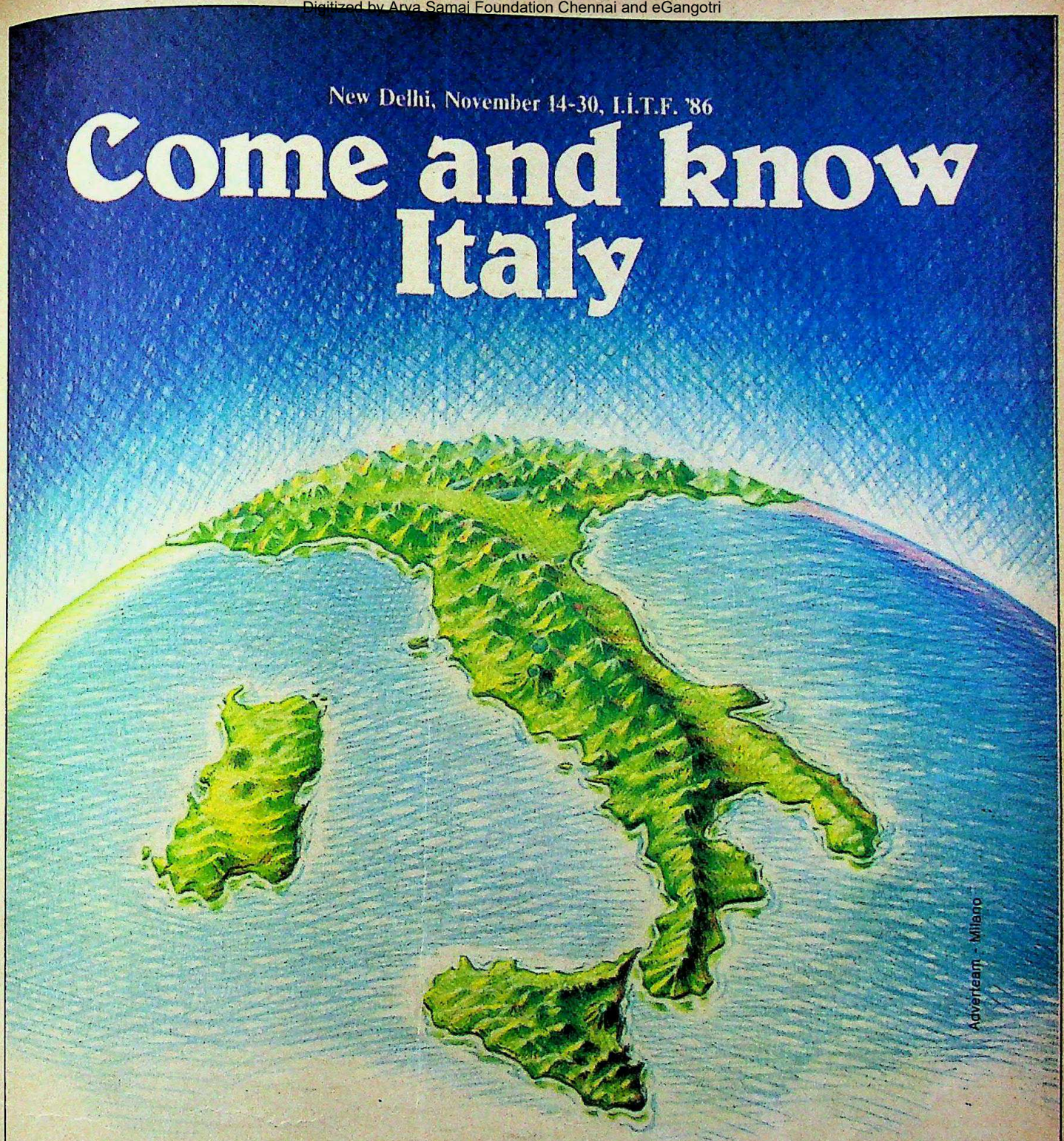

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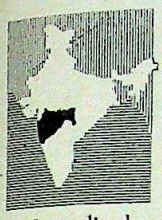

EVEN by Bombay film industry standards, it was a big-budget, multi-starred extravaganza. More than 125 vehicles packed with technicians, junior artistes, and studio hands. A galaxy of movie stars and leading producers and directors in the business. But this time, the drama was for real as the film industry staged its most spectacular demonstration of unity in its snowballing protest against the levy of special sales tax on the industry by the Maharashtra Government. "Never before for our own cause have we come together in such an agitation," said Producer-Director Yash Chopra, adding: "The war has begun."

This unprecedented show of solidarity was the high point of a total cinema bandh called by the newly-formed Action Committee of the Maharashtra Film Industry in protest against the implementation, from October 1, of the tortuously labelled Maharashtra Sales Tax on the Transfer of the Right to use any Goods for any Purpose Act, 1985.

The Act passed last year lay in abeyance till this month, when following tax concessions to other sections of society in this year's budget and faced with growing expenditure in combating drought, the state Government issued a notification implementing it.

Under the new law, an additional 4 per cent sales tax is charged whenever there is an exchange of a variety of manufactured goods, including cinematographic prints and equipment. The Act was convened primarily in response to the boom in leasing companies, but its extension to an already highly-taxed film industry, ensnared in its own economic mess due to unwieldy production budgets and falling attendance at cinema theatres, has suddenly galvanised a wide cross-section of film people.

The mammoth morcha was led by Sunil Dutt, MP, who, in the absence of co-luminary Amitabh Bachchan emerged the leading industry spokesman. The celebrities joining the morcha included producers and directors V. Shantaram, B.R. Chopra, Manmohan Desai as also President of the All India Film Producers' Council Ramraj Nahta; distributors led by N.N. Sippy, President of the Radio and TV Practioners' Association Ameen Sayani and the stars: Dev Anand, Rajesh Khanna, Jeetendra, Mithun Chakraborty, Shashi Kapoor, Raj Babbar, Dada Kondke, Shabana Azmi, Meenakshi Sheshadri, Farha.

The public show of strength had become inevitable after a round of talks, arranged by Bombay (south) MP Murli Deora between representatives of the film industry and the chief minister, failed to find a solution. Asserted Manmohan Desai: "Our leaders in the past few decades let us down badly, now it's a do-or-die battle."

Besides demanding the abolition of the new tax, industry leaders are asking the state for a 50 per cent reduction in the entertainment tax on cinema tickets, abolition or reduction in other taxes, incentives for film production and for cinema theatres, as also stronger action against film piracy. "Maharashtra has the dubious distinction of charging the highest entertainment tax, 177 per cent, in the world. It is unable to check video piracy and 90 per cent of the films are flopping at the box-office. Survival is becoming impossible," says Nahta.

Maharashtra's film industry provides employment to nearly 3.5 lakh people and has contributed 3.5 per cent—Rs 76.69 crore—as entertainment tax alone to the state's total tax revenue of Rs 2,207 crore in the last financial year. Of this, almost half was collected in Bombay's 125 cinema theatres, where a ticket is the costliest in the country.

Even though the annual investment in film production is Rs 250 crore, many studios in Bombay have closed down. Bombay's share in the number of films produced in the country has also gone down: of the 912 produced last year only 214 were from Bombay. "The economics of Bomaby's film industry has gone completely awry," says Producer Amit Khanna. "The problem is quite deep-rooted, but till now, film people have failed to unite in relation to the Government. But this time there is solidarity."

And, even as a fund-raising drive was begun in aid of film workers, who will be the worst-hit by the agitation, Sunil Dutt dashed off a telegram to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi saying: "This is an SOS from the entire film industry in Maharashtra. The state Government had rung the death-knell with this new impost instead of providing relief from the crippling problems of the industry. Your personal intervention seems imperative." And Manmohan Desai, red-faced after an entire day in the sun protesting against the state Government, intoned: "There will be no solution to this problem until the prime minister intervenes," thus ringing up the curtain on what promises to be the most epic battle scene in Indian film history.

—M. RAHMAN

DURGA PRASAD

Protesting film industry workers: unprecedented solidarity

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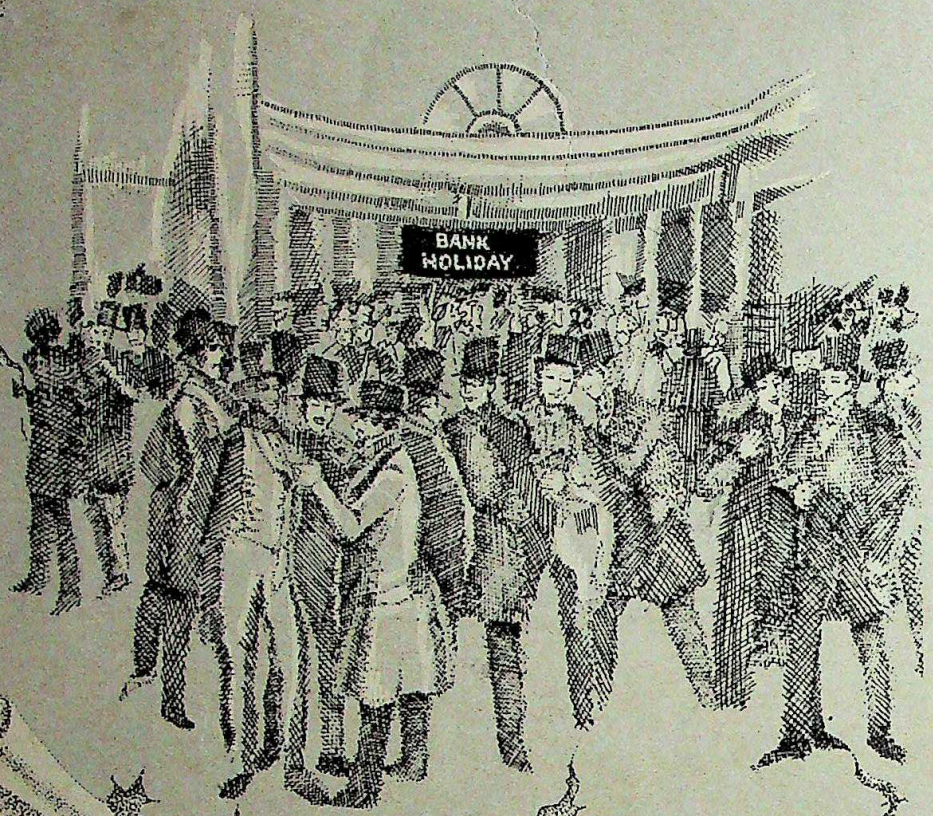
Did you know 6

Bank holidays were treated as national holidays!



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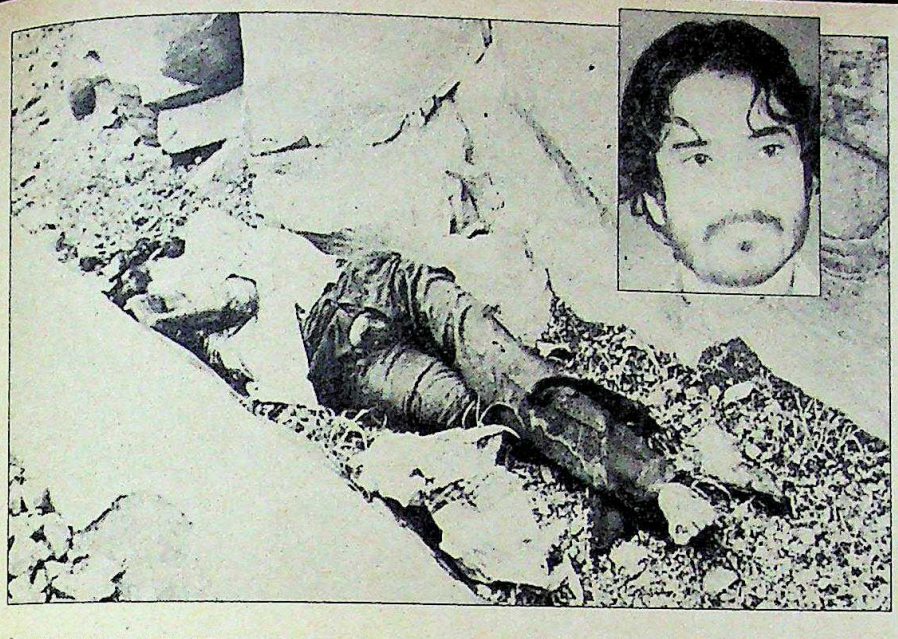
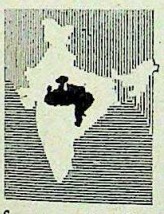


Trivedi (inset) and his body found near the tracks

While the Supreme Court vindicated Arjun Singh in the liquor case, the findings of a judicial commission into a driver's death were worrying.

MADHYA PRADESH

Judicial Tidings



EVEN as speculation continued to surround the political status of Arjun Singh, two judicial bodies in Delhi and Bhopal had both good and bad news for the former chief minister of Madhya Pradesh. While the Supreme Court gave Singh a shot in the arm by ordering the deletion of the strictures passed against him by Justice B.M. Lal of the Madhya Pradesh High Court in the famous liquor case, the report of a judicial commission of inquiry appointed by the Madhya Pradesh Government could pose fresh worries for Singh.

The commission, headed by retired high court judge M.L. Malik, had been set up to inquire into the death of a state government driver at Bhopal during Arjun Singh's chief ministership. The local police had dismissed the case as suicide. But the judicial commission has now blown that explanation sky-high. The commission's five-month-old report—which is still secret, but a copy of which was obtained by INDIA TODAY—calls the driver's death a "clear case of murder" and severely castigates the police for "misdirecting the investigation" and "cremating the body in unseemly haste, creating suspicion". The driver, though deputed to the chief minister's residence, was actually working for Singh's nephew. The state Government has now asked the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to inquire into the death of the driver.

But the Supreme Court judgement has been a clear vindication for Singh. Justice Lal and the acting Chief Justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, J.S. Verma, had struck down the changed liquor policy on the ground that it was discriminative. Justice Lal, in a separate judgement, had gone on to allege that the policy had been arrived at in an "underhand" manner and that money had changed hands between those who were favoured in the new policy and the "concerned authorities." Justice Lal had also accepted the petitioner's argument that the new liquor policy would result in a loss of Rs 56 crore, even though there were obvious errors in this hypothesis.

Not only did Chief Justice P.N. Bhagwati and Justice Khalid uphold the policy, the two judges were harsh on Justice Lal in ordering the deletion of his strictures. Devoting a full nine pages in their 84-page judgement to the strictures, Justices Bhagwati and Khalid said: "There is not an iota of evidence to establish or even as much as indicate that the state Government was actuated by any collateral purpose or was guilty of any 'sinister underhand dealing' or was prompted by any corrupt motive in reaching the policy decision....What the learned judge has said is based entirely on conjecture and suspicion—an approach which does not go well with judicial disposition of a case." Demolishing the basis of Justice Lal's observations, the two Supreme Court judges concluded with the admonition that: "Judges should not use strong and carping language while criticising the conduct of parties or witnesses. They must act with sobriety, moderation and restraint."

The Supreme Court's judgement comes as no surprise to those who have followed the case closely. As was clear at the time of the high court judgement (INDIA TODAY, April 30), and as has now been reiterated in the Supreme Court, Justice Lal's strictures were based on allegations that even the petitioners had only mentioned in passing in their petitions and had not argued out in court. Singh, who had been pained enough by the strictures to seriously consider impleading himself in the case to clear his name before deciding, wisely, to stay out, was characteristically low-key in his reaction to the judgement. Said Singh: "The final verdict has come. It is for the others to interpret."

But if one worry has faded, the M.L. Malik Commission's report has added a new one. Chief Minister Motilal Vora claimed last fortnight that "the Malik Commission has not passed strictures or cast aspersions on anyone." But as the commission's report shows, this is patently incorrect.

The badly-battered body of Rajendra Trivedi, 30, the state government driver, was found by the side of a railway track on the morning of July 3, 1984. Although his driving licence was with him, the police declared his body to be "unclaimed" and cremated it the same day without bothering to trace the relatives. But other government drivers refused to believe the police version and struck work two days later, demanding a judicial inquiry. The press was quickly onto the story, and as public resentment

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mounted, Arjun Singh ordered a judicial probe by Malik, explaining: "No doubt should remain about any matter in which my name is even remotely connected."

The commission found that although Trivedi was summoned to work at the chief minister's bungalow on February 13, 1984, he was actually deputed to work at the house of his nephew, Shailendra Singh, "in flagrant violation of official norms". In fact, the commission notes with shock: "Reports were that as many as 35 of the 200 (state garage) drivers were likewise working for non-officials."

Udaynarain: seeking justice

The records of the state garage, produced before the commission, reveal that a personal assistant to Arjun Singh rang up the state garage and requisitioned Trivedi's services. The then superintendent of the state garage, B.S. Deshpande, told the commission that he sent the driver to the chief minister's bungalow on February 13, 1984. After two months, Deshpande sent a memo to the Chief Minister's Secretariat asking for the return of the driver. When there was no response, he was marked absent and his salary for April, May and June withheld. After Trivedi's death, Deshpande was moved out of the garage.

Trivedi's family members—his two brothers, Arjun and Udaynarain (both drivers in the state garage) and aged mother, Godavari—told the commission that in those months he was actually working for Arjun Singh's nephew, Shailendra Singh, 37, a contractor. Trivedi, the brothers claimed, had come to know Shailendra Singh and his wife, Jyoti, 33, when he was working with former minister Devendra Kumari Devi, a relative of the Singhs.

On July 2, the family members told the commission, Trivedi packed his luggage and left home, saying that he had to accompany Shailendra Singh somewhere. Next morning, his blood-spattered body, with as many as 45 injuries, was found by the railway track. The police later recovered his belongings from the house of Shailendra Singh. But they still went out of the way to prove that it was a case of accidental death.

But forensic expert Heeresh Chandra, director of Bhopal's Medico-Legal Institute, told the commission that in all probability the driver was murdered elsewhere and his body dumped near the railway track to give it the appearance of accident or suicide. The motive of murder, Malik concluded, was either Trivedi's extra-marital affair with a married woman or involvement with a gang of smugglers. He recommended investigation by an agency "free from local influence".

But Trivedi's relatives seem to have little faith in the proposed CBI inquiry. Last fortnight, Udaynarain filed a criminal complaint in a Bhopal court in an attempt to drag to court luminaries like Arjun Singh, his son Ajay Singh, Shailendra Singh and his wife, and also the police officers connected with the case. The charges levelled by Udaynarain range from murder to criminal conspiracy and attempt to shield the guilty by framing incorrect records. Says Udaynarain: "I know that I will probably achieve nothing, but at least I will have the satisfaction of knowing that, despite my humble means, I tried my best to bring out the truth." But irrespective of what happens in the court the conclusions of the commission are bound to pose more problems for Arjun Singh.

MADHYA PRADESH

Power Politics

A recent notification by the Madhya Pradesh Government divesting the assembly speaker of some of his administrative and executive powers has developed into an open confrontation between the executive and judiciary. Although the Government, after a month-long cold war, was forced to retract part of the offending order, Speaker Rajendra Shukla is still bristling with ire from what he considers an attack on his constitutional powers.

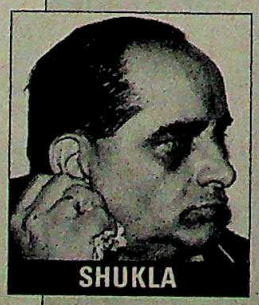
The controversial September 4 notification, apparently issued without consulting Shukla, not only transferred the speaker's powers regarding the appointment, promotion, transfer, pension etc of the assembly's employees to the Department of Parliamentary Affairs but, most important, gave powers to the Government to decide the salaries and allowances of the speaker and the deputy speaker (constitutionally, this is decided by the house). Further, the new department was also entrusted with matters relating to formulating a code of conduct for legislators and their salaries, powers, privileges and immunities.

Predictably, the notification drew flak from diverse quarters. Said Shukla, who cut short his trip abroad to rush back to Bhopal and register his objections with Chief Minister Motilal Vora: "No one can usurp the speaker's or the legislature's powers enshrined in the Constitution." The vidhan sabha secretary fired off a note to the Government seeking a review of the notification.

Reflecting the legislators' ire, N.P. Shrivastava, leader of the Janata Legislature Party, said angrily: "The Government has no right to formulate a code of conduct for the MLA's." Shrivastava, a former deputy speaker, says the notification violates Article 187 of the Constitution which guarantees independent secretariats for state legislatures.

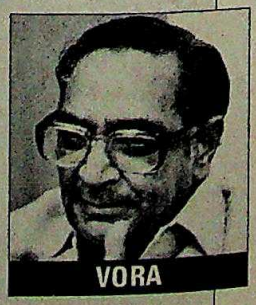
In its defence, the state Government argues that the Department of Parliamentary Affairs is merely meant to function as a liaison between the Government and the Assembly. "The notification has been brought to protect the speaker's interests. His powers have not been curtailed at all," claimed Vora.

Initially, the Government was unmoved by the mounting criticism, but after Lok Sabha Speaker Balram Jakhar also criticised the notification last fortnight, Vora and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ramkishore Shukla rushed let-



SHUKLA

Chief Minister Vora's order taking away some of the powers of Speaker Shukla has sparked off a confrontation between the two.



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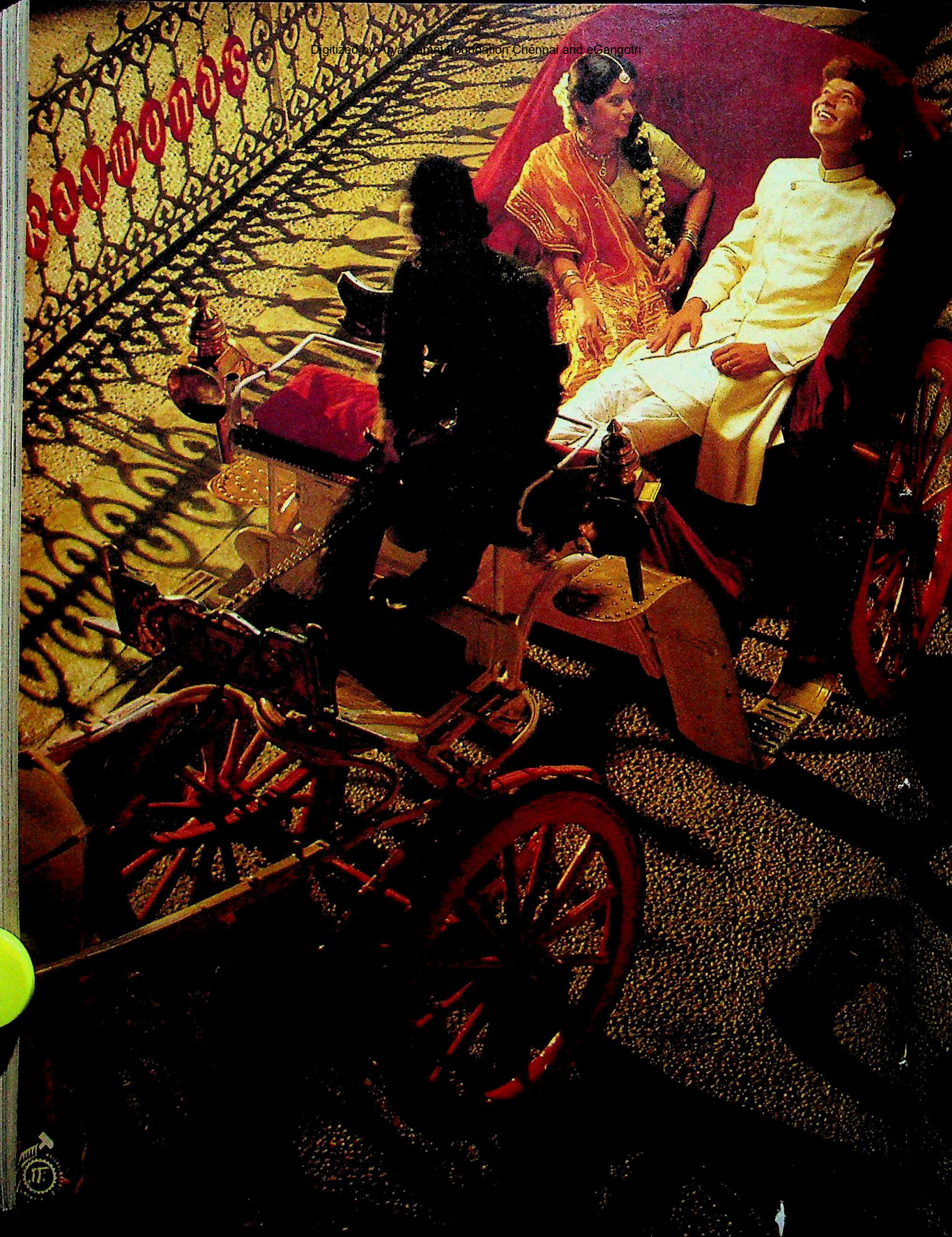

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ters to Jakhar assuring him that the Government would amend the notification. This was indeed done last week, with Ramkishore Shukla saying later: "In the notification the words 'pay and allowances of the officers and employees of the legislature' were inadvertently and erroneously included."

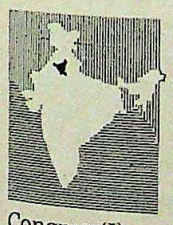
But vidhan sabha sources point out that the unimpugned parts of the order still amount to eroding the autonomy of the legislature. The Government is still to withdraw the part of the notification taking over the pay and privileges of the speaker, deputy speaker, legislators and the formulation of the code of conduct. Speaker Rajendra Shukla's dissatisfaction was evident in the special committee, headed by Opposition leader Kailash Joshi, set up by him to review the issues created by the controversy.

The confrontation is an offshoot of the political rivalry between Moti Lal Vora and Rajendra Shukla, both of whom belong to the Chattisgarh region. Shukla belongs to the Arjun Singh group and has been a constant source of discomfort in the house to the chief minister. It is a pity that in settling political scores, Vora overlooked the larger issues in question.

—N.K. SINGH

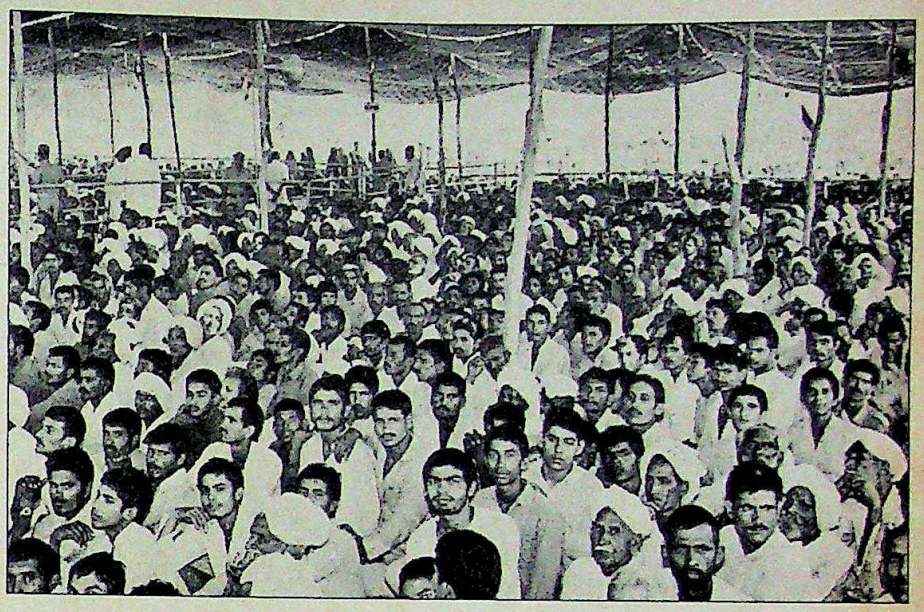
HARYANA

Poll Pursuits



THE battle for Haryana, the only Hindi heartland state scheduled to go to the polls next year, slipped into a higher gear last month with both the ruling Congress(I) and the main opposition alliance, the four-party Haryana Sangharsh Samiti, unveiling new vote-catching surprises before the electorate. The two communist parties and breakaway opposition leaders added to the excitement by throwing up a third front. Although there is no firm indication of the election date—the earliest is next February, the latest May—it is certain that this will be the most closely contested poll in the state's 20-year history.

Chief Minister Bansi Lal, inducted five months ago with the clear brief of wresting the initiative from the Devi Lal-driven Haryana Sangharsh Samiti, added to the election build-up by announcing major concessions for farmers and youth, the two sections under Devi Lal's spell. In one dramatic stroke, the chief minister waived the entire loan arrears of Rs 133 crore due from farmers in the canal irrigated areas and announced the abolition of land revenue. Later, addressing a 30,000-strong youth gathering, Lal gave up his long-standing opposition to direct elections in college unions and assured greater participation for youth in block samitis and market committees. "If Bansi Lal can win back the youth from the Lok Dal, he will win the battle," said H.S. Hooda, principal of the Jat College in Hissar.



Bansi Lal (left) addressing rally: making concessions

The Haryana Sangharsh Samiti, the four-party alliance of the Lok Dal, BJP, Congress(S) and a section of the Janata Party, had earlier captured the farmers' imagination by its aggressive denunciation of the Punjab accord as being against their interests. But Bansi Lal's concessions as well as his drive for a cleaner and more responsive administration have presented it with a fresh challenge. "We forced the Centre to pack off Bhajan Lal and it is our pressure that is winning big concessions to you," Devi Lal declares triumphantly at public meetings. Lok Dal leaders claim that several months after Devi Lal started on his round of public meetings, he still continues to draw larger and more appreciative crowds than the chief minister.

There is no doubt that Devi Lal's rapport with the Jats is still unmatched by any other politician in the state. But this is both his major strength and weakness; the aggressive support of the Jats for him tends to put off the other communities. Acknowledging this, the Lok Dal widened its support base by persuading two former chief ministers, Bhagwat Dayal Sharma (a Brahmin) and Banarasi Dass Gupta (a Bania) to join the Samiti. Also joining them in the Samiti were second-line leaders like Mool Chand Jain and Balwant Rai Tayal (both Banias with some influence).

Significantly, however, Sharma's son Rajesh continues to be a minister in Bansi Lal's cabinet, and none of Sharma's supporters have followed him to the Sangharsh Samiti. Bansi Lal underplays Sharma's importance by pointing out: "Sharma has always been against the Congress, which he left in 1968."

But the Samiti suffered a set-back when, protesting against Devi Lal's overbearing style, several second-rung Lok Dal leaders like Bhim Singh Dahiya, Sarup Singh (former vice-chancellor of Delhi University and a close relative of Charan Singh) and former finance minister Satbir Malik parted ways. "Devi Lal loves his family the most. Others in the

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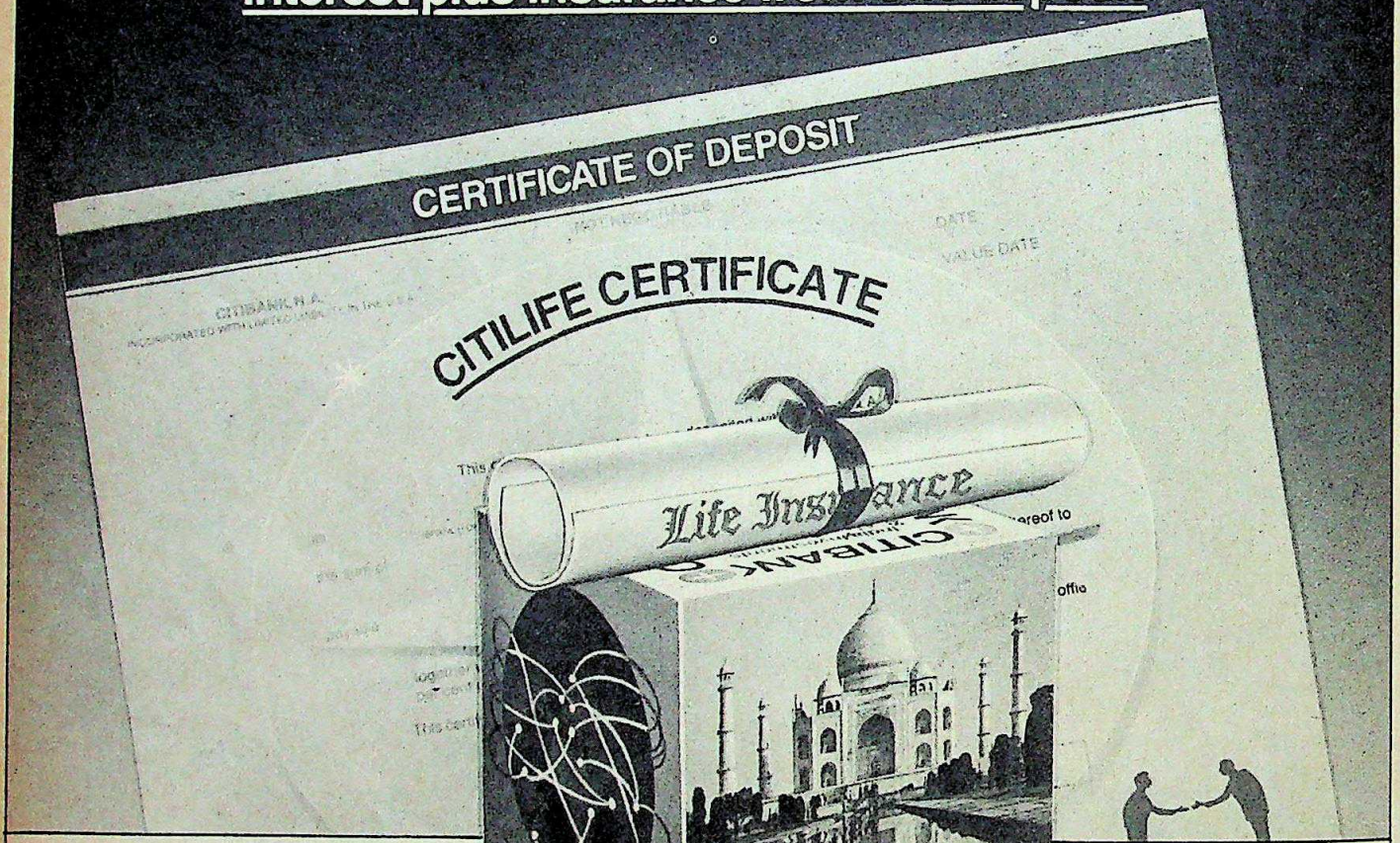

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Lok Dal are stepsons with no right to question his authority," charged Dahiya.

The breakaway Lok Dal leaders were joined in their anti-Devi Lal front by the CPI(M), the CPI, and a section of the Janata Party. The communist parties are opposed to Devi Lal because of his denunciation of the Punjab accord; they believe that the accord can do justice to both states. Says CPI(M) leader R.S. Hooda: "We take opposition to the Punjab accord as an opposition to peace and unity. Devi Lal's 'Nayayudh Morcha' is no better than the 'Dharamyudh Morcha' of Bhindranwale." The third front also aims to contest all 90 seats in the Assembly elections, and a clearly worried Devi Lal paid hurried visits to Janata President Chandra Shekhar and CPI(M) leader Harkishan Singh Surjit. Both counselled him to water down his attack on the Punjab accord, which he finds difficult to do at this stage.

Bansi Lal, on his part, has jettisoned his predecessor's strategy of outshouting Devi Lal in making pro-Haryana demands, and has been quietly and effectively arguing that the Centre will ensure that justice is done to the state. Again, while the communal mood when he took over was distinctly nasty, Bansi Lal has gone out of his way to assure all communities that the Government will offer equal opportunities to them.

The chief minister's strategy is already paying dividends, even among the Jats. Till recently, it was almost impossible for a Congress(I) leader to get a hearing from the Jats. But last fortnight, Bansi Lal even ventured into the heart of the Lok Dal's support base to hold a well-attended meeting at Pai in Kurukshetra district. Showing political savvy, he promised the Jats, an aggressive farming community looking for greater social status, "a world class capital city very near to your villages". Vowed Lal: "If I have funds and the time, Haryana will be a different state."

As Bansi Lal awaits the Eradi Tribunal's verdict on river waters—the Congress(I)'s poll chances could well depend on this—the people are making the most of the opportunity. "We shall decide whom to vote for at the proper time, but the concessions mean a great deal to us," said Hira Nand, a farmer from Kaithal. There is only one other thing certain about the Haryana pre-poll scenario: the electorate is in for the kind of wooing it could only have dreamt about.

—GOBIND THUKRAL in Kurukshetra

LAST WORD/RAJENDER PURI

Flight to the Future

EVER since Rajiv Gandhi told us that we're going to the 21st century I've been under obligation to him. I mean, before that who ever knew that we would go to the 21st century? But then, a thought troubled me. Yes, we're going to the 21st century, I told myself, but in what condition will we reach there?

It was at that precise moment of agonising confusion that I decided to call on my favourite astrologer. He would tell me.

"Panditji," I said. "In what condition will we reach the 21st century? Please study the planets and let me know."

"I've already done that, my son," Panditji replied with a kindly smile. "Have no fear, our condition will be much better in the 21st century than it is today!"

"Wait a minute," I said quickly. "At that time the whole world will be better off than it is today. What I want to know is how much better off we will be in comparison to the rest of the world. The fact is, I'm sick and tired of other nations looking down on India!"

"Don't worry," he said. "We will be better off in comparison to other nations too."

"Yes, but how much better off?"

"Well, I've made a study. Take hockey. Currently India is last among the World Cup competitors. There is no team worse than our team. By my calculations, in the 21st century there would be at least 10 other teams worse than ours in the World Cup." I exclaimed: "If we will be ahead of 10 other teams we will be back near the top of the table!"

Panditji averted his eyes and said, "Mmmm!"

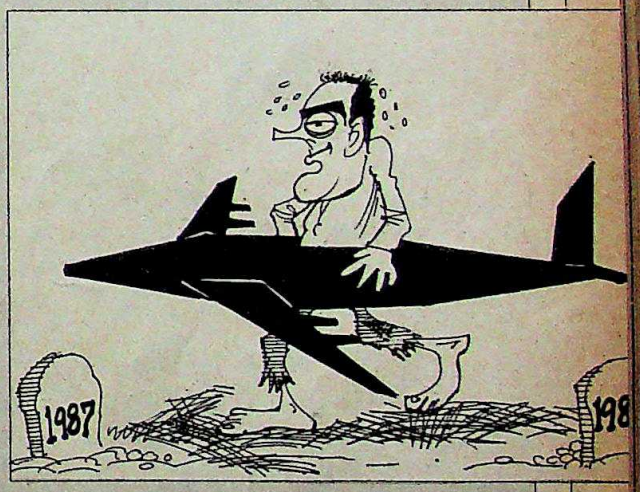
"What about the economic situation?" I asked. "Right now there are only 11 nations in the entire world which have a lesser per capita income than India. How will it be in the 21st century?"

"Our position will move up," Panditji said confidently. "In addition to the 11 nations, there will be at least 20 other nations behind us. I guess there ought to be around 31 nations poorer than India in the 21st century."

"Holy cow! That's terrific going!"

"Thanks to Rajiv Gandhi's computers and advisers, all this will come to pass," Panditji said solemnly. "India's position will move up solely due to Rajiv Gandhi's efforts!"

"You've no idea how much you've bucked me up," I said gratefully. "By the way, any idea which nations we will overtake by the 21st century? That should give us an exact picture of how well off we will be at the time."



Panditji pursed his lips. "I can't give you the complete list right now, but off hand I would say that India will certainly be ahead of Orissa, Assam, Mizoram, Kashmir...."

"Hold it," I screamed. "Those aren't nations, they are states of the Indian Union!"

"Oh, didn't I tell you?" Panditji looked up with genuine surprise. "By the 21st century India will have broken up into at least 22 new nations!"

"Twenty-two new nations?" I gasped.

"Naturally," Panditji said irritably. "How else will we move up in the world rankings? India's boundaries will stretch right up to the Yamuna! But thanks to high-tech, India will continue to forge ahead...."

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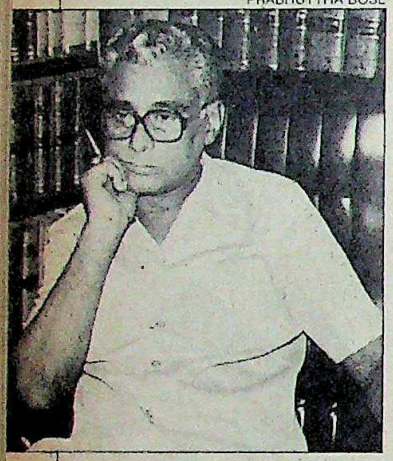
State Squeeze

CALCUTTA High Court judges find little reason to rejoice over the Union Law Ministry's recent decision to upgrade their salaries and service conditions. They feel that the Marxist state Government will invariably find ways to prune any real benefits that come their way. Already, in spite of a law saying that they be provided bungalows, the state gives them only an allowance that works out to a niggardly Rs 800 per month, compelling judges to live in cramped quarters. The former chief justice, Satish Chandra, was forced to live with his family in a two-room suite in the state guest-house for three years because he could not afford a decent residence.

PRABHUTTHA BOSE



Banerjee: unhappy

"It's degrading," said Justice Bagabati Prasad Banerjee, who lives in a small flat himself. His office, a tiny cubicle crammed with books, serves as a full-fledged court during vacations. The state Government provides neither security at home nor a proper library at the high court itself. Official cars are so few and dilapidated that on an average a judge is dropped to work only thrice in a month. The Marxists, it seems, are still in no mood to pay. State Law Minister Mansur Habibullah had remonstrated at an all-India conference on the service of judges last year: "We can't use poor people's money to pay judges." There is no evidence to suggest that the Marxists have changed their mind.

Troubled Tiger

PROJECT Tiger has been deemed a success nationwide but recent developments in Uttar Pradesh have got the state Government worried. In the last five months alone, the carcasses of eight tigers have been found in the jungles of Lakhimpur-Kheri. These forests, with a 200 sq km area touching the Indo-Nepal border, have always been a happy hunting ground for poachers, who are said to be in league with smugglers. Thanks to these operators, animal skins and other parts of carcasses often find their way to Nepal from where they are smuggled to other countries.

The recovery of five carcasses in May from a truck in the Mira township of Kheri, the district famous for the Dudhwa National Park, was the first startling evidence of the large-scale poaching going on in the area. In August, yet another carcass of a tiger was found lying on the Sharda canal embankment in Pilibhit district. The post mortem examination disclosed that the tiger had died from a gunshot wound. In September, wildlife officials raided the house of the village chief of Husainpur in Haripur range of Pilibhit and recovered a tiger skin and a buried carcass from near his house. Two days later, a tigress's corpse was retrieved during the cleaning of the control gate of the Sharda canal barrage in Madho Tanda (Pilibhit). Clearly worried, the state police and Forest Department have launched a massive drive to stop this illicit trade. It is still too early to assess the operation's success, but clearly there is not a moment to be lost.

Welcome Verdict

A recent judgement by the Indore bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court may help hundreds of slate-pencil workers suffering from silicosis, an incurable lung disease caused by silica dust pollution, in the state. Justice Virendar Dutt Gyani ordered a slate-pencil factory of Mandsaur, where slate-pencils are made by cutting soft rocks, to pay a compensation of Rs 20,000 to Vimal Chand Jain, a worker suffering from silicosis. Earlier, Jain's request for compensation had been turned down by a labour court on the ground that he should claim damages from the Employees' State Insurance Scheme (ESIS) which applied to the factory. Criticising the delay, Justice Gyani expressed surprise over the fact that the case was pending at the labour court for more than three months simply because the court did not have a place to hold its sittings at Mandsaur. He asked the authorities to implement the Factories Act provisions which declare slate-pencil manufacture a 'hazardous industry'. The judgement may help a similar case that is now pending with the Supreme Court.

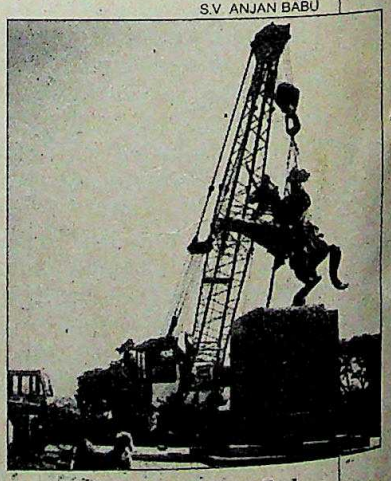
N.K. SINGH

Child workers in pencil factory

Statue Struck

THE latest step in Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao's continuing Teluguisation drive is the installation of statues of 33 prominent state heroes along the 2-km drive on the Hussain Sagar Tank Bund Road linking Hyderabad and Secunderabad. The project, which entailed the widening of the Tank Bund Road and the construction of a bridge—at a cost of Rs 4.5 crore—has been completed at break-neck speed. In ramming this project through, Rama Rao has shown determination which could have been put to better use, given the drought in Rayalaseema and the floods in the Godavari delta.

S.V. ANJAN BABU



A statue being installed

Hyderabad Mayor K. Prakash Rao tried to hold up the project by pointing out that the permission of the Hyderabad Corporation had not been sought, but Rama Rao brushed him aside. Akbar Ali Khan, a Hyderabadi and ex-governor of Uttar Pradesh, protested that the statues were an affront to the 16th century sufi, Hazrat Hussain Shah Wali, who had designed the lake and the bund. Khan threatened a satyagraha to stop the statues' inauguration, but Rao talked him out of it. Rama Rao now plans to add to the statue boom, after gauging the public mood.

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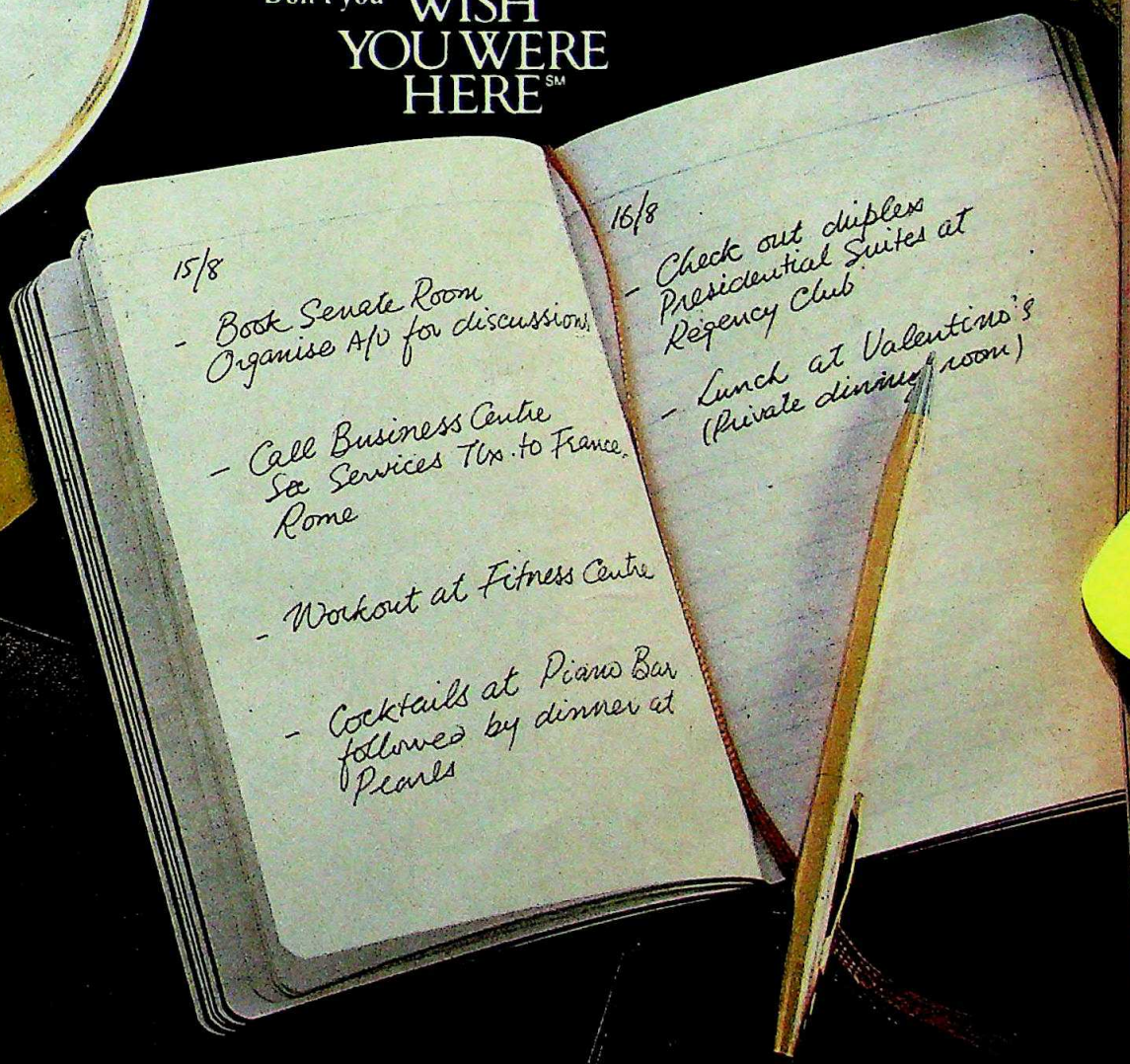

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JAMMU & KASHMIR

The Politics of

WHAT next? Even seasoned Kashmiri politicians who have seen predictable patterns in hundreds of dramas that have unfolded on the political stage of their state during the last 40 years ask this question in complete earnestness.

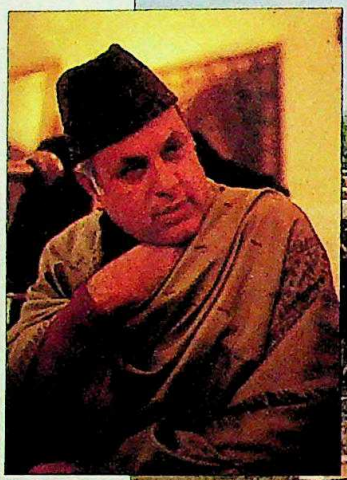
They are aware that the scions of the two families which have shaped the history of their state—Rajiv Gandhi and Dr Farooq Abdullah—have been talking to one another for the last several months. But nothing concrete emerges. They have seen minor bandhs, hartals and communal incidents in the state during this period, apparently signalling the inexorable rise of fundamentalist forces, but they fizzle out no sooner than they start. And no matter how vociferously politicians lobby against Central rule, Governor Jagmohan continues to occupy the chief executive's seat in the state.

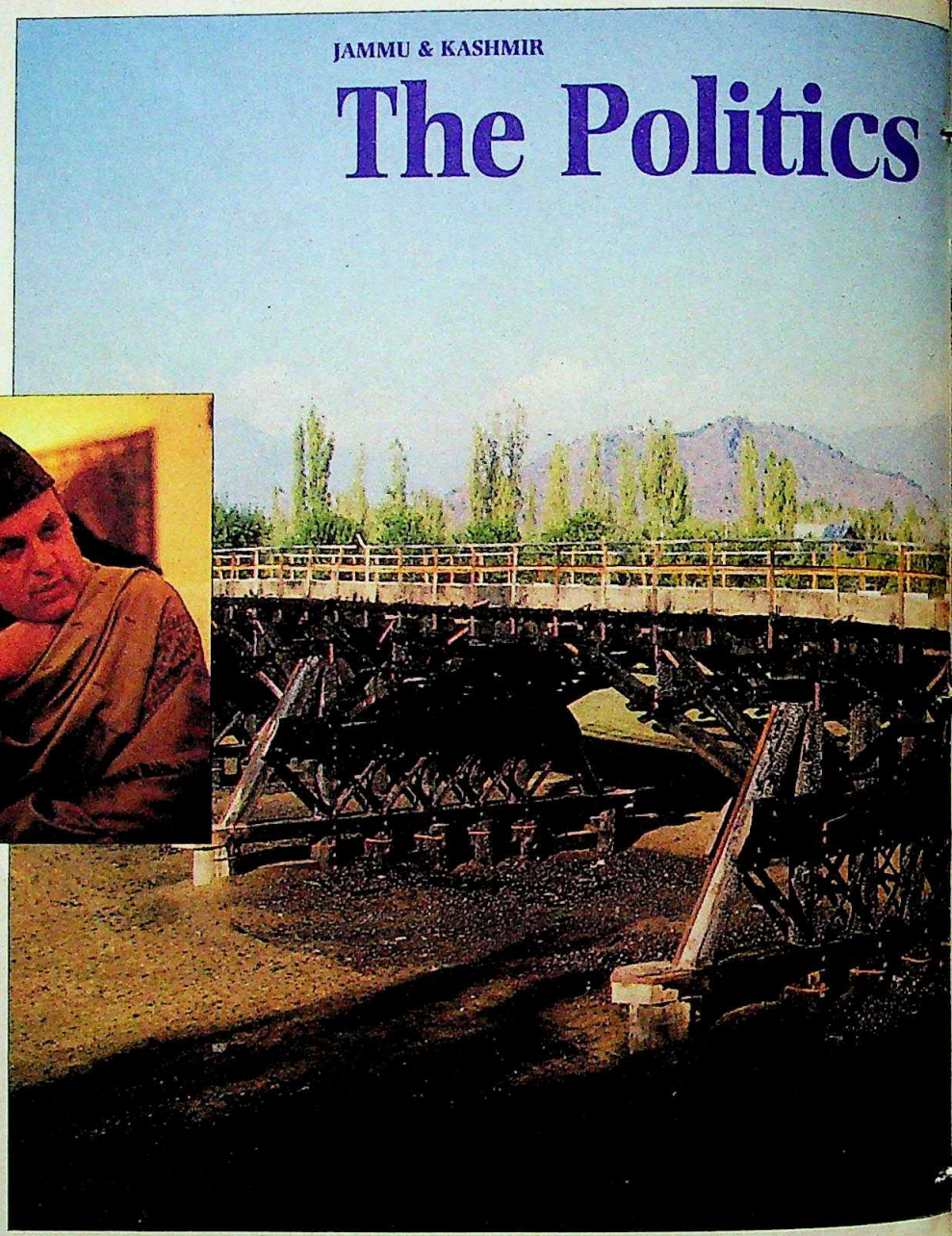
The uncertainty stems in part from a unique admixture of political mistrust and blackmail in which the various power-brokers in the state are locked in an unholy symbiotic embrace. They fear one another and yet are afraid to let go. This is reflected in no small measure in the negotiations now underway, between the National Conference(F) (NC) led by Farooq and the Congress(I), designed to usher in popular government in the state after nearly 10 months of Governor's and Central rule. It is clear that if elections are held now the NC, the only mass-based party in the state, would sweep the polls. The most obvious question being asked is, so why does Farooq need Rajiv's party? Or for that matter, why does Rajiv, whose party can easily form a government with the now independent group of 14 MLA's, need Farooq?

According to sources close to Farooq, the Centre had promised last August that the current assembly would be dissolved and elections held within a short period. The Centre then viewed this as the only realistic way to resolve the political uncertainty in the valley and curb what was seen as the rising power of religious fundamentalism that seems to thrive in a vacuum. But Rajiv was informed by party sources that the Congress(I) organisation in the state was so weak that his party might wind up losing several seats in its traditional stronghold of Jammu because of the exceptional rise in the strength of the BJP in the area.

Traditionally the Congress, in the interest of maintaining a strong Central presence in the state, has always controlled the state legislature either directly or through alliances—except for the period of Farooq's government, which was toppled because it had refused to play electoral ball with Mrs Gandhi. In the current negotiations Congress (I) leaders, fearing considerable losses in a straight election, have been bargaining for new electoral alliances in which the NC would not contest a certain number of seats in order to ensure Congress(I) victories in those areas which would make up for any losses in Jammu.

According to sources in both parties, if the talks are successful, the scenario then calls for an interim coalition government between the two parties with a new chief minister—Farooq—being sworn in and fresh elections by March of next year. "We are not against a coalition," says Abdul Sanat Teli, provincial chief of the NC, and an MLA from Srinagar. "But the longer the Centre delays things the worse it will be for the Centre and for us. It is important that pro-India elements be strengthened." NC partymen, most of whom want a quick end to Central rule, resent having to drag out negotiations with Congress(I) when they know they can win hands down on their own. But as one party official put it: "Realistically, we have to deal with the





Farooq (left); the burnt Mahjoor Bridge and Rajiv: power struggle

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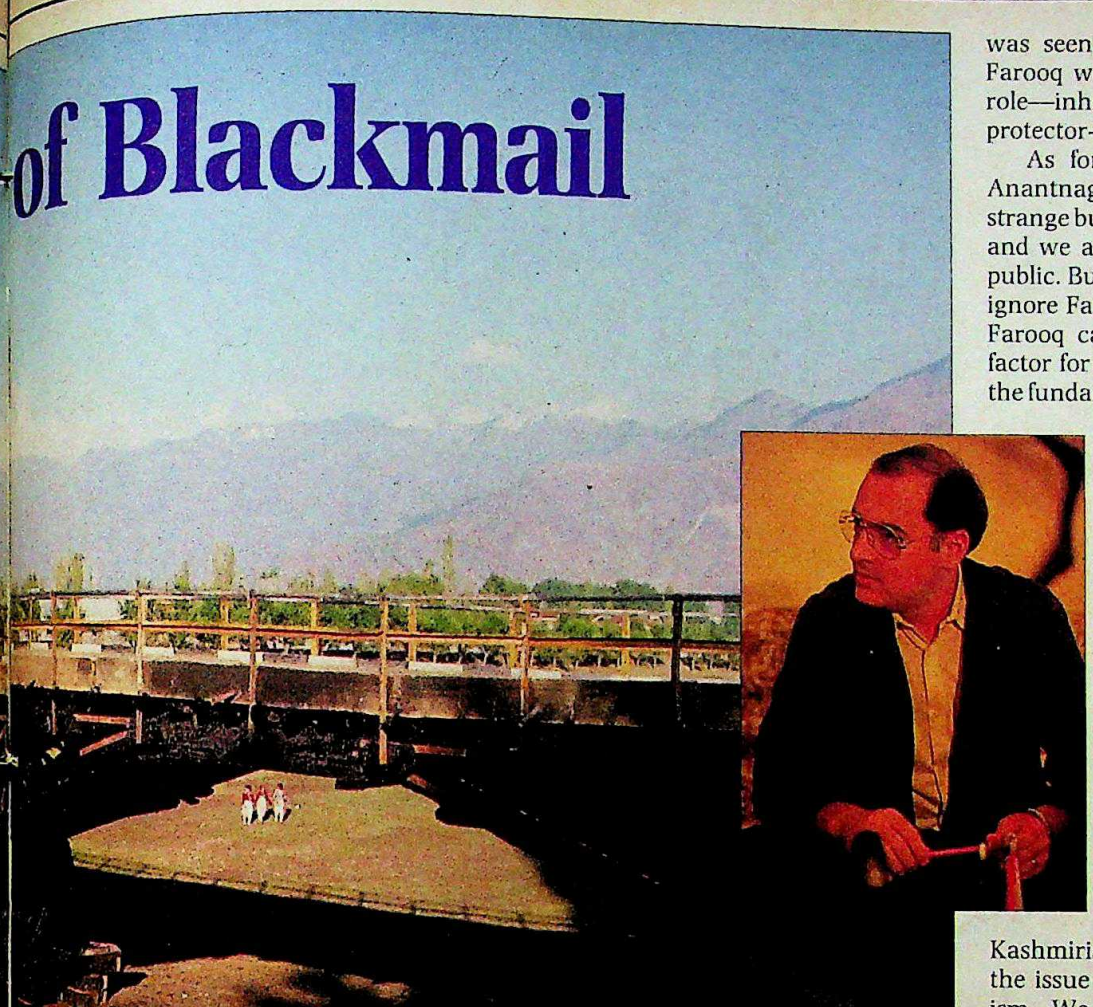
# of Blackmail



With reports of violence in the state being highly exaggerated, the talks between Rajiv and Farooq are significant. The scenario calls for an interim coalition government between the two parties with a new chief minister—Farooq—being sworn in and fresh elections by March next year.

Congress. Look at history. They could make and break Sheikh Abdullah, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, G.M. Sadiq, G.M. Shah. And they toppled us once before. They are like a sword over our heads. History has reconciled us to accepting king-makers from outside." Adds Teli: "But Rajiv must now show his goodwill. He must be decisive and take risks. After all, Dr Farooq took a risk and we showed our bona fides."

The reference was to the recent uncontested election of Mufti Mohammed Syeed to the Rajya Sabha in which the NC did not field a candidate, notwithstanding the fact that the NC had earlier held the vacant seat. Farooq's public embrace of Mufti last month, when he referred to him as a "brother" was particularly galling to some of his supporters who had heard his father Sheikh Abdullah refer to him as "a worm of the gutter". The public turnaround was what caused a demonstration in Srinagar in which portraits of Farooq and his father were burned and desecrated amid the chanting of anti-India slogans. That Farooq or his party have not decried the recent outbursts of fundamentalist outpourings is only a reflection of the other side of the blackmail puzzle. He needs them.

Farooq is capable of presenting a pro-national front to the Centre as the only person who can contain fundamentalism while playing to the gallery at home. His recent meeting with the president of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir during the Haj did not go unnoticed in the valley. In fact, it was seen as a development in which Farooq was talking to both sides in his role—inherited from his father—as the protector-in-chief of Kashmiri identity.

As former Congress minister from Anantnag M.L. Kaul puts it: "This is a strange business. We are talking to the NC and we are not able to shake hands in public. But the fact is that Congress can't ignore Farooq. A disgruntled and angry Farooq can be quite dangerous and a factor for instability if he decides to play the fundamentalist cause or starts talking about the United Nations."

Dr Mahboob Beg, an MLA from Anantnag and former minister in the G.M. Shah government says that the Congress(I) now has a "golden opportunity" to form its own government by allying or merging with the independent group of 14 that broke away from Farooq's government under the leadership of Shah. "They should learn from the past and not repeat old mistakes," he says. Farooq, he says, assumes a nationalist posture with the Centre "but he talks to the Kashmiris in gestures. He will never bury the issue of Kashmir's political separatism. We all understand the gestures. When he criticises Congress(I) he attacks India. When he attacks the Centre he attacks India. He calls me a *ghaddar* which means an Indian agent."

Beg maintains that Farooq out of power can be a "nuisance" but that a government formed by the Congress(I) will be able to deal with him politically. The people of Kashmir, he says, will get out and vote for Farooq, "but he knows that they won't come out on the streets and fight for him."

The Congress(I) is clearly in a dilemma. It is seeking to share power in the state without a grassroots organisation of its own. As Abdul Ahad Waza, a staunch Srinagar-based Congress(I) party worker points out: "The committed people in Congress(I) are being kicked out and anti-national elements are being taken in. You can go all over the valley and you will see that there are not even any district committee offices of the party." And for the past several months, since Mufti Mohammed Syeed was taken into the Union Cabinet as tourism minister, the party has been without a functioning president. Says veteran Congress(I) leader Trilochan Dutt, MLA from Jammu, who is being tipped to become deputy chief minister in

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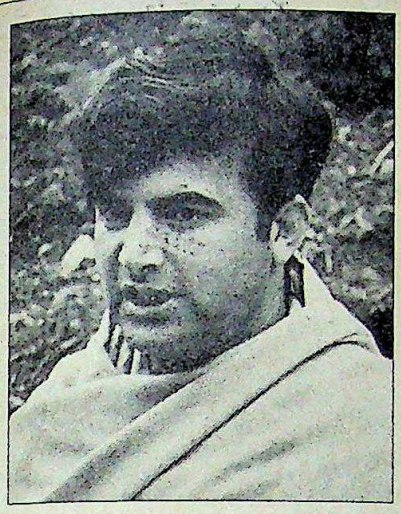


"Congress(I) has a golden chance to form a government by merging with the independent group."

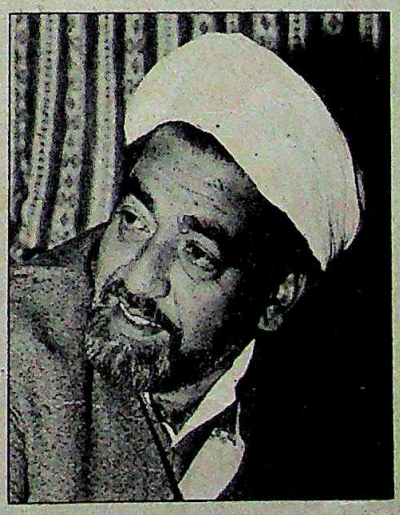
DR MAHBOOB BEG
former minister in G.M. Shah government

case a coalition government is formed: "Clearly we are at fault. We should strengthen our Congress and try to form a government, but for the sake of communal harmony it would probably be wise right now to deal with Farooq. True, he obliquely supports communal politics, but that is because he is insecure. The NC gets weakened if elections are deferred and that plays into fundamentalist hands, which undermines the traditionally secular nature of the Kashmiri Muslims."

But each party harbours grave doubts about the other and any alliance can be but an uneasy truce. While Farooq is said to trust Rajiv at a personal level—he considers him a true secularist but indecisive—some influential members of his party are advising him not to put all of the NC's eggs in the Congress(I) basket. Their view is that the Congress(I) will not survive as a national party and that regional parties will decide the future of India and that the NC should ride the tidal wave of regionalism that they see emerging. And the Congress(I) is not also entirely happy with the coalition choices before it. Farooq's reputation as chief minister was not the best. As one government insider put it: "He was like a little boy with a toy." He made impetuous decisions, left in the middle of sensitive cabinet meetings for private business and preferred to man street traffic posts when his own partymen were imploring him . visit flood-affected areas in the state.

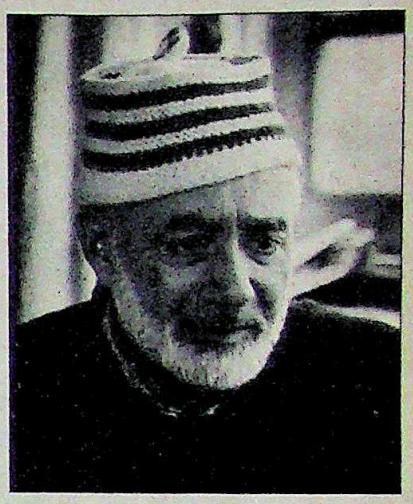
The Congress(I)'s other options are limited. Having toppled and then discredited the Shah regime as corrupt and anti-national, the Congress(I) can hardly be expected to embrace the "defectors". And well-informed political circles believe that the reason for the fall of the Shah government was more than its inability to cope with the law and order situation in Anantnag and Baramula last February. Shah was considered to be an arrogant, blunt man by Congress(I) leaders. He had refused to play ball with them. He refused to call meetings of the coordination committee which was supposed to work out a merger between the two groups. The Congress(I) had installed him in the hope that not only would the move finally break up the Sheikh Abdullah family but also destroy the NC as an organisation. The task entrusted to the Shah government by the Congress(I) was to break up the NC's cadres, take over locals' wakf properties as well as the revenue-generating complex of Mujahid Manzil (NC's headquarters), and close down *Nawa-i-Subh*, the NC party newspaper.

While Shah was politically ambitious to become chief minister, he had no intention of destroying the party. In fact, his government was toppled after the Centre learned that Shah's wife, Khaleda (Farooq's elder sister), and her younger sister, Surayya, had been secretly working to promote a re-merger of Shah's NC (Khaleda) with the parent organisation.



"We could be sitting on a volcano. Political parties provide a buffer zone between fundamentalism and politics."

MAULANA IFTEKAR
legislative leader of the Congress(I)



"We are not against a coalition. But the longer the Centre delays things, the worse it will be for the Centre and for us."

ABDUL SANAT TELI
provincial chief of the NC

Maulana Farooq says his party canvassed for and helped Farooq's party come to power in the first place, "but he is not taking us into confidence. He is dashing off to Delhi all the time and displaying utter servitude to Delhi. What's going on? Does he represent the people or Rajiv Gandhi? The Centre must know that it cannot keep interfering with legitimately elected bodies in this state and must accept them. Only that can bring stability." He says that the basic position of his party, not inconsistent with the NC's platform, is that Article 370 of the Constitution governing Kashmir's relations with the Centre must be preserved, and the distinct character of Kashmir must be kept intact. "But Farooq seems more concerned about his own power than these issues," he adds. Maulana Farooq also points out that people detained under Governor's Rule must be freed, the governor's ordinances revoked and immediate elections be called, "otherwise there's no way to

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check the spread of communalism".

This view is endorsed by fundamentalist leader of the Muslim United Front (MUF) Maulana Abbas who has given several recent calls for bandhs and hartals in the state. In addition to the demands listed above, Abbas also calls for the implementation of proportional representation in the state for filling all government jobs and university admissions. "We have never tasted democracy. We have always had a maharaja," he says, referring to Governor Jagmohan. Adds Professor Abdul Ghani, an MUF organiser: "There is a saying here that after 40 years of darkness Kashmir will see light. We are in the 39th year. Our next step will be to offer ourselves for mass arrests. There is repression under Governor's Rule. Government officers are being fired without cause, people are being imprisoned."

Politicians are mostly united in seeking an end to Central rule. "We could be sitting on a volcano," says Maulana Iftekar, legislative leader of the Congress(I). "Political parties provide a buffer zone between fundamentalism and politics. We provide access to the people which must now come." But Moinuddin Pandit, head of the Awami Forum, a breakaway of the Awami Action Committee, differs: "In the name of religion we have been looted by all parties. For the first time, under Governor's Rule, we have water, better schools, better roads. I say let this rule continue until the good works are finished. The common people praise Jagmohan. The problem here is not so much politics as the fact that Kashmiris are always a suspect people and no party has tried to bring them into the mainstream."

There is little doubt that Jagmohan has come to occupy a strategic role in current Kashmir politics. Fundamentalist parties and political propagandists have tried to portray Kashmir as a state on fire with violence at every turn. As Javed Mukhdoomi, superintendent of police, Anantnag, says: "In a political vacuum, mullahs often occupy the stage and 50 hoodlums can hold a town to ransom. But the activities were small and just fizzled out." The state is peaceful and boasts of the best tourist season in a decade and a bumper apple harvest.

IN addition to waging war on vested interests and corruption *(see accompanying story)*, Jagmohan has launched massive welfare schemes, mostly in rural areas. Roads have appeared in places which had never seen roads. For the first time in history, towns like Srinagar and Sopore which never had sewage systems are being equipped with modern drainage. Primary health care centres, new schools, expanded bus stations, clean drinking water facilities, projects to surround cities with parks and natural forests are sprouting all over the state. And the state's bureaucrats, as Srinagar Divisional Commissioner Hamidullah Khan says, "are inspired. I have never seen morale so high. We can do our work without political interference. There's been a revolution here". His sentiments are echoed by a wide variety of people.

Jagmohan on tour: setting high standards

Says Mohammad Rafiq, a hawker from Anantnag who has just moved into a regular shop constructed under a new project for the city: "We praise *Khuda* for Jagmohan. I used to be a worker for NC and went to jail for the party. But now if they come for votes, we will boycott all politicians. Governor's *raj* has done in this city what no politician did for us for 40 years."

Echoes Arjun Nath, a pundit in Bogund village where temples and houses were burned last February and now have been reconstructed through special grants: "I had lost all faith in the system. *Partybaazi* had created communal tensions and politicians had disgraced democracy."

Even Ishtiaq Ahmed, leader of the student strike at Srinagar's engineering college had praise for Jagmohan who has constituted a working committee of students and bureaucrats to redress grievances. "Our strike was based on our demands for better facilities and proper allocation of college resources, but the papers and politicians painted it into a communal disturbance," he said.

The paeans of praise, if repetitive, are genuine. And most of them come from taxi-drivers, slum dwellers, village folk in areas which have seen speedy development work for the first time.

Even as formal politics gradually returns to the state, one thing is certain: Jagmohan's will be a tough act to follow for any politician. In nine months he has captured the imagination of the people by travelling to areas rarely frequented by politicians in the past—where he has been showered by rose petals and mobbed by well-wishers. His simple bread-and-butter, performance-oriented approach has brought speedy development to areas which had seen no progress in 40 years. And the people's expectations have risen greatly. Whichever party comes to power is going to be judged by a much higher standard of performance, because the Kashmiris now have a standard—Jagmohan's standard—by which they will be rated.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR in Kashmir

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ADMINISTRATION

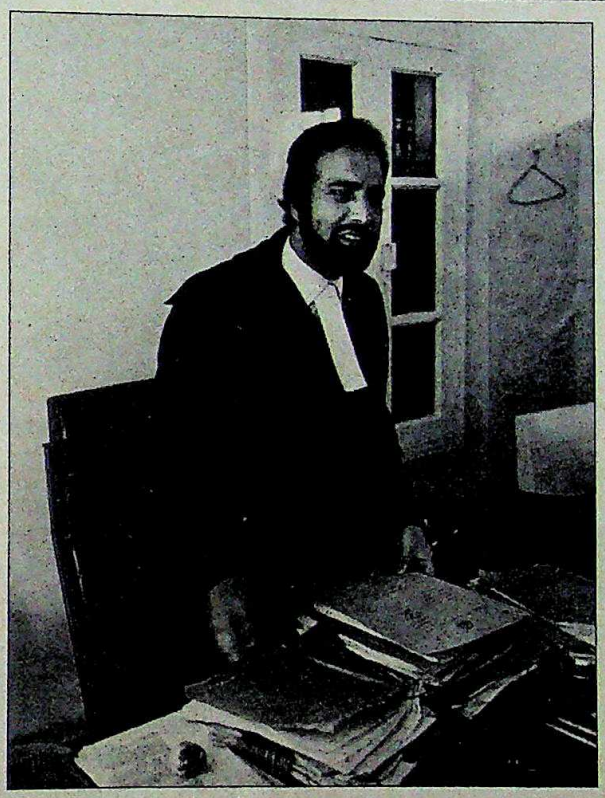
Corruption Crackdown

PERHAPS the most controversial move undertaken under Governor's Rule in the state has been a concerted and unflagging drive against corruption in high places and the deeply-rooted spoils system permeating every level of government and politics. The drive, a combination of administrative action, issuance of ordinances, as well as a vigorous pursuit of court cases aimed at breaking monopolies and vested interests, has to a large extent been spearheaded by Muzzaffar Beg, 39, the state's advocate-general.

Beg, who comes from a farming family near Baramula, was educated in his home town and later went to Harvard University for graduate studies in law. Says Beg: "In a system where the Government is almost the sole distributor of largesse, power and patronage go hand in hand and the state always becomes the loser in terms of lost revenue. Fighting these interests is often a lonely, sometimes thankless job." Admits businessman H.S. Sawhney: "These actions have shaken up the power structure as never before. And it is no wonder that politicians of all colours who profited by the status quo and protected one another as well as certain bureaucrats are opposing these actions as undemocratic."

Selected examples of the extent and diversity of the drive:

▶ In one of the earliest actions he took as governor, Jagmohan suspended one of the most powerful officials in the state—M.M. Khajuria, director-general of police. He was formally charge-sheeted and a high-level inquiry being conducted by a retired chief justice is now under way. The charges filed against Khajuria include abuse of his official position for the spot purchase of spare parts for vehicles, guard items, sports and laboratory equipment; filing of fraudulent travel vouchers; manipulation of official documents and contract tenders. Khajuria was posted as director-general of police in August 1985 and continued to enjoy the confidence of the state Government notwithstanding confidential reports dating back to 1957 in which his conduct, efficiency and integrity were repeatedly the subjects of scathing comments from high officials and had been brought to the attention of the Union Home Ministry.



"In a system where power and patronage go together, the state is the loser of revenue. Fighting these interests is often a thankless job."

MUZZAFFAR BEG
advocate-general, Jammu and Kashmir

▶ Current vigilance inquiries are focusing on the involvement of former ministers in illegal deals. One involves the release of Rs 14 lakh by the director, food supplies, for the purchase of tarpaulins. The reasons for the order are not listed in the purchase books and one firm which supposedly supplied the material doesn't exist. In another case, a minister released money to an agriculture marketing society which had been formed by 11 of his family members. This same minister was involved in obtaining false certificates for family members and appointing them on an ad hoc basis to teaching positions. Another minister purchased Rs 75,000 worth of furniture for his residence through the state forest corporation. Of 508 cleaners and drivers recently hired by the Transport Ministry, 308 were sponsored by a single minister. Ninety-four of those hired under the minister's direct recommendations were found to be unqualified but were taken in under specially relaxed standards. In another vigilance case, investigators are examining circumstances under which another minister, using a front organisation, purchased coal from the state mineral corporation at Rs 125 per tonne below the real price and sold it in the black market.

▶ An ordinance, which for the first time, opens up country liquor vends to public auction rather than giving them to a single individual or running them departmentally strikes indirectly at the role played by the Farooq Abdullah government in attempting to grant an exclusive contract to a firm to manufacture, bottle and market country liquor in the state. The firm, Madeira Bottlers, armed with a "letter of intent" from the Farooq government in 1983, had proceeded with the construction of a factory. Subsequently, a confidential inquiry established that the go-ahead to the firm had been given under direct orders of the chief minister against the advice of the finance minister and finance commissioner who had favoured bidding on competitive terms because the project entailed a major change of policy. Not only was the Finance Department kept out of the scheme until the letter of intent was issued, but the Cabinet too was not consulted for its approval.

Even as Madeira Bottlers began construction of its factory, the governor passed an ordinance amending the law and allowing the auction of country liquor shops in the state. Madeira Bottlers challenged the governor's action through a writ petition to the high court arguing that the Government had gone back on its earlier promise. But the state's advocate-general scored a rare victory when the court, in rejecting the petition, noted: "The action of the governor is not mala

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Illegal timber: source of corruption

fide and besides, it has public purpose because recourse to open auction is presumed to be in the public interest...because it is universally accepted as a fair, just and reasonable mode promoting healthy competition."

Another major victory for a gubernatorial ordinance came only last fortnight. Under a government order which took effect on June 1, private practice by all government doctors including dental surgeons was banned. A note prepared by the secretary of the Health Department explained why the measure became necessary. Among the reasons: doctors were fixing dates of operations and charging fees in their private clinics and then attending to those same patients in government hospitals; doctors engaged in teaching—professors, associate professors—remained so occupied in their private practice that they did not teach classes for years together.

The ordinance was challenged in a writ petition to the high court by several politicians including former deputy chief minister D.D. Thakur. The court noted that the governor's action was not capricious because it had been followed up by several measures such as the establishment of primary health centres in each district along with 150 sub-centres in rural areas, speedy filling of posts lying vacant in medical colleges, creation of three new blood banks, as well as special incentive allowances for government doctors—demonstrating the genuine desire of the Government to improve health care. The writ petition was dismissed forthwith.

The administration also recently challenged in court the power of what is commonly known as the state's "forest mafia", which has traditionally enjoyed political protection. When forest cutting leases held by the lumber bosses expired in 1983, about 150 of them filed court petitions seeking not only an extension of the leases but also the right to cut wood in adjacent forest areas. The courts passed an ex parte order under which the lessees cut about Rs 100 crore worth of forests. When the state Government objected, the forest merchants agreed to a compromise under which they could enter into fresh agreements to cut wood but they would have to purchase the felled timber by paying a royalty to the state. But later the lessees reneged on this agreement: they asked for more time for felling and even challenged it in court. Again, their plea was granted ex parte. The Government responded with an ordinance designed to free the forests from the control of the lessees. But this too has been challenged in court. A division bench of the high court recently gave the state Government a partial victory when it ruled that while lessees can now be banned from entering forests they should, however, be paid some compensation.

The extraction of pine resin which, after conversion to turpentine and rosin, is used for the manufacture of products such as paper, soap and paint, has been a big industry in the state. Official figures estimate its extraction at 40,000 tonnes annually for the last several years. Most of the extraction was done by private contractors under an agreement that it would be used within the state for increasing the manufacture of end-products. Several investigations during the last few years revealed that the resin was being sold in the black market and being smuggled to other states, and that the unscientific tapping of trees was taking a lethal toll of the state's forests. In 1985, the G.M. Shah government appointed an expert committee to review the situation. But before the committee could submit its report, the Government fell. Under Governor's Rule, an ordinance was promulgated under which the state would extract the resin, process it into rosin and turpentine and then sell it to industry. But this Act has been challenged in a writ filed in the Supreme Court.

Another measure particularly unpopular with the state's politicians is the control that the administration has now chosen to exercise over the disposal of state-owned properties. Traditionally, evacuee properties—lands and houses abandoned by families who left for Pakistan—were given as patronage offerings by ministers to selected individuals at well below market rates and heavy profits were later realised through subsequent sales. Now these properties are either auctioned or converted into schools or welfare homes for the destitute.

—INDERJIT BADHWAR

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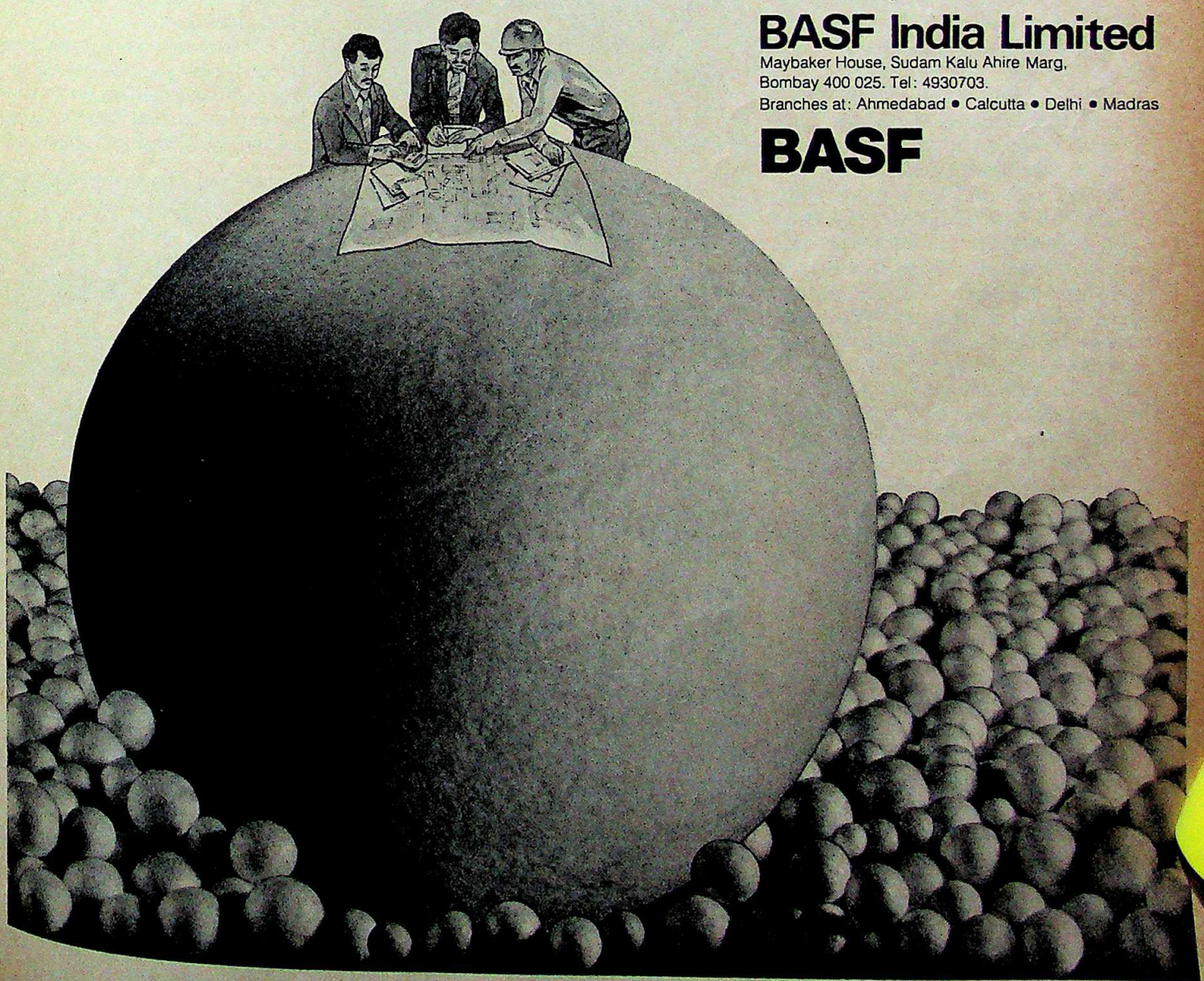

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DUBAI INDIANS

Traders in Trouble

WHEN the huge neon signboard of Premier Electronics failed to light up as usual a few Fridays ago, the throng of weekend shoppers in Dubai's commercial heartland was taken by surprise. Premier had been their favourite shop for almost any kind of electronic and electrical appliances and, with Eid Al Adha round the corner, the shop had been attracting more than the usual custom.

When the showroom failed to open on the following Saturday, the first whispers of uneasiness erupted into a shrill panic of enquiries. By evening word was out that the owner had fled the country. Ramesh Bhatia, the managing director of Premier Electronics and owner of the successful Premier Building Contracting Company, had added to the growing body of unsavoury legend about fleeing Indian merchants and their tales of knavery.

Bhatia had left large unpaid bills to banks and suppliers, debts conservatively estimated at between DH 15 million and 20 million (between Rs 5.20 and Rs 7 crore). But, unusually, he also left behind a "farewell note" explaining the reasons for his sudden departure. The unsigned note, which began with the sentimental plaint that, "we are leaving this country with tears in our eyes, the country we thought was our own", squarely blames the Premier group's local sponsor for deliberately creating problems that made it impossible for the Premier companies to operate.

Bhatia's case is symptomatic of the strains under which the Indian merchant community—the largest among Dubai's expatriate groups—now operates. "We are being squeezed," says a veteran of the Gulf textile trade. "The so-called local partners don't put in any capital but claim the right to management control and arbitrary shares in profits. If we object, our days are numbered."

The brouhaha over the Premier closure, particularly in the wake of the farewell note—widely circulated to banks, traders, the media and United Arab Emirates (UAE) businessmen—has thoroughly upset the Indian merchants, who hold that this is not the first time one of them has been forced to abandon his business and flee the country in the new climate of aggressive nationalisation and unbridled greed for profits. However, Bhatia's is the first case where a businessman has talked openly of problems with local partners, and a close friend insisted that Bhatia's assets in unpaid bills for construction jobs would cancel his debts.

The downturn in the Gulf economies and the closure of two of the biggest markets in the region owing to the Iran-Iraq war have brought business down to a small trickle from the rich founts of the previous years, making it difficult for expatriate businessmen to meet the demands of their local partners, who refuse to scale down expectations. As a result, sudden business failures have become a fairly frequent occurrence over the past two years, attended by the unannounced departures of the owners who have left behind a trail of bad debts and a murky reputation for Indian traders.

Initially, the people concerned were small businessmen, owners of retail shops and the like, whose exit created only small ripples. But in recent months, with more of the big companies going under because of credit restrictions and the continuing recession, even the big names among the Indian traders have been made scapegoats for the liabilities of their local partners, including personal bank loans. Not surprisingly, even the pillars of the Indian community have tottered and fallen.

The reverberation has been the most in the case of Bhagwandas Bablani, a popular entrepreneur belonging to the topmost strata of the local business community,

The closure of Premier Electronics is symptomatic of the strains under which the Indian merchant community in Dubai, caught in a cleft stick legally, is now operating.

Premier Electronics showroom: sign of the times

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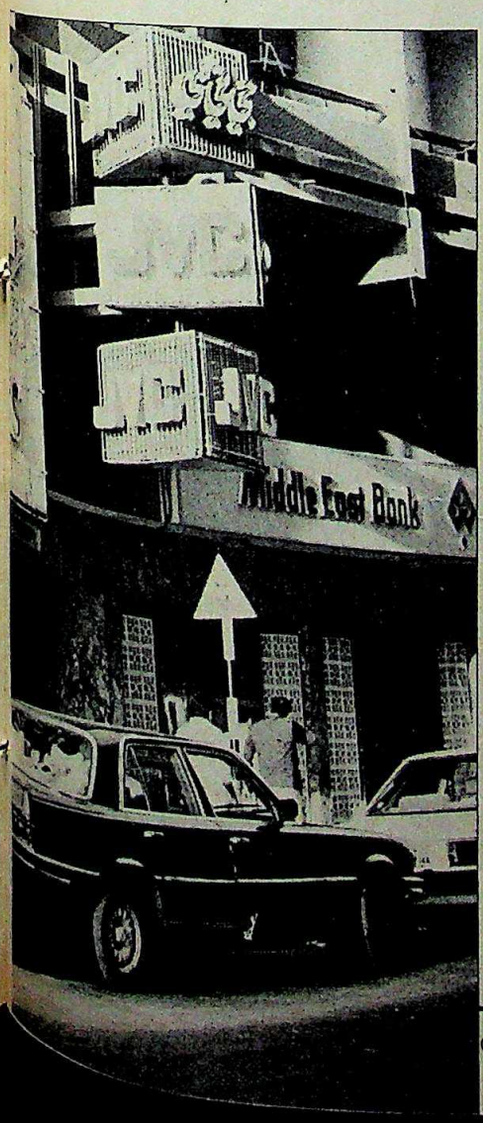
who made an undignified exit from the UAE a couple of months ago to avoid possible arrest. Bablani, who came to the UAE more than three decades ago, had to abandon a widespread trading empire dealing in products as diverse as oilfield supplies and upmarket cosmetics when his partner took the easy way out and held the expatriate responsible for bank loans of about DH 50 million (Rs 17.5 crore).

THE problem is the lack of bankruptcy law and company law, and the big loopholes in what passes for the law at the moment," laments a second-generation Indian businessman who has been trying unsuccessfully to cope with the recent changes which have made the UAE a harsh new environment for those weaned on its comfortable laissez-faire attitude of the past. The law is such that the expatriate trader is left with the onus for all omissions and commissions.

Until four years ago, Indian businessmen had the full freedom to run any business in Dubai with just a trade licence—secured by furnishing a bank guarantee of DH 100,000. But the situation has now changed dramatically. As part of the increasing nationalisation campaign, the authorities stipulated that 51 per cent of the share capital must belong to a local UAE citizen. A certificate of this partnership is essential for obtaining visas for employees, and even for the expatriate owner himself. Although this means that the UAE partner should put in slightly more than half the capital and bear responsibility for any commercial transaction, in practice it works quite differently. In fact, Dubai allows a "legal loophole" which absolves the local national from any commitment by notarising in the civil court separate agreements between the partners which state that the local partner is entitled only to an annual sponsorship fee and is not responsible for any legal or financial commitment.

Sheikh Rashid's sickness has deprived Indian merchants of a benevolent patron.



While even their compatriots are seldom willing to give runaway merchants the benefit of the doubt, in the case of Bhatia there is little to disprove his claim that harassment by his partner had forced him to leave Dubai. Well-known UAE nationals who had been approached by Bhatia to mediate with his sponsor have privately admitted that the Indian had recourse to little else in the face of the obstinate demands of the local person.

Meanwhile, the implementation of a law which makes it mandatory for the UAE partner to put in 51 per cent of the capital has been twice delayed by the federal authorities because of the lack of response. In the straitened circumstances now prevailing in the Gulf, few local gentry have been willing to make such heavy capital investments.

Caught in a cleft stick legally, the Indian merchants have been realising the helplessness of their situation in the aftermath of the Bablani and Bhatia ousters. Their old patron, Dubai ruler Sheikh Rashid, is seriously ill and the UAE is run by his three sons, who have neither the time nor the inclination to listen to a community they treat with scant respect.

"We have no access to the majlis any more," bemoans a Dubai veteran who recalls that as recently as the early '80s he could meet Sheikh Rashid personally and "get any problem solved". After the recent upheavals, their efforts to put their case before the authorities have been mediated by some Dubai merchants with whom the Indians still enjoy some repute.

"It would be difficult and useless to deny that there have been no outright cases of fraud where Indian merchants have run away with bank loans and the profits, to start businesses elsewhere," admits a supplier who has been cheated of DH 2 million (Rs 70 lakh) by runaway dealers. "We have no forum which can speak for our just demands."

There was a forum in the past, the Indian Merchants Community, which had the direct ear of those who mattered in Dubai. But in 1983, it was closed down by the authorities, ostensibly as it did not fulfil certain municipal regulations. The real reason, it has been said, is that local businessmen had objected to a parallel organisation to the local chamber of commerce. At the same time, the Indian serving on the board of the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry was also removed.

The only other organisation of any note, the Indian Association of Dubai, has lost what little credibility it had by giving up its protective role to become a purely social body frittering away its financial reserves in feting diplomats.

As with the ruling family, the merchants now find that they have to come to terms with a brash new generation in the business sphere also. "These young people want to make the maximum money in the shortest possible time; they care little about long-term policies or the ethics of business," laments the owner of several trade agencies in Dubai and Al Ain. He reports that, notwithstanding fixed fees, his local sponsor for a chain of retail outlets makes periodic demands for money to meet travel and other personal expenses. "Sometimes my sponsor (a major in the UAE army) comes to check on our business; and if he sees the turnover is higher on that day he will ask for a larger share of the profits. Frankly, time is running out for us in the UAE." That may be an overly pessimistic statement, but the warning signs are there for all to see.

—A. ZARIN in Dubai

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IMMIGRATION

Passport to Peril

A fortnight after the squalid and harrowing scenes at London's Heathrow Airport's Terminal III, when hundreds of visitors from the Indian subcontinent camped out for endless hours on its florid plastic chairs in wretched desolation, the bedlam over the sudden clamping of visas for visitors from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria and Ghana has taken a new twist. The Conservative Government's decision to take away the rights from British MP's to intervene in immigration cases has sparked off yet another jangling scrape—this time within the House of Commons.

Until now, MP's had the right to intervene when approached by a constituent on behalf of a passenger who was refused entry by an immigration official. They had only to contact the Home Office for removal to be "stayed" until the controversial Minister of State at the Home Office David Waddington had investigated the decision and decided if the refusal of entry was justified. Most passengers were then admitted on a temporary basis. Now Home Secretary Douglas Hurd has helpfully suggested that, with the new compulsory visa system, there is little need for Britain's MP's to lose their sleep over immigration cases.

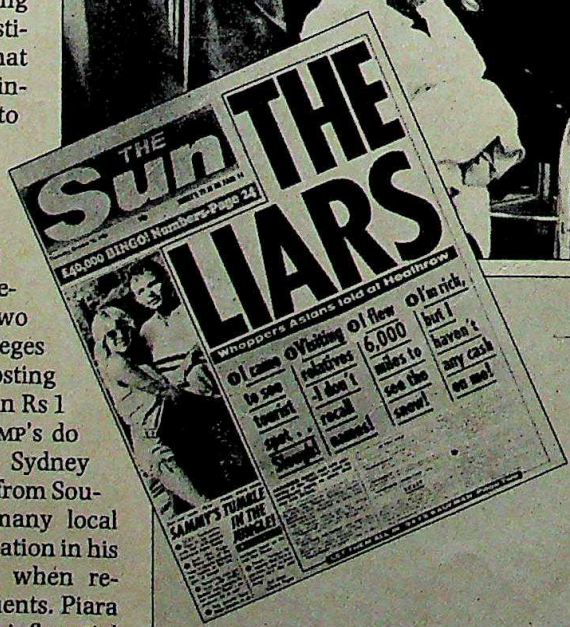
In a well-coordinated publicity drive by the Home Office, which has been drenching newspaper offices with statistical trivia, it now states that representations of MP's have increased from 1,000 in 1980 to more than 4,500 last year. Because Britain's Immigration Act stipulates that airlines have to meet the costs of returning passengers refused admission if directions of removal are given within two months, the Home Office alleges that MP's interventions are costing the British taxpayer more than Rs 1 million a year. Indubitably, MP's do make frequent appeals. Sydney Bidwell, the Labour Party MP from Southall—"Bidwell Singh" to many local Sikhs—has a well-worn reputation in his constituency of intervening when requested by one of his constituents. Piara Singh Khabra, president of the influential Indian Workers Association, relentlessly takes one case after another for visitors from India to the Southall MP.

But many Indians view the latest measures of the Thatcher Government with cynicism. They see it as yet another "racist ploy" in an interminable sequence orchestrated by the ruling Tories. Says S.S. Sekhon, an Ealing-based solicitor: "It is ludicrous to think that there would be many people from the Indian subcontinent arriving in Britain without visas after all the scandalous events at Heathrow and that MP's would have to make numerous representations. Which airline would now be stupid enough to carry a visitor without a valid visa?"

It was not just Britain's large Asian and black communities who were seething and branding the new measures as "naked racism". A furious row erupted in the House of Commons when the Labour Party's shadow Home Secretary Gerald Kaufman told Tory MP's that they "only give a damn for the human rights of those with white skins". Kaufman, who maintained a highly-visible profile at Heathrow amidst the general misery last fortnight alleged that Asians had been treated like "second-class human beings" which would not have happened "if their skins were white". Home Secretary Douglas Hurd, to general merriment in the House, demanded: "Are we being asked to believe that all these young men happened to choose the third week of October to come to see the Tower of London?" Hurd's reference was related to some of the extraordinary reasons many young men—mostly from Bangladesh—gave to the cold, dry-eyed questioning of immigration officers. Asked why they had come, some said it was to see tourist sites. Pressed to specify, the answer was often, "Slough" or the Tower of London. There were computer engineers who had not seen a terminal, rich businessmen who

Checking passports at Heathrow; (inset) scurrilous report in *The Sun*

The Guardian


THE Sun
£40,000 BINGO Numbers Page 24
THE LIARS
Whoppers Asians told at Heathrow
O I came to see tourist spot . . . Slough!
O Visiting relatives I don't recall name!
O I flew 6,000 miles to see the show!
O I'm rich, but I haven't any cash on me!
SAMMY'S TUMBLE IN THE JUNGLE!

Old men, women with wailing babies and hungry children were kept herded together for hours on end as immigration staff deliberated over passports.

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did not own a sou and one who had even flown 6,000 miles to see the "snow".

Britain's scandal-mongering tabloids—aptly titled the gutter press by John McEnroe, went to town with alarmist stories of "Asians flooding Britain". The scurrilous besmirching was led by the odious *Sun*, which ran a front-page banner headline branding the incoming Asians as "liars". When INDIA TODAY questioned numerous non-Asian Britons about the reasonableness of the Government's measures, the general response was that the move by Mrs Thatcher was exceptionally popular. And there did seem a great deal of confusion about the identity of the Asians who sought entry into Britain. Many thought they were "Indians and Pakis". In reality, only a small proportion were Indians. A majority were young single males from Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Youthful Bangladeshis, having paid extortionate rates to unscrupulous agents, flew in droves into Britain to beat the visa deadline. Bangla Biman operated numerous "special flights" between Dhaka and London. Air-India only operated its normal weekly complement of flights. A survey of the inflow of visitors from India during the few days preceding the visa deadlines showed that the number of visitors from India maintained its weekly average. And most Indians had valid reasons for entering Britain.

EVEN though a fortnight had elapsed, official circles in Britain seemed to be still angry at what they termed needlessly intemperate remarks made in Sydney by the Indian prime minister—remarks which were widely applauded by Britain's ethnic minorities. Rajiv Gandhi had said: "The steps that the British have taken are very clearly racist. There can be no other description of the measures that they have taken. We see it as an extension of their racist policies which they are expounding on South Africa."

Baroness Young, the minister dealing with Indian affairs in the Foreign Office told Indian High Commissioner P.C. Alexander that her government greatly regretted the Indian prime minister's remarks. To which Alexander asked what other interpretation should one draw from the fact that five Asian and African countries of the Commonwealth have been singled out for this treatment. There is no visa regime for visitors from any of the white countries within the Commonwealth. Even visitors from South Africa, which practises apartheid, are welcome to visit Britain without a visa. What Indian officials repeatedly have to answer are charges that it was the first to impose visas on all UK citizens. India House has countered that the regulation applies to every visitor to India and does not discriminate between one set of countries and another.

What was galling to most Asians in Britain was the callous manner in which incoming Asians were treated. Old men, women with wailing babies and hungry children were kept herded together for hours on end at the airport as immigration officers vigilantly deliberated over the merits of one passport after another. There have been calls by various Asian organisations for official inquiries against the Immigration Services Union—calls which will come to naught. One indignant engineer from Bangladesh and a long-time resident in Britain, Mohammed Amin, told INDIA TODAY: "Her Majesty's Government has just capitulated to a bunch of thugs—the Immigration Services Union—who had threatened strikes. Now they are going to spend millions of pounds more to employ more staff in five different countries. And amidst all this, if several thousand hapless Asians got kicked around, who cares? As long as they were not whites, there would be no media or political pressure. But I can assure you if blacks were treated in such a cavalier fashion, they would probably have rioted and wrecked Heathrow. We just happen to be incredibly docile."

The end result of the distasteful episodes of the past fortnight was that it was all much ado about nothing. Illegal immigration in Britain is now a minor problem. It was effectively stemmed in the '70s. There is now little opportunity for apocalyptic speeches for a Mrs Thatcher on one hand (threat of Britain being "swamped" by immigrants) or Enoch Powell on the other (the famous "rivers of blood" speech). What most observers taking stock of the visa clampdown after two weeks suggest is an eerie feeling that for the next general elections which will come up in 18 months time, the Conservative Party is gearing itself up to replace the Falklands factor with the race factor.

—RAMESH CHANDRAN

Queues of Asians at Airport: indignation and anger

The Guardian

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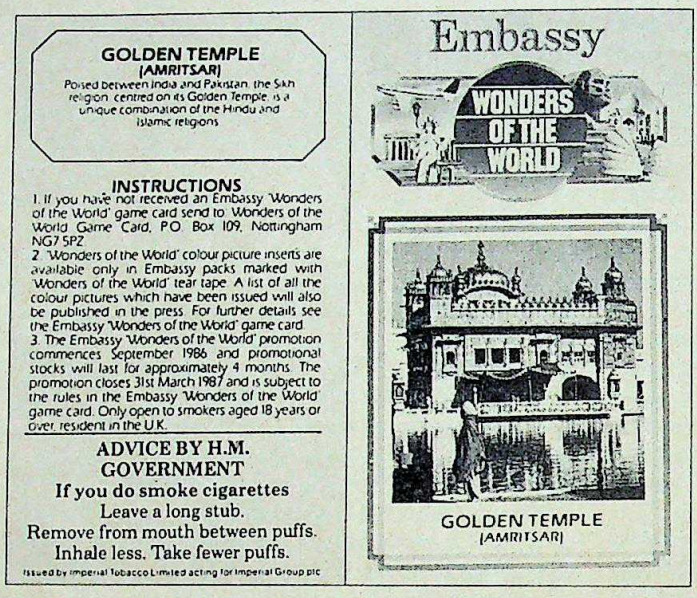
Charred Campaign

IMPERIAL Tobacco Ltd, one of the world's largest cigarette groups, choked and sputtered over its own fumes when one of its promotional campaigns sparked off a furore amongst the Sikh community in Britain last fortnight. In its "Wonders of the World" competition, organised by Embassy, one of its companies, in which smokers can win a "Dream Holiday", Embassy had included the Golden Temple at Amritsar as one of the 50 pictures enclosed in cigarette packs. The company's researcher had obviously overlooked the fact that smoking is taboo among Sikhs. Small wonder that Embassy and Imperial Tobacco offices were besieged by angry calls and letters from numerous Sikh community leaders from all over the UK, protesting at the hurt caused to their religious sentiments. A contrite company spokesman issued an apology for the "offence caused" and assured Sikhs that in future every precaution would be taken to ensure that none of their promotional activities would give offence to any religious community. Imperial Tobacco also emphasised that the offending card was one amongst the 50 which included the wailing wall in Jerusalem, St Peter's Basilica in Rome, Bangkok's Golden Buddha and Lord Ganesh. The company pointed out that it had certainly no intention to "discriminate in favour of or against any particular religion". However, it is now too late to withdraw the cards from the competition since there are some 250,000 outlets selling Embassy cigarettes all over Britain. It is understood that a quiz game organised by the company also includes queries related to the Sikh religion. These will not be reprinted, says the badly-burnt Imperial Tobacco.



The card (right); and instructions

Radical Row

DAVID Selbourne, author of a book on India and well known for his sulphurous prose, is the newest *cause celebre* among the academic fraternity in Britain. The three principal players in this sizzling row are Selbourne himself, Ruskin College—the pluralist college of the Labour movement at Oxford University, where Selbourne has been a tutor for the last two decades—and Rupert Murdoch's daily, *The Times*.

Selbourne

Despite his impeccable left-wing credentials, Selbourne did the unpardonable last March when he penned an article for *The Times* on the Liverpool Militants. Murdoch's paper has been subjected to a boycott by the trade union movement. And when Selbourne returned to Ruskin for his lectures, he found himself confronting student pickets who branded him a "scab", and facing criticism from his peers. Now Selbourne is contemplating legal action against the college authorities for their refusal to offer a commitment to academic freedom.

Novel Award

A major new award for Commonwealth writing is to be announced later this fortnight at the "Hall of India" in the Overseas House in central London. The Book Trust, an educational charity, in association with the Commonwealth Foundation and the Royal Overseas League, intriguingly called a "Gentlemen's Club", are associated in launching together the "Commonwealth Writers" prize.

The new award is designed to encourage emerging literature from the countries of the Commonwealth and works eligible for it would be in the field of fiction, collections of one-act plays, short stories etc. in English. Those works published between January 1, 1985 and Decmber 31, 1987 will be considered for the prize. While the precise amount of the award has yet to be decided, organisers say it would be "a considerable cash prize". There will also be probable "runner-up" awards for the regional winners— in Africa, the Caribbean and Canada, South-east Asia and the Pacific.

The award, the first major prize of its kind that concentrates on a specific grouping, will, the organisers hope, become a sort of "Commonwealth Booker Prize".

Hockey Blues

WITH a vigorous helping hand from the massive media coverage on many hours of prime time television, field hockey, its stars and the north London venue, Willesden, are now household names in Britain. As for the Indians, having got the wooden spoon, it was by far the most ignominious performance by an Indian team in the history of the sport.

Anwar

The saving grace was the Indian Veterans XI, oddly titled 'The Seva Dal Indian veterans hockey team'. The throngs of Indian fans were treated to a soupcon of the old magic through Captain Udham Singh, Govinda, Inam-ur-Rahman, Ashok Kumar, Kuttappa and Vinod Kumar. In the John Lelliott World Cup veterans tournament, the Indians lost in the semi-finals by a single goal. The 26-member team, led by Tariq Anwar, MP, and including Aslam Sher Khan and Vilas Muttemwar, also MP's, paid their own fare apart from faring better than the national eleven.

—RAMESH CHANDRAN

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Beauty in your bathroom, beauty that last

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An eye for detail. And it helped Hotline Range

Those little touches that make all the difference. You've always known it—and we've learnt from you. To create and develop a range of home appliances you could call your own.

Take the special hot case in our Cooking Range. We put it there because we know you like to serve your dishes piping hot.

Or the timer for the oven in the Micro Range Deluxe. Because you'd much rather watch the sun set than watch the clock.

Our Food Processor comes with three separate blades for separate jobs. Because you like your mayonnaise creamy and your carrots grated fine.

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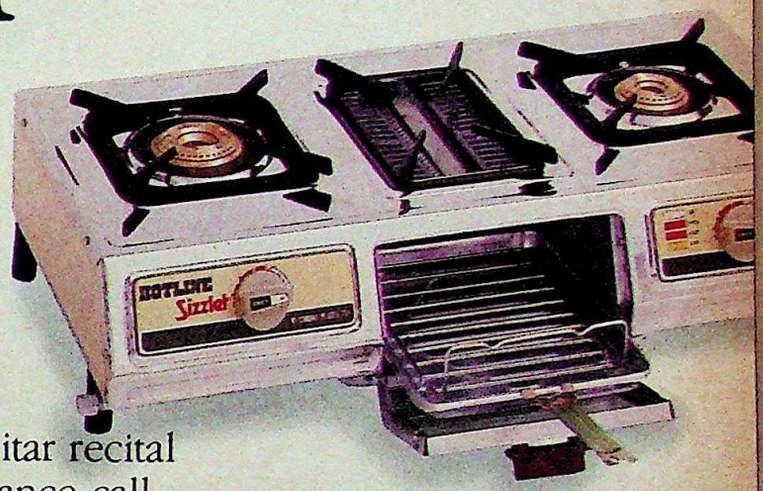
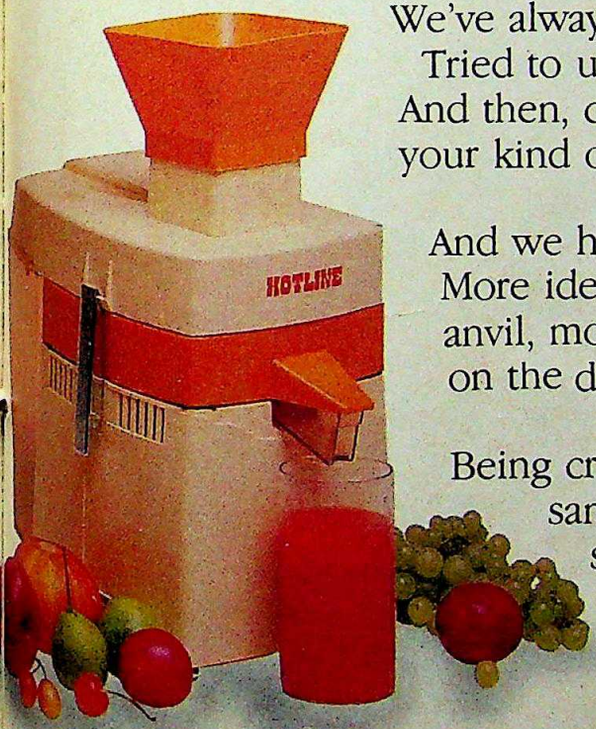
We learnt it from you. us create the of Home Appliances.



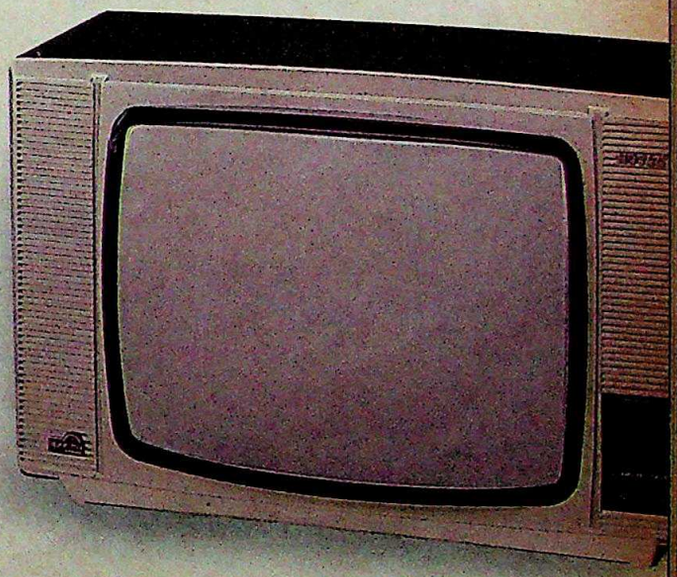
Licuadora, our instant juice-maker, has a separate container to collect the pulp neatly. Because we know you love fruit juice but hate sticky fingers!

Our TV—Exactavision—has provision for headphones. So that you can tune in to the sitar recital while your husband makes a long-distance call.



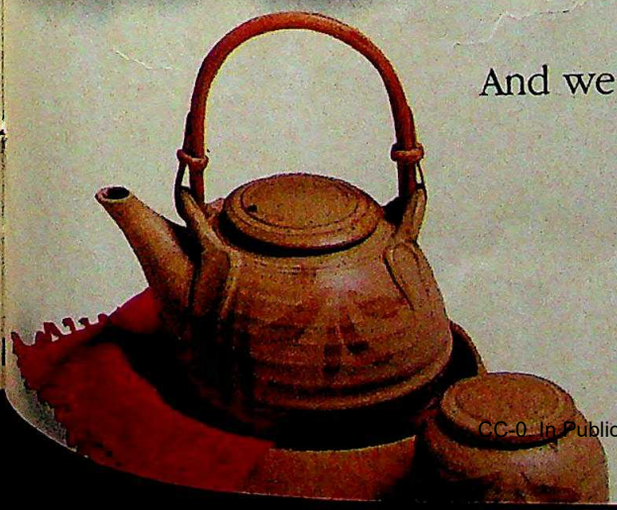
We've always been this way at Hotline.
Tried to understand what you need, what is important to you. And then, created product after product for your kind of life, your kind of home.

And we haven't stopped. More ideas are on the anvil, more products on the drawing-board.



Being created with the same finesse, the same attention to the smallest detail.

And we learnt it all from you.



HOTLINE

The home-maker's joy.

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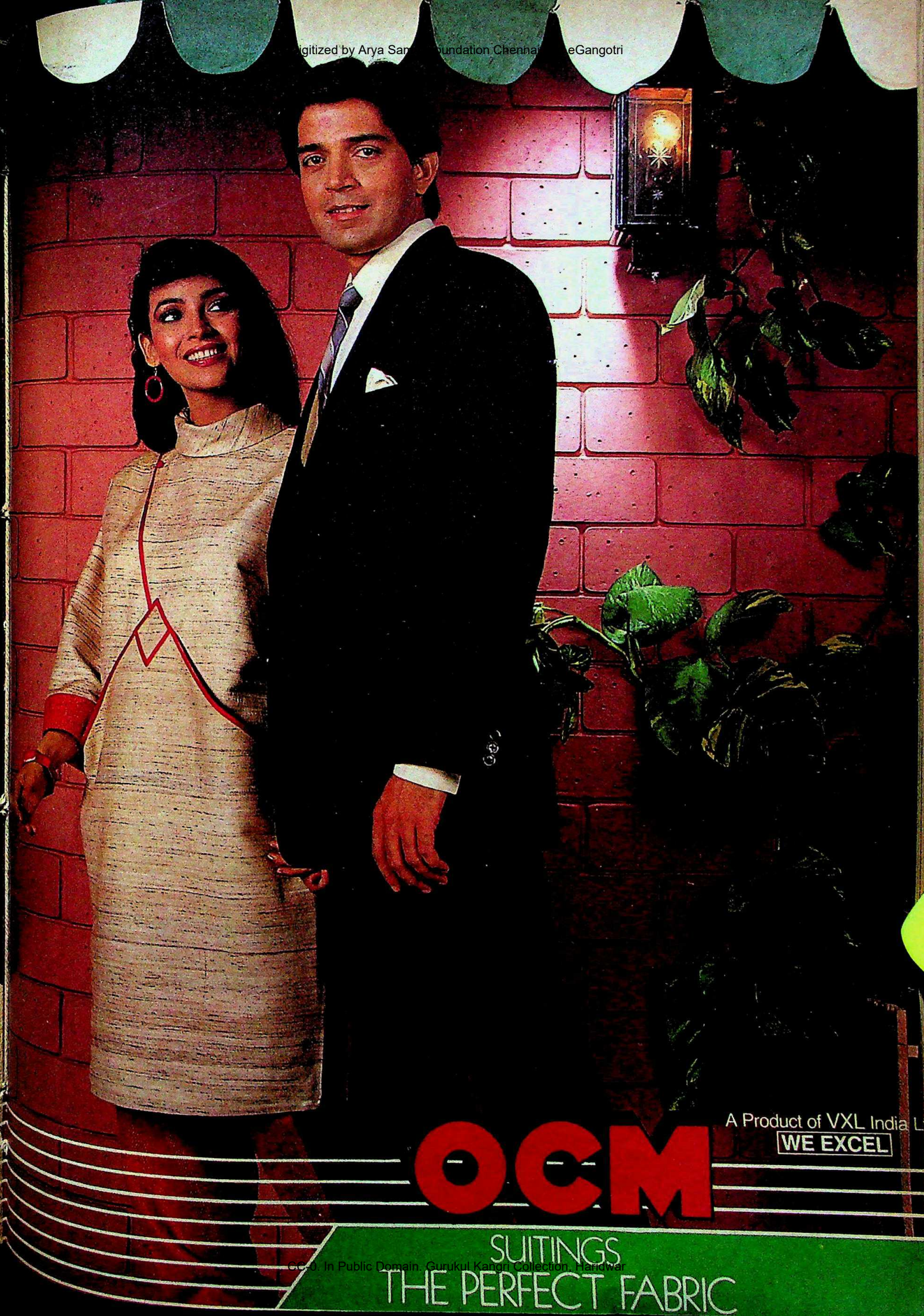

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Otis introduces microprocessor controls for rush hour traffic.

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Elevators were invented to make life more comfortable.

At Otis, that's a rule we never forget.

What use is an elevator if it takes you twenty minutes to get into one?

Which is why Otis is integrating powerful computers with their elevators. They maintain a continuous vigil over the doors and brakes of the elevator. Ensuring optimum speed of operation. So that the travelling and waiting time for a passenger is reduced to a minimum.

Traffic jams are, of course, more often the result of bad traffic management.

But now you can program an Otis to fit your building's requirements. And avoid unnecessary queues.

For example, if your building has greater rush on the 7th and 13th floor, but no rush at all on the 9th, you can program your elevator to automatically stop at the 7th and 13th floors, and ignore the 9th floor altogether.

Or, you can program the Otis not to stop at the lower floors on its way down, should you want the slackers there to exercise a little.

And if you happen to be the big boss, you can even jump the queue. Because you can program the Otis to ignore all other calls and come up to fetch you first.

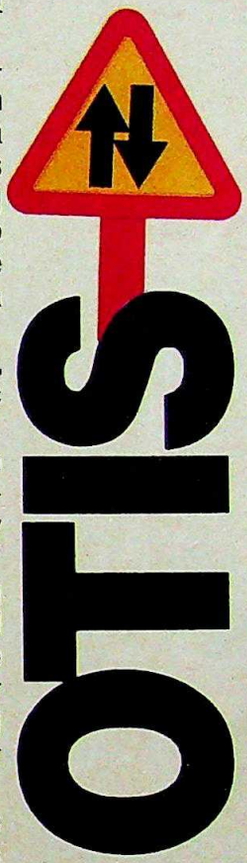
The options are mind-boggling.

And as the needs of your building change, you're not left with an outdated traffic plan.

Because all you have to do is pull out the old program card and replace it with a new one.

For more information on microprocessor-based lifts, call Otis.

Or fix a time to meet with our representative at a mutually acceptable place. Keep aside a margin of 20 minutes if your elevator is not an Otis.



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Otis. The international number one.

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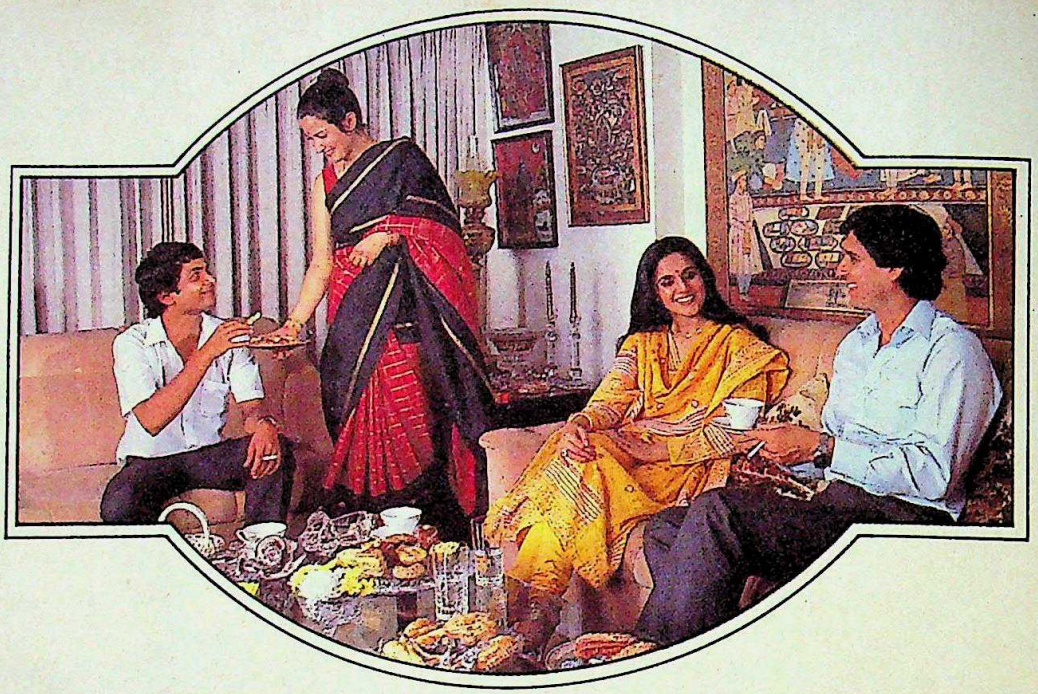

The tinkle of crystal,
the sparkle of talk and laughter...
and Gold Flake.
Great quality...
For the gracious
people.

GOLD FLAKE KINGS

Quality that's forever

CLARION C-GFK-1

Every genuine WILLS GOLD FLAKE cigarette bears the name W.D. & H.O. WILLS

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CIGARETTE SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

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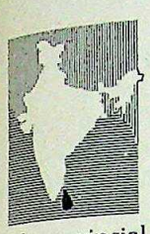
SRI LANKA

Political Machinations



President Jayewardene has once again set the cat among the ethnic pigeons. Addressing a Colombo rally last fortnight, the Sri Lankan President stated that "the provincial councils proposal will not be presented in Parliament until the terrorists laid down their arms and accepted the concept of a unitary state". Since the acceptance of Sri Lanka's unitary constitution is common ground to all parties in the country, including the parliamentary representatives of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), as well as the Indian Government—the exceptions being the most hard-line militant groups—that demand came as no surprise. What did mark a sharp shift in the negotiating stance was the call for a laying down of arms as a pre-condition to the introduction of the Provincial Councils Bill.

The Sri Lankan President further added: "The Indian Government and the state of Tamil Nadu should pledge their cooperation to end terrorism, with all terrorist weapons handed over to our Government, and the terrorist camps in the north dismantled." While most diplomats, many of whom represent important aid-giving countries, were dismayed over what seemed a serious setback to the already slow-moving negotiations, Indian concern became immediately evident when High Commissioner J.N. Dixit called on the President the next day. The "clarification", as it was tactfully termed, pinned the blame on the press and its natural predilection to over dramatise the utterances of notabilities, often taking remarks out of context.

But the real context in which Jayewardene's remarks should be examined is within the increasingly aggressive domestic political scene in Sri Lanka, more precisely, the newly-formed Movement for the Defence of the Nation (MDN), an unusual alliance of the influential Buddhist clergy and assorted opposition forces. Jayewardene's dramatic announcement at the Colombo rally did look suspiciously like a tactical retreat in the face of the MDN's mounting agitation against his offer of provincial autonomy to the separatist Tamils.

The MDN's common target was the ruling United National Party's (UNP) back-benchers who give the Government its massive five-sixths majority. The bill needs a two-thirds majority. These MP's represent rural constituencies. Almost all of them are Sinhala-Buddhist. Not only are many of these MP's physically isolated but, in the prevailing climate of opinion, psychologically so. In December 1982, 48 per cent voted "no" in a referendum by which the UNP extended its six-year-term by another six. Now past its ninth year, it is clearly overstaying its welcome in an electorate long accustomed to regimes changing every five years. The rural MP is as vulnerable to electoral fatigue as he is to the worsening economic conditions.

RAGHU RAI

Jayewardene's case is that he has reached the limit which public opinion in a democracy will allow. The rest is up to India. He would prefer Rajiv to assert himself in his role of mediator.

Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel, engaged in his own painful negotiations with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for a massive loan, describes the situation as "grim". Next year's budget deficit is a record US $1 billion (Sri Lankan Rupees 29 billion). Estimated revenue is just over Rupees 40 billion. Defence spending (Rupees 8.7 billion) could swallow income from tea, rubber and coconut, the three main exports. Today, 40 per cent of Sri Lanka's families live on food stamps valued at $25 a month.

By adopting an anti-autonomy line, Bandaranaike—whose name is known far better internationally than that of any other Sri Lankan and who is far more respected traditionally by the Indian leadership—has alienated this important external constituency and thus thrown away her trump card as the only credible alternative to Jayewardene.

Behind this obvious lapse on the part of a shrewd and tested politician lies the same electoral fatigue factor that is now a problem for the ruling UNP's serried ranks of cabinet ministers, ministers without portfolio (or not much), deputy ministers, district ministers, project ministers and plain ordinary MP's, all loaded with privileges and perks, some of which are liberally, if selectively, extended to the clergy by the state whose largesse is limitless.

Having issued a stern warning to the MDN, Jayewardene has now stiffened the

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morale of his rank-and-file with his statement on pre-conditions for legislating on provincial autonomy. At the same time, he has turned his attention to the main source of external pressure and possible help, India.

The Sri Lankan Government wants Rajiv Gandhi to be more assertive and decisive in his dealings with the Madras-based Tamil moderates and militants. It was pleased to find the Indian prime minister describing its present proposals as "fairly good" at his Canberra press conference, a spectacular contrast from his Harare tirade, but was disappointed when he spoke of "direct negotiations" between Colombo and the Tamil representatives, with Delhi merely preparing the ground. Fearing that Delhi has conceded far too much to M.G. Ramachandran as the key middleman, Colombo would prefer Rajiv to assert himself in his own chosen role of mediator.

The Sri Lankan Government realises that "something extra" (at present unspecified) will have to be given to the militants in the final round of the diplomatic game, and that any deal with only the TULF, even if possible, would remain a piece of paper. This "extra" will depend largely on the Government's reading of the Opposition's effective capacity for mass mobilisation, its ability, in short, to create chronic instability in the south to make Sri Lanka ungovernable.

The militant's minimum demand is a north-east merger, a modified version of the traditional homeland's concept using the Indian model, while the TULF speaks of a "single linguistic unit" with a re-drawing of provincial borders. The Government's best offer is a boundary commission within 18 months of the accord. Neither Sinhalese opinion nor the UNP's political will could support bold Nehruvian exercises of that type.

Colombo's case is that it has reached the limit which public opinion in a democracy will allow. The rest is up to India. To back up its case with diplomatic pressure, Sri Lanka made a strong but abortive bid to have its view of "cross-border terrorism" and "separatist threats" endorsed at Harare.

Preoccupied with other, more immediate and pressing issues, Rajiv Gandhi's patience with Colombo could be soon exhausted. The primordial terrors of the Sinhalese and the worst fears of the Government will then be realised if an exhausted and exasperated Delhi makes the Tamil issue entirely a Tamil Nadu responsibility.

—MERVYN DE SILVA in Colombo

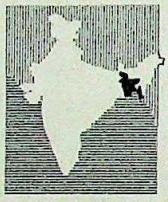
BANGLADESH

Search for Legitimacy

"No fair and free election is possible under Ershad."
—Begum Khaleda Zia, chairperson, Bangladesh Nationalist Party

"We participated in the parliamentary election to join the House. But whether we shall go or not depends upon how Ershad calls the Parliament into session."
—Sheikh Hasina Wazed, president, Awami League

"The question of credibility does not arise at all. Opposition threw a challenge that they would resist the polls and the holding of the polls alone was a mark of credibility."
—President H. M. Ershad

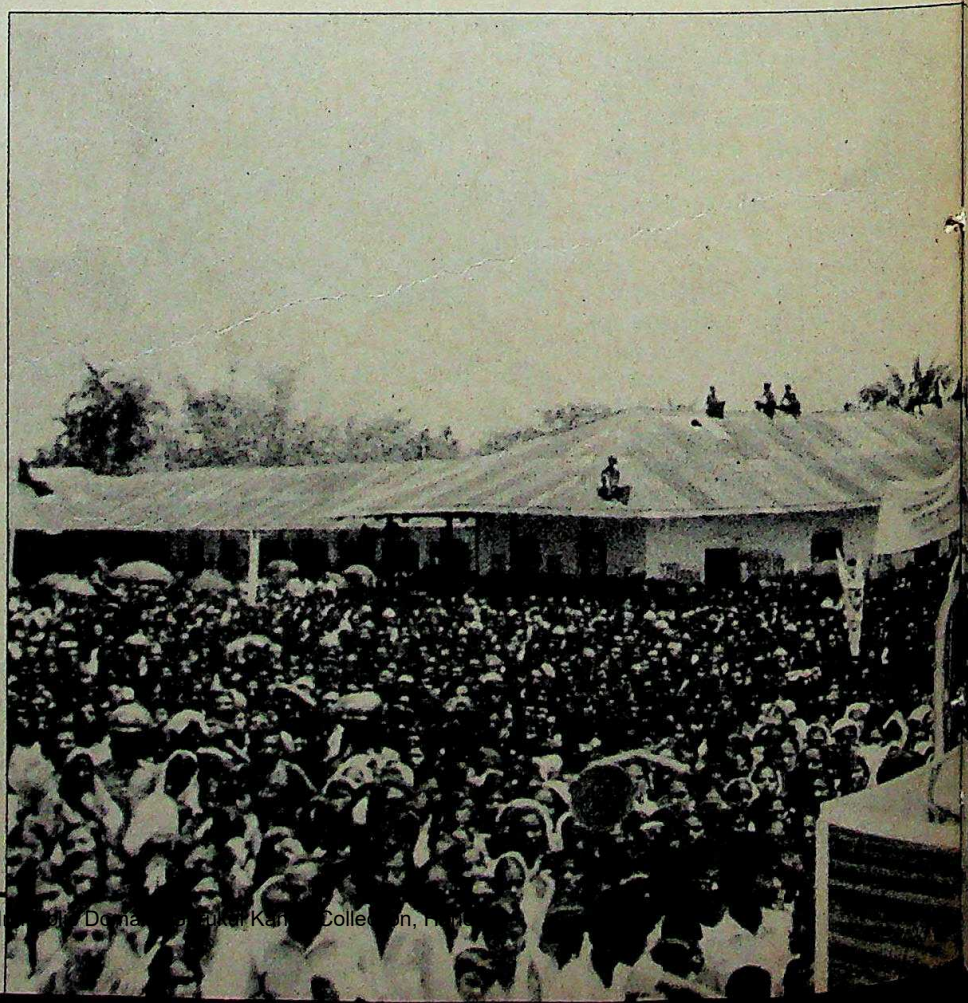


THE question did arise, after all, when General H.M. Ershad finally romped home with a tremendous majority in last fortnight's presidential election. But the boycott of the polls by the Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party, which head the country's major opposition alliances, and the pathetically low turn-out of voters eventually left little contest and less of credibility in the polls—the third in Bangladesh since 1971. Ershad's victory, despite his ardent desire to give the election a genuine coating of authenticity, had all along been a foregone conclusion.

The results predictably left political observers cold. The victory, as they pointed out, hardly reflected the actual showing at the polls. Most voting centres were deserted. The Government claimed 60 per cent voting, the eight-party alliance led by the Awami League put the figure at 3 per cent while independent observers put it at around 5 per cent. Presidential candidate Abdus Samad, who got little over 1 lakh votes, said he couldn't cast his own vote: someone had already exercised his right of franchise.

However, the polls were not entirely uneventful. The last few days before the

Ershad addressing Dhaka election rally



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elections saw concentrated violence in Dhaka, leaving two judges of the Supreme Court, among others, injured in a bomb blast. Dhaka University and areas around it were turned into a virtual battleground as the students took to the streets with bombs and bricks, and the police raided the hostels, seized a hoard of bombs and weapons and arrested over 200 students.

The scene would certainly have been dramatically different had the opposition parties decided to contest as well. The decision by the opposition alliances led by the Awami League of Mujib-ur-Rehman's daughter Sheikh Hasina Wazed, which has 72 seats in the Parliament elected under General Ershad, and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, founded by former president Zia-ur-Rehman and led now by his widow, Begum Khaleda, has taken the situation in Bangladesh back to square one. Immediately before the elections, with his victory assured, Ershad declared that the important thing was to go ahead with the elections, which the Opposition had said couldn't be held without its cooperation. But the elections only served to distance the opposition parties further—a far cry from the May 7 parliamentary elections earlier this year which the Awami League and its allies contested and won, signalling as it were the return of mainstream politics in Bangladesh and seemingly marking the end of the country's political stalemate.

But the process was reversed in the subsequent by-elections, when the League lost two seats held by Sheikh Hasina in Gopalganj, her ancestral village. This soured the party's fragile understanding with Ershad, and ultimately led to the boycott of last fortnight's elections.

So, far from proving the dispensability of the Opposition, the elections have only made the country's political scenario appear murkier, with everybody guessing Sheikh Hasina's next move. Hope, for Ershad, lies in the proposed Indemnity and Ratification Bill, with which the Government is expected to dissolve the Parliament later this year. On the day of the presidential election, Ershad told reporters that his Jatiya Party and other "like-minded parties" could garner the required 220 votes in Parliament.

Khaleda Zia (left); and Sheikh Hasina: divided leadership

The Indemnity Bill is also expected to influence Sheikh Hasina's future plans as well. Addressing a press conference immediately after the presidential election, Hasina did not rule out chances of her joining the Parliament when it is called in end-October. But given the Government's plans to dissolve the House with the Indemnity Bill, Hasina just might stay where she is—outside the Parliament—seeing little for herself in the new dispensation.

Whatever turn the country's political situation may take, it seems unlikely that the Opposition will succeed in toppling General Ershad in the near future, considering the lack of unity in the Opposition: the two alliances are not exactly the best of friends and one would just as soon see the other hurt, instead of joining hands against their common foe. Observers have begun to feel that there never was any real threat to Ershad. Mohammed Farhad, general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) has himself admitted that they contested the parliamentary polls because they realised that they couldn't oust Ershad through a movement. The CPB and its allies, who have made it to Parliament after a gap of three decades, will be the worst hit if the Indemnity Bill and the dissolution of the House does come through.

With the Jatiya Party, and its leader General Ershad, assured of more than enough support for pushing through the bill and dissolving the House, a change in the country's political scenario cannot therefore be ruled out. But from all indications, however, it may not be a change for the better. For, though the proposed bill and the dissolution may make the political journey easier for Ershad and his supporters, it seems hardly likely to lead to anything decisive. So, with the approaching winter months, Bangladesh seems destined for a longer season of vacillation and uncertainty.

—AMIR KHASRU in Dhaka

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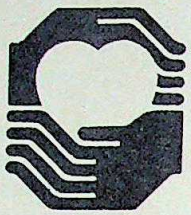

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INDO-US TIES

The Hard Sell

"IT was a wonderful visit." Thus spake US Defence Secretary Casper Weinberger after he had recovered from his bout of "Delhi belly" that scratched him from the final day's discussions with Indian Defence Ministry mandarins during his official visit last fortnight, the first such by an American secretary of defence. At first blush, it would appear that Weinberger was not just referring to his time spent gazing at a moon-washed Taj Mahal or other ancient monuments. As one Indian official involved in the parleys summed up succinctly: "The atmospherics were very good."

Just how good, will in the ultimate analysis, depend on the future meanderings of Indo-US relations. Certainly, the sale of a handful of GE-404 engines for India's highly-ambitious and long-delayed light combat aircraft (LCA) project, still in its conceptual stage, hardly represents a "new phase in Indo-US defence ties", as the US State Department and some of the headline-hungry Indian newspapers have suggested. As re-emphasised by Minister of State for Defence Arun Singh (who headed the Indian delegation), there are two basic principles governing major Indian defence purchases from any country: reliability of supply and transfer of technology.

The US State Department and the Pentagon have been traditionally reluctant to pass on high-tech goodies to India mainly because of the paranoia that these will immediately come under Soviet scrutiny. Thus far, the Pentagon has only been willing to okay the sale of the F-20 Tigershark, an aircraft that could hardly classify as a bestseller or even high-tech. But more important in the Indian Government's eyes is reliability of supply. The US has not exactly covered itself with glory in the past in this respect as far as the Indian experience is concerned during its periodic bouts with Pakistan. As A.P. Venkateswaran, the Indian foreign secretary, remarked to the American team: "You have always played the bad Samaritan, holding an umbrella over us when the sun is shining and promptly taking it away when it starts to rain."

The Indian Government's point is that India has been buying high-tech defence equipment from a variety of western sources (France, Britain, Switzerland, the Netherlands, West Germany and now Sweden), without any great risk of the Soviets or anybody else getting into the act. Further, as one member of the Indian delegation pointed out: "Historically, most of the leaks of high-tech American equipment have been from the US itself, and not from any developing country." To drive the point home, Weinberger was studiously kept away from the section where Soviet MiGs are being manufactured in the Hindustan Aeronautics complex he visited in Bangalore. In South Block's eyes, the only reason the US is eager to sell defence equipment to India is to lessen its military dependence on the Soviets, and not from any great change of heart in the White House vis-a-vis India.

PRASHANT PANJIAR

The sale of a few engines for India's light combat aircraft hardly represents a new phase in Indo-US ties.

Weinberger with Arun Singh: ground rules

Weinberger himself may have returned home convinced that any transfer of US equipment does not translate into "selling the store" to the Soviets. But he will find it virtually impossible to convince his colleagues in the Defence Department on that particular score, as is evidenced by the sale of the Cray-XMP supercomputer which has been dragging along for well over a year. Meanwhile, the Cray has already been superseded by three other models. The Indian Government, it is learnt, has agreed to provide safeguards if the computer deal is pushed through quickly, but that again will depend on the prevailing mood in Ronald Reagan's Washington.

The complexities involved in any significant shift in Indo-US defence relations was also amply demonstrated by Weinberger's inevitable next halt—Islamabad—where Pakistan was promised an airborne early warning system as part of the next $ 4.02 billion (Rs 5,000 crore) military sales package. The package includes a variety of modern armaments that will perforce have to be matched by the Indian side. Neither is it likely that Islamabad will allow the US to sell India any comparable weaponry while the "special relationship" between the two countries exists.

Consequently, there is little likelihood of any major change in Indo-US defence ties. What seems to have changed is the perception on both sides ("clearing up the cobwebs" as one official put it)—and a dramatic increase in commercial ties. There are currently 850 Indo-US joint ventures in operation, a majority of them commissioned in the last two years. Thus, while at a limited political and economic level, the Weinberger visit could serve as a spring-board for better ties, at any other level of import, the spring-board would be still situated at the shallow end of the pool.

—DILIP BOBB

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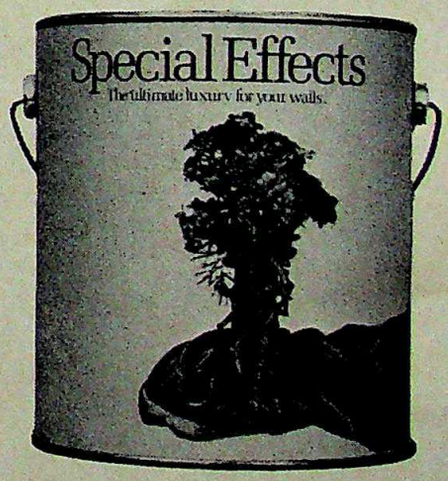

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KENNETH LARKINS

Teaching in Tihar

EACH time Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi travels abroad, it's time for Geography class in the juvenile delinquents' ward in Tihar Jail. Pointing at a world map hung on the wall, former Air Vice-Marshal Kenneth Larkins, sentenced to 10 years rigorous imprisonment under the Official Secrets Act for espionage, gives the boys a sketch of the country being visited by the prime minister. English class follows Geography, and then General Science, General Knowledge, Life Sciences, History (based mainly on the *Discovery of India* by Jawaharlal Nehru).

It's a regular school—in jail. A novel experiment is being carried out these days by the Tihar Jail authorities to reform their younger convicts with the help of an educated inmate. And so far, it has been a runaway success.

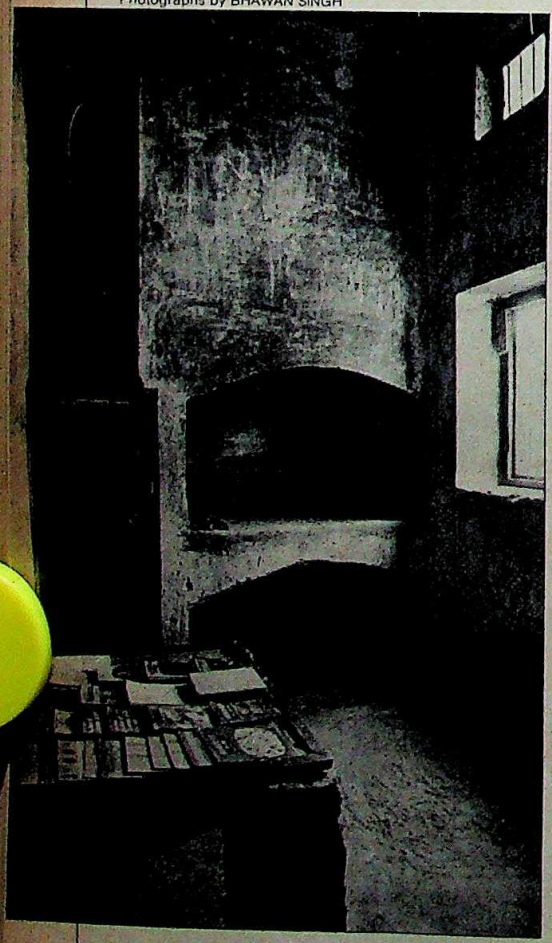
The idea was mooted soon after Charles Sobhraj escaped from Tihar Jail and, for security reasons, the Larkins brothers were shifted out of ward 17 to ward 14 next to the juvenile delinquents. "The new ward was unreal," Air Vice-Marshal Larkins told INDIA TODAY. "There were 150 boys staying next door yet there was no noise, just an unearthly silence." Seeing the boys just sitting around all day doing nothing, Larkins thought of teaching them. A Signals man in the Air Force, he had never taught anything but flying before. Still, he applied to the jail authorities for permission to tutor his young neighbours.

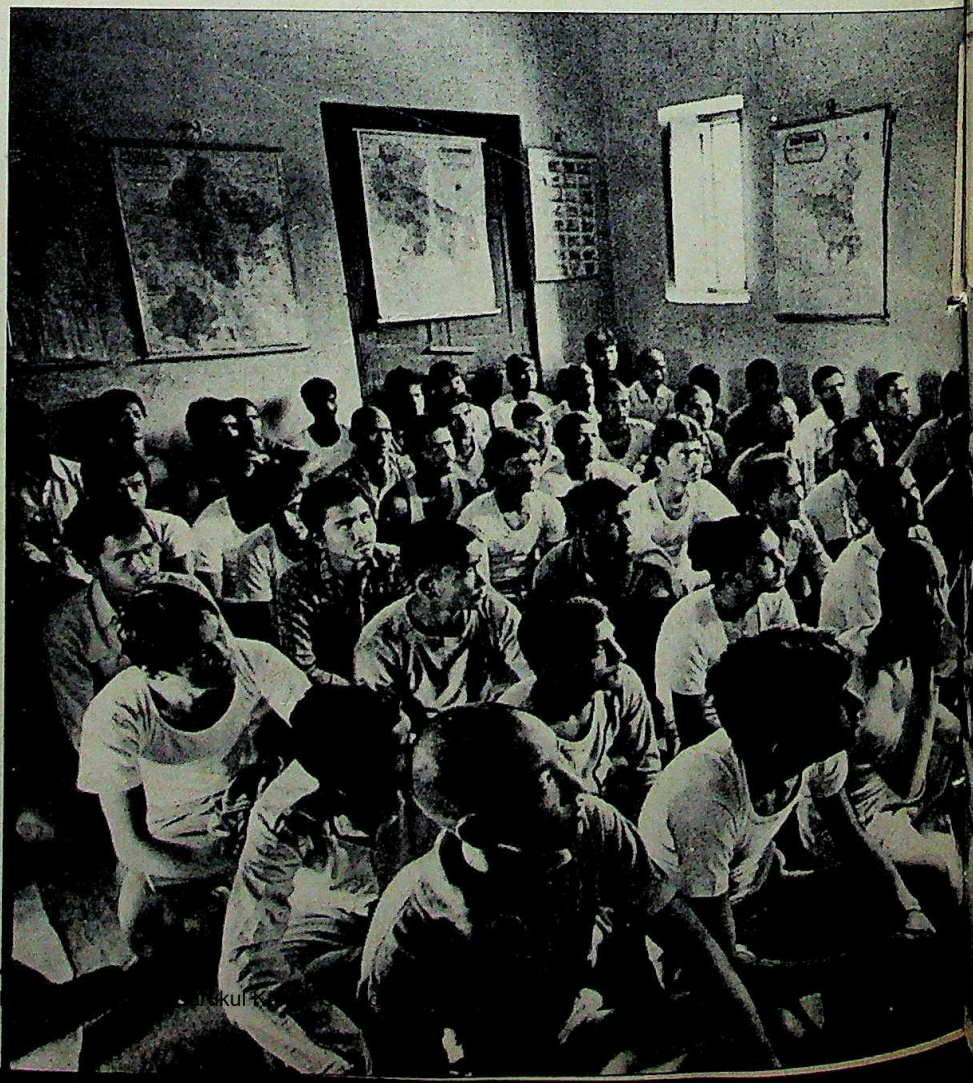
Permission was granted but there were no students. None of the delinquents, conditioned by their backgrounds, were interested in education. So Larkins switched strategy by concentrating on games, positive that any boy would like a game of cricket. He wrote to the Chief of Air Staff Denis La Fontaine for some sports equipment and pat came a reply from Vice-Chief P.P. Singh granting equipment generously. The games began but the studies did not. Nobody was willing to come to class. At first he let the boys play by themselves. "Then I started growling," he says, "use your mind, I'd scream. Run for that catch, you won't get it if you just stand there." His "growling, grumbling and coaxing" began to pay off and the enthusiasm built up so fast that they ran out of equipment. Reinforcements were sought and received from the armed forces and the Dignum Tuition School run by his sisters in Lucknow. But still there was no headway in studies.

Then one morning, Larkins walked up to the boys and said: "Come, I'll tell you all about venereal disease (VD)." And they came, in numbers. "I had to capture the interest of these boys. I had to arouse their curiosity so as to bring them into the classroom once," grins Larkins. Once they were there, not only did he tell them about VD but also about Armstrong setting foot on the moon and the World Cup Football then being played in Mexico and how people in Delhi were watching it live on television thousands of miles away. "You want to know more about all this, then come to my class," Larkins enticed the boys. This time they came. And today Kenneth Larkins has 42 boys learning a

The library (left); and Larkins taking a class: a lesson learnt

Photographs by BHAWAN SINGH





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new way of life under him.

Classes begin at 9 a.m. and continue in the afternoon after a break between 11.15 a.m. and 3.30 p.m. English is by far the most popular subject as the students feel that their prospects for employment after the jail term will be enhanced if they can speak English. The classroom belies the fact that a few months ago it was a store. Colourful maps hang on all four walls, a globe rests on the window next to a huge blackboard as Kenneth Larkins tries to hold the boys' interest in his halting Hindi. The beginnings of a library next door boasts of mythological works like Mahabharata, Panchatantra, comics like Tarzan, elementary reading like Numbers 1-20, Hindi *sulekh*, and even fiction like *A Zoo in my Luggage* by Gerald Durrell. These are all donations collected by Larkins through letters shot off in all directions. The material has been collected not only from the forces and his sisters but also from social welfare bodies like the Ankur Educational Society, schools like the Army Public School and La Martiniere of Lucknow, and even individual donations like a single cricket ball donated by Balsara, a Parsi boy from Calcutta.

Games begin at 4.30 p.m.—football, handball, volleyball, baseball, kabaddi, seven tiles, cricket, and Tihar cricket—a combination of cricket and French cricket to overcome the space and equipment shortage. The sports fields are kept spotlessly clean, in a freshly swept compound with roses growing in neatly maintained flowerbeds, all along the path around the volleyball court, the baseball and cricket field and leading to a small mud temple in the centre of the compound. Sports have become competitive in Tihar with the warders divided into three teams for a regular triangular league championship.

"I'm doing this only to try and bring back some credit to my father's name. I don't think he could have stood the shock of both his sons in jail," explains the silver-haired, six-foot, lanky, 60-year-old Larkins, the younger of two brothers. "Thank God he died before he saw this," he says with his eyes brimming. The elder brother, Frank Larkins, is not really involved though he has shown some interest by supervising a tailoring class last fortnight. But the younger Larkins makes up for the two of them. "I'm trying to teach them to be a little curious about what's happening to other people. I'm trying to convince them that this god-given machinery of mind and muscle can be improved beyond their own expectations with practice and finally I'm trying to get them to believe that they can be loved and respected by the community where they live and their own little families," says Ken Larkins.

As additional inducement, the boys have been provided with some special attractions. Sunil Gavaskar and Mohinder Amarnath came in to play cricket with them in jail when the Delhi Test against Australia got washed out with rain last month. Says Inspector General (Prisons) P.V. Sinari: "It's a new experiment and there are a lot of hurdles. We're trying our best to make it succeed."

And the growing interest shown by the boys is ample evidence of its success. Huddled together in class are boys convicted for murder, drug peddling, theft and petty crimes, each sharing a common curiosity—and the guarded optimism that this new awakening will help change the course of their tragic lives. Larkins too has discovered a new motivation in life behind bars—and a new optimism. "I'll walk out of these gates one day and I'll go to Brisbane and eat turkey with my wife and daughter," he says confidently.

—TANIA MIDHA in Tihar Jail

Larkins referees a handball match

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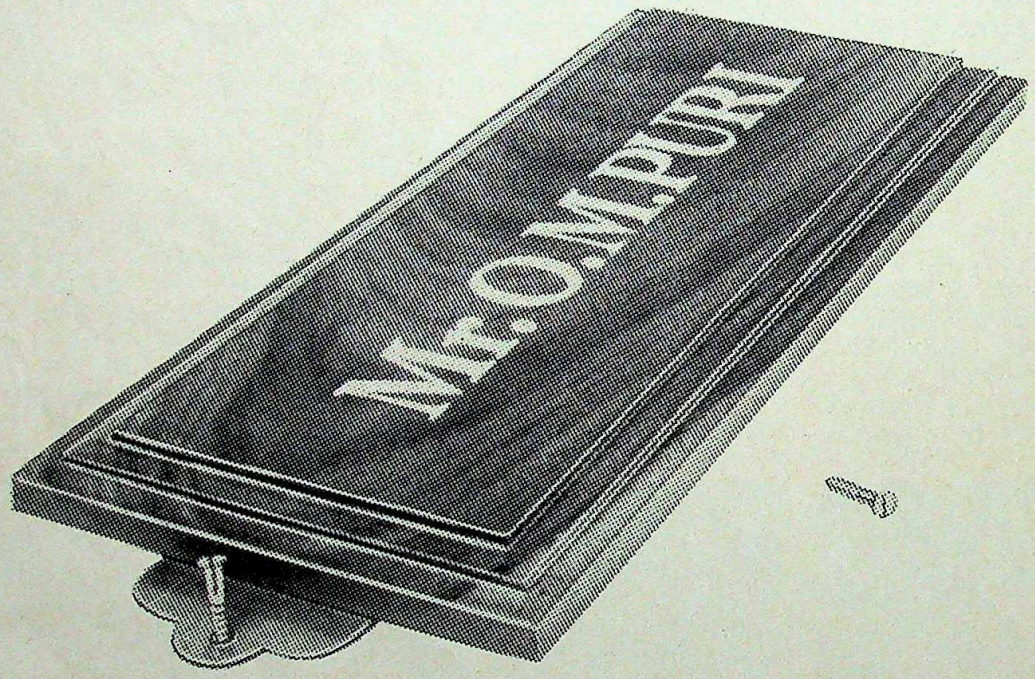

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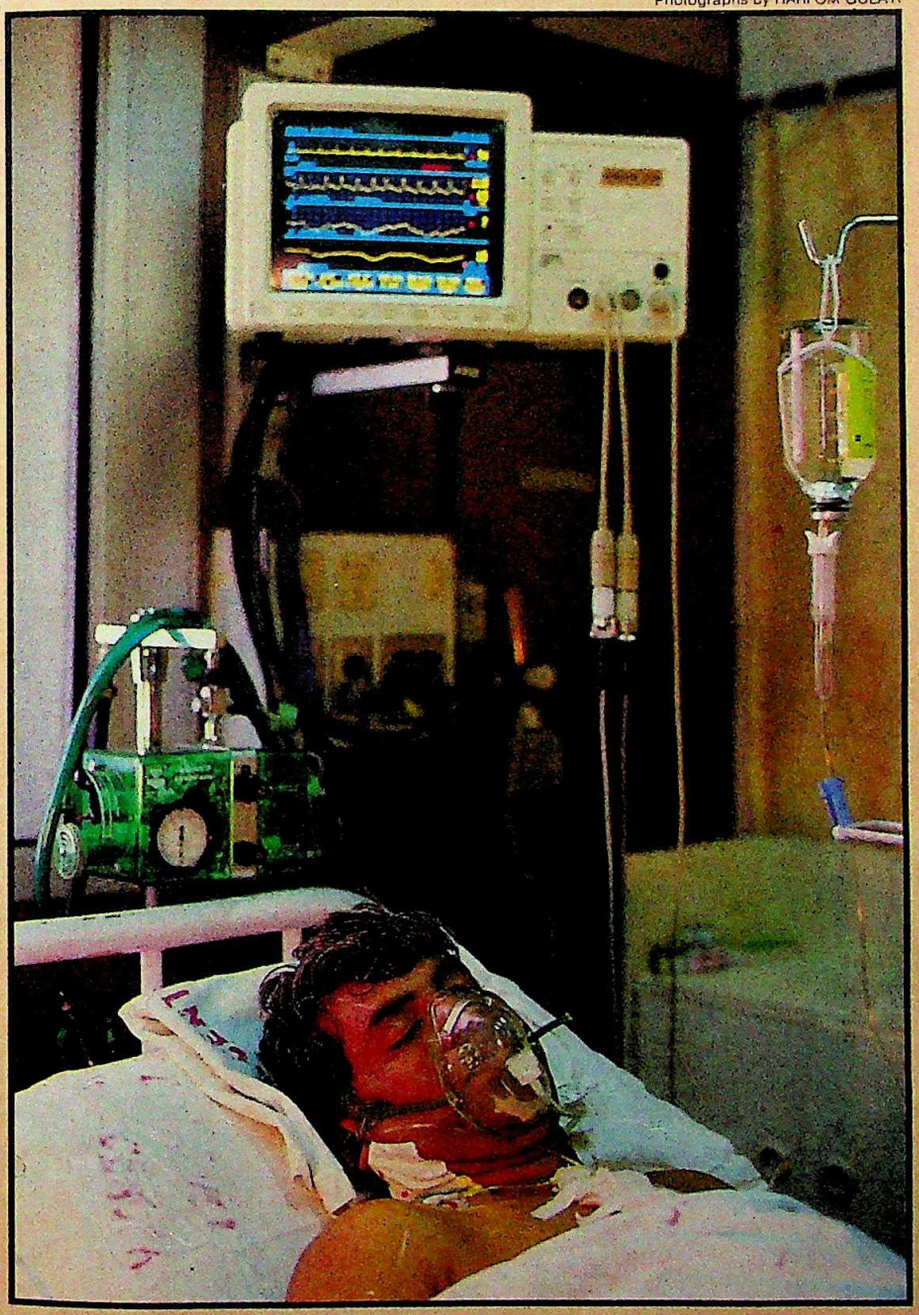
HEART DISEASE

Hitting the Young

Photographs by HARI OM GULATI



The past decade has seen a dramatic rise in the number of Indians suffering heart attacks. It is now hitting people in the prime of their lives, cutting short bright careers and leaving behind a trail of shattered homes. A majority of the heart attacks today strike people in their 40s and even 30s. Despite improvements in diagnostic and treatment facilities in the country, hospitals are increasingly failing to keep pace with the rapid rise in heart attacks. And with the Government yet to launch a preventive public health campaign, cardiologists fear that heart disease will soon assume epidemic proportions. To assess the magnitude of the problem, Principal Correspondent RAJ CHENGAPPA interviewed a wide cross-section of patients and doctors in several major cities. His report:

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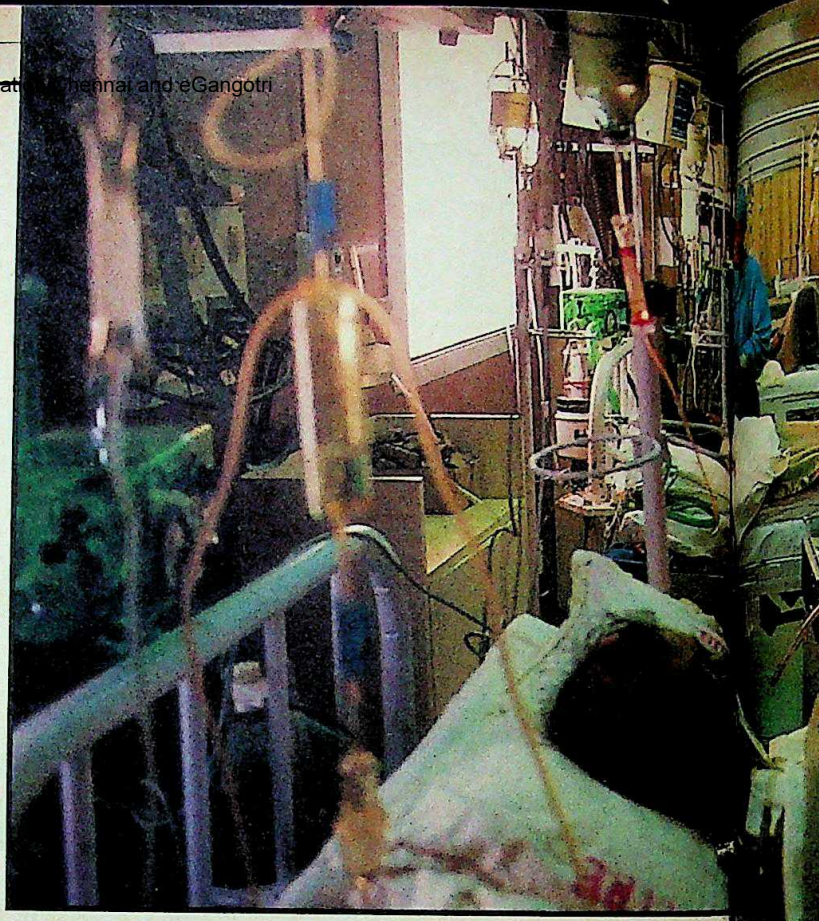
RAVI Sareen could not believe what his doctor was telling him. At 35, Sareen, an auto-spares salesman in Delhi, was beginning to enjoy the good things of life. His office had just given him a hefty raise. At home his two children, Amit, 11, and Aditi, 7, had settled down to the routine at school—giving him and his wife, Pratima, more time to relax. And yet here was his doctor looking worriedly at X-ray prints of his heart and telling him: "Unless you undergo surgery immediately you have only a 10 per cent chance of living for another year."

Sareen was stunned. He had had a few indications that things were going wrong with his heart, but he had not taken them seriously. Four years ago, his doctors had detected that he was mildly hypertensive and advised him to give up cigarette smoking. He switched to chewing tobacco but did not slow down the pace of his life. And then, last January while chatting with a friend, he felt a shooting pain in his chest as if "someone was gripping my heart". Tests revealed that he had suffered a heart attack. Sareen's battle for life had begun.

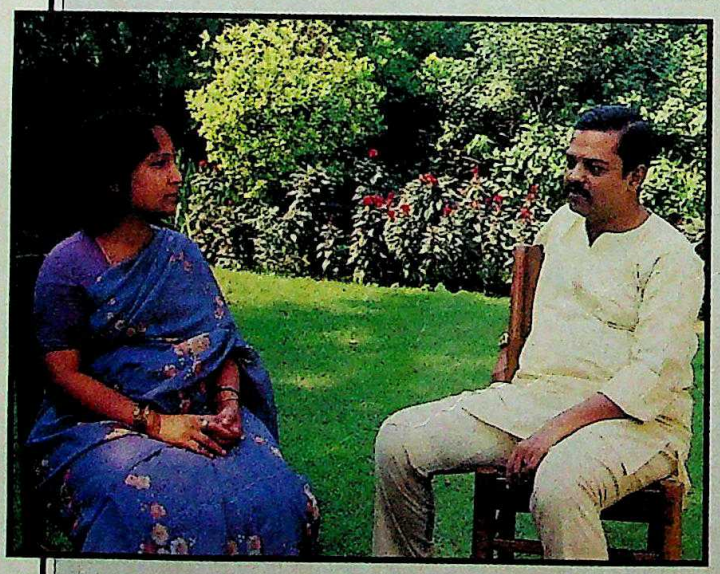
Two decades ago, Sareen would have made medical history for Indian cardiologists. The majority of patients then were more than 50 years old, many even over 60. That situation has now changed dramatically: heart attacks are hitting people in the prime of life, cutting short the brightest careers, leaving behind shattered homes where the finances are still unsettled and the children too young to help their widowed mothers tackle the world.

Two-thirds of the heart attacks today strike people under 50 years. And worse, a third of the total affects those in their 30s, like Sareen. Said G.B. Parulkar, dean of the KEM General Hospital in Bombay: "Earlier if someone below 40 was admitted with a heart attack we would ogle at him. Today our wards are filled with people in their 30s and 40s."

And despite an increased bed capacity, the country's cardiac centres are unable to cope with the rush of young patients. The Madras Medical College (MMC) Hospital, which recently increased its 200-bed facility by another 100, found that they were occupied even as quickly as they were added. At the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Delhi, the waiting-list for heart surgery patients now exceeds 500 and except for urgent cases, some patients have to wait for weeks before they can be operated upon. At the nearby G.B. Pant Hospital, where also admissions are a struggle, Chief Cardiologist Professor M. Khalilullah says: "The increase in cases is both dramatic and frightening."



Heart patient in an intensive care unit



Anand Swarup, 41, development manager in a Jaipur bank, had his first heart attack when he was 35. He had ignored his doctor's advice to give up smoking 60 cigarettes a day. And last January, after his third attack, he was asked to go in for by-pass surgery. The operation was successful, and Swarup has been forced finally to give up smoking in order to stay alive.

As in the West, heart attacks have quickly moved up as the number one adult killer in India, elbowing out more traditional killers like tuberculosis, pneumonia, bronchitis and cholera. Slightly over a decade ago, heart disease accounted for just 6 per cent of all deaths in the country. Today, the figure is 10 per cent, and is rising. Of the 10 million Indians who die every year, 1 million do so because of heart disease—as many as in the US. Tuberculosis, in contrast, claims only 0.8 million.

Worse, as many as 12 million Indians are prone to just one form of heart disease—atherosclerosis (a thickening of the coronary arteries that constricts the flow of blood to the heart and causes a heart attack). And one out of three of those affected die with his or her first attack. Most do not even reach a doctor before they are dead.

But even for those who

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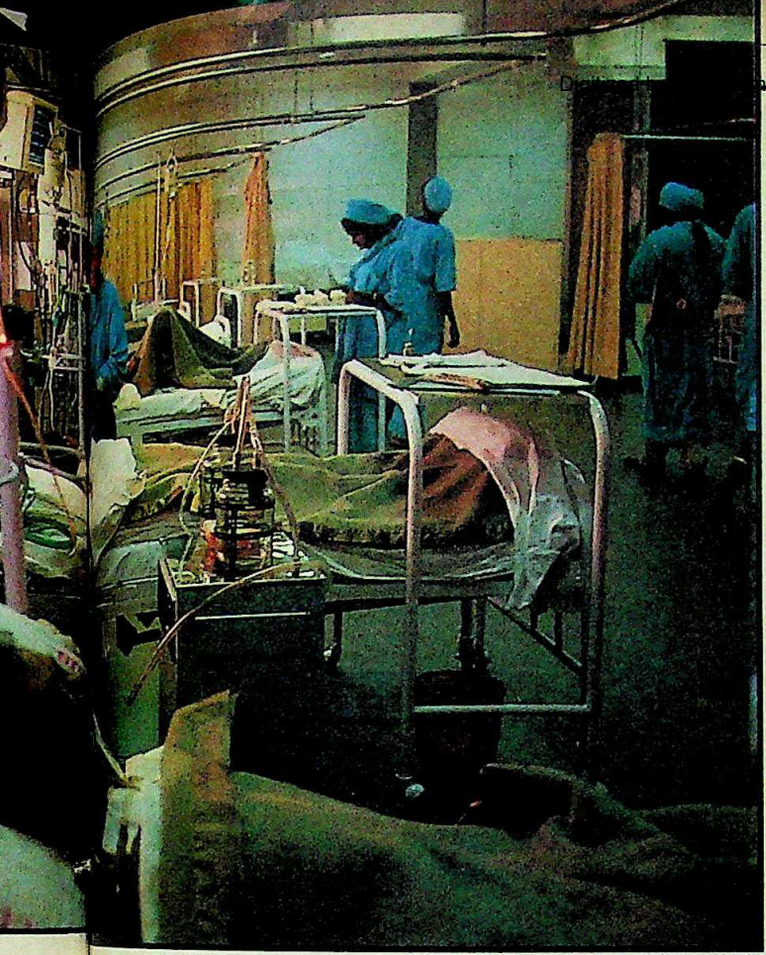


survive the first attack, the prognosis is not too good. One out of 10 of them die within a year. The rest continue their tenuous existence, not knowing when the next stab of pain in their heart will be their last. "We are looking at a disease that has become a major cripple and killer in the country," says C. Lakshmikanthan, chief cardiologist at MMC Hospital.

Those who do survive a first heart attack often become "cardiac cripples". In Vadodara, M. Varshaneya, 51, chief engineer at the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC), found that after his first heart attack he could not maintain the old pace and opted for a less strenuous posting at headquarters. Sareen, the auto-spares salesman, gave up his lucrative job and opened an electrical shop so that he would not strain himself too much. Anand Swarup, 41, a bank officer in Jaipur, found that even walking to the general manager's office was difficult and said: "I've never felt so depressed in my life. I had perfectly good hands and legs, and yet I was virtually crippled and tied to my seat."

And when the silent killer, as heart attacks are known, ends a life, it leaves behind a trail of death and shattered lives. It moved into Subhash and Jayanthi Khandpur's home when they were having a quiet holiday last June. He was a paediatrician and she a gynaecologist. Along with their son, Sujay, they had gone to Darjeeling to take a break from busy schedules. And just as they were beginning to enjoy themselves, it struck.

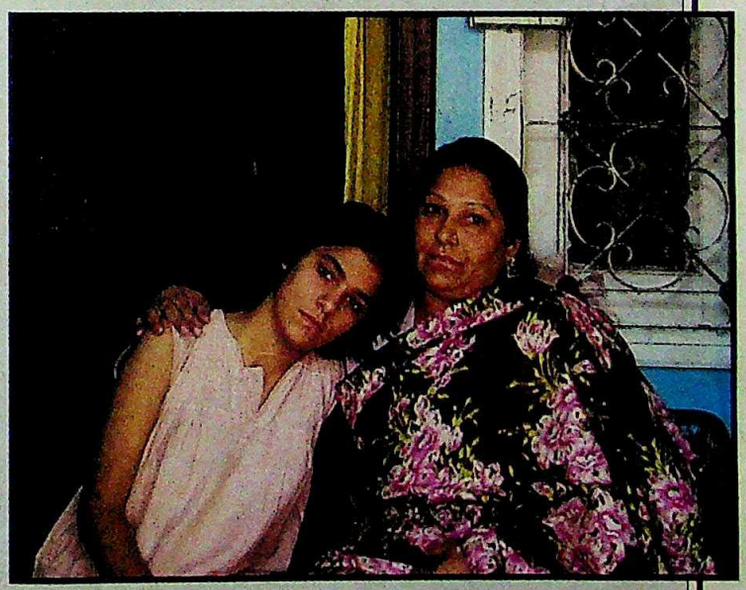
All Subhash felt was a slight burning sensation in his gullet. And then without warning he collapsed. A doctor was called in, but he could do little. Pain relievers did not help and 12 hours later Subhash was dead. He was only 48 years old. Widowed at 42, Jayanthi cries softly and says: "I feel only a great emptiness." And then looking at Sujay she adds: "How can I be a father to him also?"

WHILE the heart-broken families try to pick up the pieces of their lives, cardiologists are trying to solve the puzzle of the dramatic rise of heart attacks. Some wonder whether this increase is a result of people becoming "heart conscious", as Ashwin Mehta, cardiologist at Bombay's Jaslok Hospital, puts it. But statistical studies by cardiologists in the country's 20-odd hospitals with specialised cardiac centres show common trends:

- heart attacks seem to hit Indians a decade earlier than in the West. A majority of the victims are male;
- the middle class seems to be as vulnerable to heart attacks as the affluent;
- one out of four patients showed no symptoms of heart ailments, and for them the attack came like a "bolt from the blue";
- those under 40 years of age usually had severe heart attacks, making treatment even more difficult than normal; and, three-quarters of the victims below 40 were smokers, indicating that there might be a strong link between smoking and heart attacks among the young.

While Indians today are getting more "heart conscious", cardiologists despair at the lack of preventive care and the ignorance that continues about heart problems. The fact is that any disease of the heart is deadlier than most people think.

Contracting and expanding 1 lakh times every day, the heart is the central powerhouse of the body's circulation. Shaped like an egg and weighing less than a paperweight, it is a fist-sized bundle of pulpy muscles. To sustain



Anita Khetrapal, a New Delhi housewife, is among those whose lives have been shattered by the spread of heart disease. Lajpat Rai, her husband, who owned a printing press, died of a heart attack four years ago when he was 41. She now looks after their three children on her own. Her husband's brothers help out with money, but there is never enough. Her life, she says, "is only full of problems".

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its phenomenal pumping power, root-like coronary arteries constantly supply its muscles with blood. But the heart can get affected in any number of ways. Children are most commonly affected by rheumatic heart disease which begins as a simple cough and leads to such problems as weak heart valves. Among adults, the most common heart disease is atherosclerosis. But heart problems could take many other forms: irregular heart-beats that need the implanting of pace-makers, and congenital defects like a hole in the heart that need open heart surgery.

Like the rest of the world, Indians are belatedly realising that the biggest danger from cigarette smoking is not lung cancer but heart disease. With every third adult Indian male being a regular smoker of either cigarettes or beedis, the habit is deeply entrenched in the country. The nicotine in tobacco makes the body's blood vessels constrict, forcing the heart to work harder to pump blood through them. "If you are a heavy smoker you are asking for a heart attack," warns Dr D. Chinniah, head of Bangalore's Jayadeva Institute of Cardiology, which has "Smoking is dangerous" signs plastered on its walls.

Anand Swarup, the Jaipur bank officer, now wishes he had

TREATMENT

Hi-tech Hopes

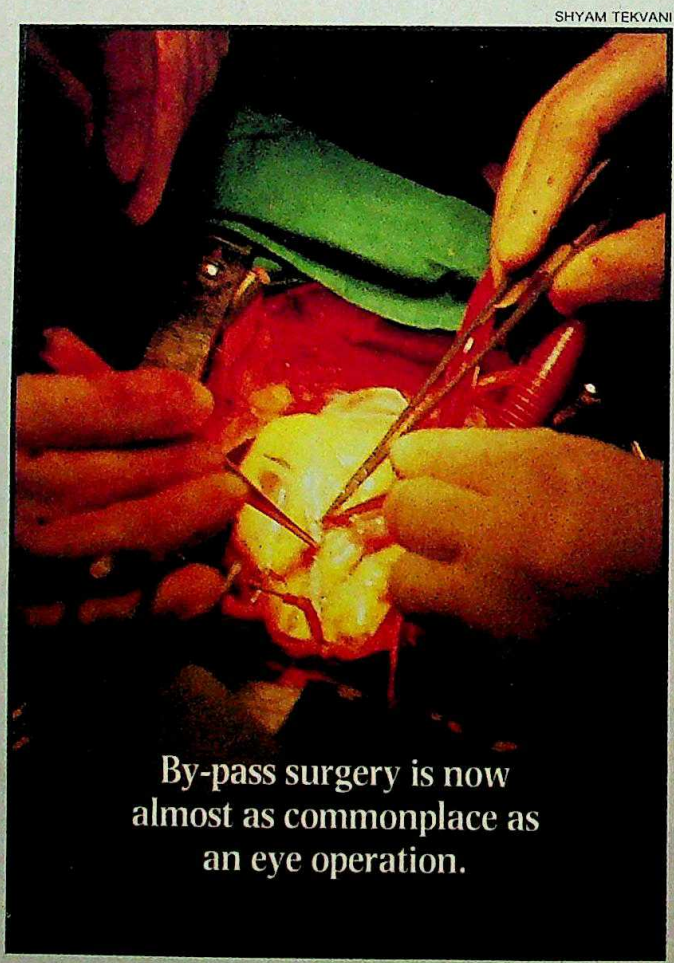
THE news on the heart front may be bad, but dramatic improvements in diagnosing and treating heart patients have enhanced survival rates in hospitals, ensured speedier recovery, and reduced treatment costs, sometimes quite sharply. Meanwhile, even complicated by-pass surgery does not now need a trip to Denton Cooley in Houston.

Traditional equipment like the electro-cardiograph (ECG), which records the heart's electrical activity, and the sphygmomanometer, which measures blood pressure, have made way for a host of new hi-tech diagnostic tools. At the Madras Medical College Hospital, doctors put patients on a 24-hour ECG watch which includes a carry-along recorder that can even be taken to office. Using a computer that processes the recordings, doctors can pinpoint when the heart behaved irregularly.

At nearby Apollo Hospital, doctors employ an echo-cardiograph that uses high frequency sound waves which send back echoes from the heart that form images of its condition. In Delhi, the AIIMS's cardiology department uses a nuclear scanner to detect anomalies in the heart. A harmless radioactive tracer is introduced through the patient's veins and the gamma rays it emits as it passes through his heart are recorded by a special camera. Almost simultaneously, images of his heart are flashed on a screen. Studying them, doctors can analyse how efficiently the heart is working.

In Bombay, when KEM doctors wanted to analyse the condition of a patient's heart more accurately after an attack, they asked him to go to their 'cath lab' for an 'angiogram'. While the patient lay down, his right thigh was anaesthetised. A catheter, a hollow tube shaped like a scooter clutch, was then gently pushed into an artery till it reached his heart. An opaque dye was sent in through the tube that allowed the giant X-ray cine cameras hovering above his chest to record information about the heart's blood supply and the condition of the arteries and heart valves. Using a machine like a tape-recorder, doctors play back X-ray spools to examine the clogged portion.

SHYAM TEKVANI



By-pass surgery is now almost as commonplace as an eye operation.

Even for treatment, doctors now have a much wider range of drugs to choose from in order to reduce anginal pain, dissolve blood clots, expand narrowed arteries and even halt a heart attack in its tracks. The latest of drugs to come to India are the calcium blockers. Calcium ions influence the electrical impulses and contractions of the heart, and the new wonder-drugs that block the flow of calcium ions help reduce anginal pain and even lower blood pressure.

But the most exciting developments are in the field of cardiac surgery. Using a heart-lung machine that is now standard equipment, doctors can stop the heart from pulsating, and then operate on it. If the heart muscles are damaged after an attack, they remove the dead tissue. If the crucial valves in the heart are malfunctioning they replace them with metallic valves. If the coronary arteries are blocked they remove a vein from the patient's leg, suture one end to the aorta and the other on the artery, "by-passing" the blocked portion like a traffic fly-over, making open heart surgery almost as commonplace as an eye operation.

But several factors have prevented a more rapid development of heart surgery in the country. For years, Indian surgeons have been by-passed by people (including VIPs) who prefer to go to the US or UK for surgery, even though they can have the same surgery done at hospitals in India, and that too for a fraction of the cost abroad (some Rs 4 lakh in a typical case). In 1983 alone, as many as 197 government officials went for by-pass surgery to the US, spending a hefty $40

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paid heed to his doctor's advice to give up smoking after his first heart attack six years ago. Swarup had instead continued to smoke 60 cigarettes a day. Two years later he had another attack, more serious than the first. Tests revealed that many arteries in his heart were severely clogged. Swarup had to choose between cigarettes and life. He chose life.

But while cigarette smoking figures high among the list of causes, cardiologists do not regard it as the heart of the problem. They argue that the rise in heart attacks is a result of the new life-style evolving in India, especially in its cities. "There's a fast buck and fast-food culture that's gaining ground. It's a highly competitive world and there is plenty of stress and tension," says Professor M.L. Bhatia, chief cardiologist at the AIIMS, which treats five people suffering from heart attacks every day. Doctors believe that stress and tension release certain chemicals in the bloodstream that tend to speed up the heart-rate and make it beat irregularly, weakening the arteries as a result.

P.N. Kumar, 55, a regional director of Indian Airlines, knows the results of high living only too well. For Kumar, working as an engineer meant touring a lot, keeping late hours,

million (Rs 5 crore) of public funds.

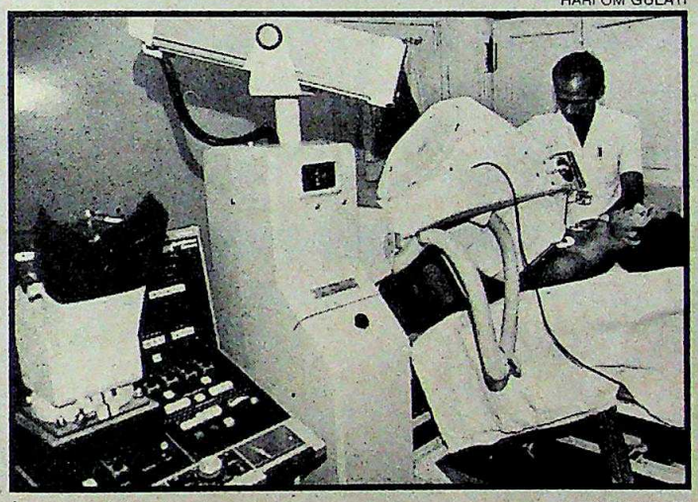
Indian cardiac surgeons also complain that patients postpone surgery till it is almost too late. Even today, 90 per cent of those who come for treatment have as many as three to four arteries clogged, needing at least four by-passes. "People treat the hospital as the last stop before the graveyard," says AIIMS's Chief Cardiac Surgeon P. Venugopal.

NEVERTHELESS, with improved facilities Indian surgeons have, in many cases, brought down the mortality rate of heart operations to just three deaths in a 100, from as high as 15 to 20 a decade ago. They have also drastically reduced the cost of a by-pass operation to as little as Rs 20,000 in a government hospital and Rs 40,000 to Rs 50,000 in private hospitals. Typically, AIIMS has a sophisticated set-up, with four operation theatres and a special 18-bed post-operative care unit.

But surgery is not the final solution. Says M.R. Girinath, chief cardiac surgeon at Apollo, who has done 500 open heart operations in two years: "By-pass operations only help the patient live a better life. They do not cure him of what originally caused the narrowing of his arteries."

Meanwhile, for those who have only one artery blocked and would like to avoid major surgery, Indian cardiologists are now experimenting with a sophisticated operation called balloon angioplasty. A catheter similar to the one used in an angiogram is introduced through an artery in the patient's leg. When it reaches the narrowed artery in the heart, a fluid is introduced that inflates the tube, making it inflate like a balloon. The fatty tissue clogging the artery is flattened, resulting in a smoother flow of blood. Angioplasty is also used for opening out blocked heart valves. "We are robbing surgeons of part of their bread," says Professor M. Khalillulah, chief cardiologist at New Delhi's G.B. Pant Hospital, who has so far done 40 such operations.

HARI OM GULATI



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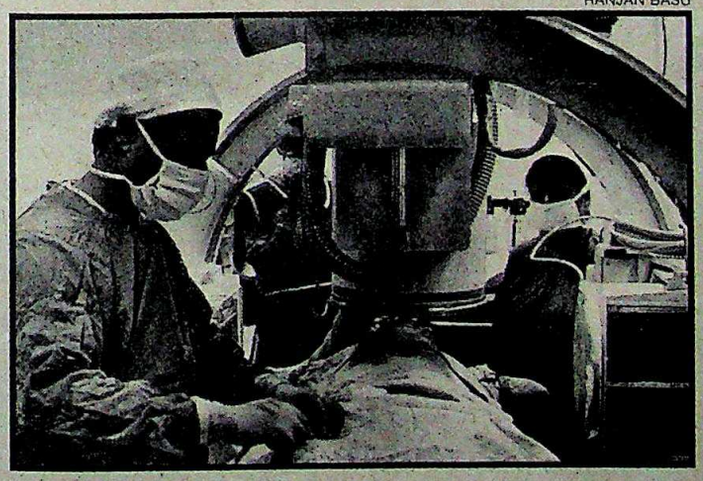

Nuclear scanner (top) and an angiogram: improved diagnosis

But these heartwarming developments in treatment are far from adequate. Currently there are barely 350 specialist cardiologists in the country: one for every 2 million people. And though every year 2,000 heart operations are being done, AIIMS doctors estimate that the demand is for around 50,000. As Devendra Saksena, cardiac surgeon at Bombay Hospital, says: "Right now we have only five-star hospitals that are like islands of treatment in a vast ocean of neglect." With cases of rheumatic heart disease showing no decline, the existing centres are already overloaded and have long waiting-lists for surgery.

The Government is planning to fund five specialised cardiac centres by 1990. But with surgical equipment being costlier than the surgeons themselves, any government effort is unlikely to keep pace with the rapidly rising number of patients coming for treatment. And even the existing centres face daunting problems like lack of manpower and poor equipment maintenance. Apart from more surgeons, the country needs skilled anaesthetists to handle the new equipment, and trained nurses specialised in post-operative care. Also, despite what Saksena terms the five-star facilities, even ordinary ambulance services are often not available. Most general hospitals lack the basic facilities for quick diagnosis and treatment of heart attacks. "What we see in cardiac centres are only a third of the victims. The rest either don't get to hospitals in time or are not diagnosed properly," says C. Lakshmikanthan of Madras Medical College Hospital. Without improvements on all these fronts, there is little chance of bringing down the death rate among heart patients.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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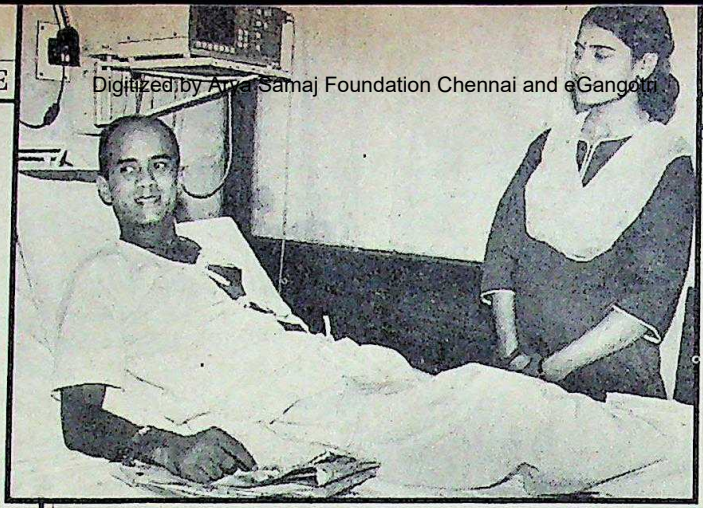

Kuldip Rai Gupta, 38, a Bhatinda farmer, exercised regularly, hardly ever smoked and led a tension-free life. Yet last June he felt a shooting pain in his heart and thought he was going to die. Tests showed that he had suffered a heart attack. Like Gupta, one out of every four people who have heart attacks shows no precipitating symptoms.

eating greasy food at hotels and chain-smoking 80 cigarettes every day. Relaxation meant going to the club and playing rummy late into the night. And then one day when he was 43, there was a burning sensation in his throat, followed by breathlessness and sweating. His family doctor told him he had suffered a heart attack—a term he would become very familiar with in the years that followed.

But stress and faulty lifestyles are not confined to the well-off. Last June, 35-year-old N.S. Pillai, a stenographer in a private firm in Bombay, had his third heart attack in four years. At office Pillai had to deal with five bosses and was overworked. At home there were tensions too. Commuting every day meant suffering an hour-long ride in a jam-packed train. He began smoking two to three packets daily. Four years ago, while typing out a letter, he felt his heart was being "hit by a hammer". Ever since then, he has lived in constant fear of death.

Cigarette smoking and stress are not the only villains. Indians may not be great chocolate or ice cream eaters, but they make up by gorging into oily sweets and greasy food that are high in cholesterol. An excess of cholesterol in the body too is known to cause thickening of the arteries. In fact, some surgeons have even noticed that people in north and south India have different degrees of arterial blockage. At the New York University Hospital, which has a large number of Indians coming for bypass surgery, Naresh Trehan a highly experienced cardiovascular surgeon, who is now involved in setting up the Rs 15 crore state of the art Escorts Heart Research Institute, said: "Just looking at X-rays of the arteries I could tell which part of India they came from. North Indians usually have only one or two arteries blocked because they tend to eat red meat, processed milk products and hydrogenated cooking oil (vanaspati). South Indians, in contrast, use coconut or groundnut oil that seem to show up as fat in their arteries in a very diffused manner, causing blockages in several arteries."

Cardiologists say that Indians are rarely conscious of what they are shovelling into their arteries when they stuff themselves with eggs, meat, sweets and snacks. While doctors say that a person's daily intake of cholesterol should not exceed more than 250 to 300 mg, with all their over-eating many Indians easily take in at least 500 mg into their system. What few Indians

MEDICAL TERMS

Heart Beats

MEDICAL terminology takes the romance out of the heart. Here is a ready reckoner for the uninitiated:

Coronary arteries: The arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle.

Atherosclerosis: Narrowing of the arteries, due to build-up of fatty tissue.

Angina pectoris: The pain due to inadequate blood supply to the heart caused by narrowing of arteries.

Coronary Thrombosis: Obstruction of a coronary artery by a blood clot that may cause a heart attack.

Heart attack: The death of a portion of the heart muscle as a result of a coronary artery being blocked, denying it blood supply. If a large part of the muscle is damaged, the person dies.

Myocardial infarct: Myo refers to muscle, cardial to heart and infarct means an area of dead tissue that is caused by interruption in blood supply.

Heart failure: An inability of the heart to pump adequate blood, resulting in an accumulation of body fluids in the lungs or in the feet.

Fibrillating heart: Irregular and disorganised heartbeat. Rectified with either an electric shock or drugs.

Pacemaker: An electronic device placed under the skin covering the chest that stimulates the heart with a small electrical impulse to start each heartbeat in patients whose natural initiating system is faulty.

Hypertension: This is simply high blood pressure and is measured with a sphygmomanometer which records the systolic (the pressure when the heart pumps blood) and the diastolic (the pressure when the heart rests for a moment).

Electrocardiograph: A recording of the electrical events that occur in the heart during each heartbeat, giving information regarding the speed of the beat, injury to the heart and the presence of myocardial infarct.

Angiogram: An X-ray of the coronary arteries done by introducing a catheter or tube into the heart and passing an opaque dye that is seen by X-ray cameras.

Echo cardiograph: Investigating the heart by using high frequency sound waves.

Bypass surgery: An operation in which a vein or artery is removed from the body and one end sewn into the aorta and the other at a point beyond the clogged artery in the heart, thereby "bypassing" it, resulting in better flow of blood supply.

Cholesterol: A type of fat that is found as a normal part of the body. The danger comes when abnormal amounts of cholesterol accumulate in blood vessels, especially the arteries feeding the heart.

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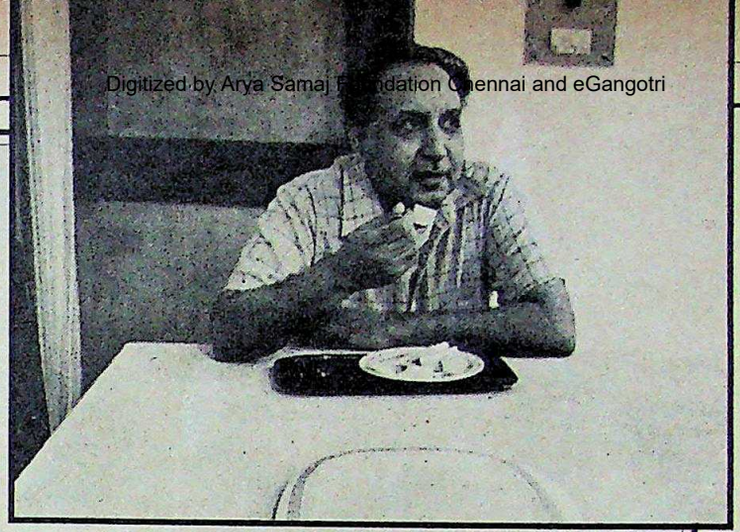

P.N. Kumar, 55, an Indian Airlines regional director, suffered a heart attack and is now living a saner life. Out went his favourite mutton curry and *parathas*, as did late night card games. He now exercises regularly and does not smoke. Kumar, who had his first attack when he was 41, says: "I feel fitter than at any other time of my life."

realise is that an egg yolk itself contains 275 mg, a piece of mutton around 77 mg, beef liver around 372 mg, a cup of ice cream around 60 mg, a small chocolate bar 20 mg, a buttered slice of bread 30 mg, and a packet of chips 20 mg. And depending on the cooking medium, every *laddu or jalebi* can contain anything from 10 to 20 mg.

The number of cups of tea and coffee that Indians gulp down every day has been indirectly contributing to high cholesterol levels. Most beverages contain large amounts of caffeine that is known to cause a rapid heart rate and palpitations, apart from raising blood pressure. Caffeine also stimulates the adrenal glands and increases the cholesterol levels in the blood.

A study done by Victoria Hospital in Bangalore recently showed how serious, high levels of cholesterol in the blood, could be among the young. At least a quarter of the patients with heart attacks had exceeded the normal limit of 250 mg of cholesterol in their blood samples, and some even had more than 300 mg. Says cardiologist Chinniah: "Indians probably have one of the most imbalanced diets anywhere. And all those sweets that are essential to most of our meals are the real killers."

Aggravating this is the high salt content noticed in most Indian diets. While Indians need around three grams of salt every day, most consume around five to 15 grams liberally sprinkled over their curries. Snacks like salted biscuits, chips and groundnuts that are now TV-time favourites in most urban Indian homes have also increased their intake of salt. Salt is known to raise the blood pressure, and already studies done in the country show that people living in cities have a high rate of hypertension. A survey by the Indian Council of Medical Research recently showed that one out of every 16 Indians is hypertensive (suffering from high blood pressure), making them susceptible to heart attacks.

While people gorge unhealthy food, they rarely exercise enough to burn away the excess calories. "These days people even complain of walking to the parking lot," remarks Dr M.S. Valiathan, director of the Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences in Trivandrum. Excess body weight makes the heart work harder to pump blood to the rest of the body, putting it under constant strain. Unlike the West, Indians hardly count their calories when they stuff themselves, and the fitness craze

HEART ATTACK

Danger Signals

IF you are highly competitive, extremely time conscious, insist on doing several things simultaneously and find no time to relax, you may move up the executive ladder. You may also be the next candidate for a heart attack.

Cardiologists are not very sure why such personality traits are known to cause heart diseases. But they do know that under stress, adrenalin concentrations in the blood increase and the cholesterol content in the blood rises. An excess of these chemicals may lead to irregular heart beats and greater pressure on coronary arteries. And either of these aberrations can result in a heart attack.

Most people do not know whether they are susceptible to heart attacks. The danger signals to watch for, are all too numerous: high levels of cholesterol in the blood (doctors recommend periodic checks), excess weight, diabetes, high blood pressure, smoking, lack of exercise, history of heart disease in the family, and stress and tension.

While doctors advise people who are exposed to such risk factors to go for periodic check-ups, they essentially advocate "normalcy" in whatever one does, be it eating, working or sleeping. As AIIMS Professor M.L. Bhatia says: "Anything done in excess is bad. A well-balanced life is the key to a good heart."

Generally a diet that is full of red meat (beef, pork, mutton), processed milk products like butter, cheese, chocolates and ice cream and extremely greasy foods are known to increase cholesterol levels.

Doctors say that a majority of the people who have had heart attacks are not even aware that they are having one. It is common to dismiss chest pain as "gas trouble".

The chest pain that patients experience during a heart attack has variously been described as "a wrenching pain", "a hundred needles being poked in my heart" and as if "my heart was being compressed by book binders".

Some may just feel a mild burning sensation in the gullet or just a fleeting pain in the chest. Doctors regard these as warning signs of a major heart attack to follow. But an important feature about chest discomfort is that it is an absolutely new experience and many people who get it usually feel a sense of impending doom.

Sweating, nausea or vomiting may accompany a heart attack. A person may also fall unconscious without even feeling discomfort in the chest. The other symptoms are extreme shortness of breath, rapid heart beat and sudden shooting pains in the legs and the arms. The only advice in such circumstances: get to the nearest hospital.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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has not caught on either.

In fact doctors think that the rise in heart attacks has a great deal to do with Indians' apathy towards the high risk factors. Most of them look upon heart attacks as an old age disease and seldom go for check-ups of either their blood pressure or cholesterol levels. Complains Parulkar of KEM: "People neglect their health at every stage. They eat too much of the wrong things, don't come for check ups and even if they do, they don't listen to us." Adds Mehta of Jaslok Hospital: "Apathy seems to be an Indian characteristic."

In Delhi, Lajpat Rai Khetrapal, 41, a printing press owner, did everything that would lead to a heart attack without knowing it. He worked from 8 a.m. till midnight, chain-smoked, rarely exercised and was grossly overweight. Yet he never fell ill. Till one day while at office he felt a strange pain in his chest. Just as he reached a doctor he collapsed and died.

BUT even those who are quite unlike Khetrapal and do not indulge themselves, need not feel lighthearted. Kuldip Rai Gupta, 38, a wheat farmer in Punjab's Bhatinda district, was regarded by his friends as "a model of good health". He exercised regularly, ate a balanced diet and rarely smoked. Having a 100-acre farm gave him a reasonably tension-free existence. But two months ago he felt a severe pain in his heart and tests confirmed that some of his arteries were mildly clogged. Like Gupta, one out of every four people who have heart attacks do not show any precipitating symptoms. But Gupta need not be disheartened, because doctors feel that in most of these cases it is a "benign attack" and they have excellent recovery rates.

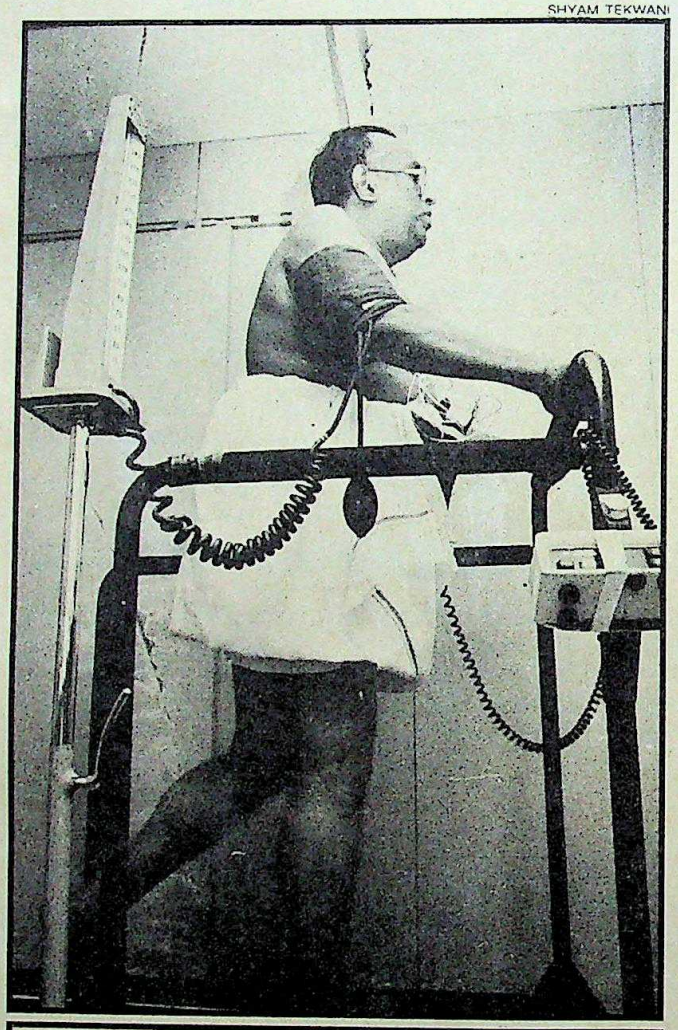
Doctors also find that people with a family history of heart attacks are more prone to heart disease. Ashtaf Hussian, a former MP from Gorakhpur, had a heart attack at 42 and apart from his close relatives two of his brothers too are suffering from heart problems.

Cardiologists are unable to explain why women are not as susceptible to heart attacks. Curiously, it was found that women after menopause had the same rate of heart attacks as men in their age group. Doctors refer to research abroad which tested the thesis that the female hormone, estrogen, cast a "protective shield" over a woman's heart. To test this they actually gave several male heart patients large doses of estrogen. Those who took it lost the hair on their bodies and even developed breasts, but it did not seem to improve the condition of their hearts.

While facilities for treatment of heart diseases have improved in many ways *(see box)*, basic shortcomings continue to exist as the problem takes on the character of a national health crisis. There are too few doctors—barely 350 trained cardiologists, far too few specialised cardiac treatment centres—less than two dozen, no proper emergency care facilities, and worst of all no public health campaign to prevent heart disease.

A patient on a Treadmill Test

SHYAM TEKWANI



While Indians are getting more "heart conscious", cardiologists despair at the lack of preventive care and the continuing ignorance about heart problems.

And what is even shocking is that there are hardly any recent studies done on the prevalence rate of heart attacks in the general population. The Government does not even have estimates of the number of cardiologists needed to tackle the problem. "We are in a mess. While heart attacks are showing signs of reaching epidemic proportions, our research on the problem is completely blank," admits Professor Bhatia of AIIMS.

Cardiologists emphasise the need for preventive measures that include launching a mass programme to teach people about the risk factors like smoking and imbalanced diets that precipitate heart attacks. And to wipe out misconceptions like "chubby babies are healthy ones" although it is known that plump children are prone to heart disease. They also point out that the survival rate in heart attacks has improved dramatically abroad because of outstanding emergency treatment—some 15 million Americans are trained in cardiopulmonary resuscitation, while smoking is on the decline, unlike in India.

But despite the dramatic rise of cases of heart attack in the country there does not seem to be any sign of a preventive campaign on the horizon yet. "If we don't launch a preventive programme against heart attacks, it could reach catastrophic proportions in the country," warns Chinniah. But with India already claiming as many heart attack deaths every year as the US, the catastrophe that Chinniah is talking about seems to be already here.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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SHE'S YOUNG,

SHE'S OLD,

SHE'S BIG,

WILD AND BEAUTIFUL

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Stage Two will be on television. The top 48 winners of Stage One will qualify to compete on the national hook-up in a series of 13 television quiz programmes.

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- All those answering a minimum of 40 questions correctly in Stage One will be awarded a Youth Passport. A Youth Passport entitles you to unheard of discounts for accommodation at selected destinations.

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CAR CRAZE

THE rush into the automobile business continues. While Hindustan Motors now wants to manufacture the Isuzu Gemini model in India, Gujarat Industrial Investment Corporation (GIIC) has applied to the Government for permission to manufacture 10,000 two-seater 'micro-cars' in collaboration with Deanneau of France. The two-seater car, with a fibreglass body and a kerb weight of 230 kg (compared to the Maruti's 610 kg), is expected to give 25 km per litre of petrol.

The Government's initial reaction has been negative, arguing that it would like to sanction fresh capacity only by broadbanding existing licences, but the GIIC is still optimistic and has asked the Government to reconsider the matter on the grounds that the car will be a genuine people's car, the investment will be small and the outflow of foreign exchange only around Rs 13 crore. But like all other car manufacturing proposals, this too will have to wait for the formulation of the new automobile policy by the Government.

PENAL PLANS

THE Government has finally decided to get tough with companies that delay the implementation of projects. It has asked the fertiliser firms that are setting up units on the HBJ pipeline route to pay a penalty if their projects do not come up on time. The details are yet to be worked out, but the penalty could be a lumpsum payment for each month's delay.

The pipeline-laying consortium led by France's Spie-Capag already has a penalty clause built into its contract, and the Government's move may be prompted by worries that delays will merely swell the fertiliser import bill further.

TOUGH TACTICS

FAR from being on the defensive following criticism of the tax raids and arrests of businessmen, the Finance Ministry has now gone on the offensive. Incensed by the fact that industrialists are hiring the highest-priced lawyers to fight their cases, the ministry has written to the Industry Ministry and the Company Law Board, suggesting that businessmen arraigned on charges of tax evasion be asked to pay their own legal expenses, and not bill them on their firms. There is only one precedent of a businessman paying his own legal costs: H.P. Nanda of Escorts, during his battle with Swraj Paul, the Government and financial institutions.

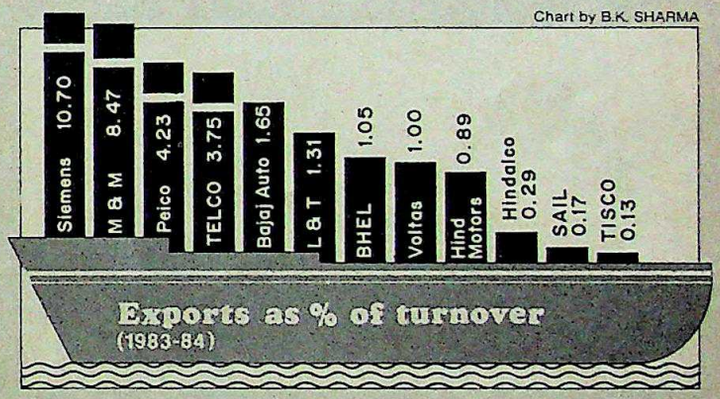
RISING REACTION

THE Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) seems to have taken to heart recent government pronouncements that ailing units should be identified before they fall sick and not after. Ironically, the villain of the piece in the first IDBI ante-mortem study has turned out to be none other than the Government itself. About 50 licences have been issued for the manufacture of electronic push-button telephones for a total capacity of 10 million units. But the Department of Electronics' (DOE) projections show that demand will be only 2 million by the end of the seventh plan. In the unlikely event of all the units coming up, industry will be graced with another very sick sector. Fifteen licences have, however, been cancelled and the DOE is going around with a chopper among other units which are dithering over the implementation of their licences. Evidently, someone has pressed the electronic panic button.

PRIME POINT

PRIME Minister Rajiv Gandhi has a point when he complains that Indian big business has performed poorly on the export front, and that small-scale industry has often done better. Figures compiled by the Government for 1983-84 (no details are available for subsequent years) show

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



that most large companies export minuscule proportions of their total turnover—and this includes some of the public sector giants. The best companies export barely a tenth of their total turnover, and the worst among the giants do only a fraction of 1 per cent. Even among the foreign-owned companies that sometimes have a better record on the export front, their imports usually are far in excess of the export earning, so that the foreign exchange balance is negative.

AMBITIOUS AIMS

THE newly created Mahanagar Telephone Nigam (MTN) has decided to follow the example of many developed countries by not only getting the telephone directories of Delhi and Bombay free but also making some money on it. MTN has floated a tender for a five-year contract for publishing telephone directories; the successful bidder will have the right to sell space for advertisements in the yellow pages, from which he is expected to meet the expenses of producing the directories annually and pay a royalty to MTN. Eleven potential bidders have been short-listed, including several leading newspaper groups, prominent printers and publishers and even a soft drinks company. Several international telecommunications giants are also interested to collaborate in any way they can.

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Forest of Interests

FOR more than one year now, the Madhya Pradesh Government has been locked in a grim struggle with the Department of Environment (DOE) in New Delhi to gain the Centre's clearance for the Bodhghat hydel project in Bastar district. In its bid to get the Rs 900-crore project cleared, the state Government has left no stone unturned: it has even named the reservoir-to-be the Indira Sagar! The project also has the blessings of the World Bank. But the DOE has dug its heels in, and its doubts are shared by the prime minister.

These led to the appointment of a committee of experts from the Central Forest Institute, Shimla, to assess the precise damage that the project would inflict on the environment. The team's findings show that the Madhya Pradesh Government, in its anxiety to get the project cleared, had underestimated the likely damage by a significant amount. While the Madhya Pradesh State Electricity Board (MPSEB) had claimed that only 2.8 million trees would be submerged, the team found that more than 10 million trees would be lost. It also found exceedingly optimistic the MPSEB's estimate that only one-eighth of the trees were sal trees.

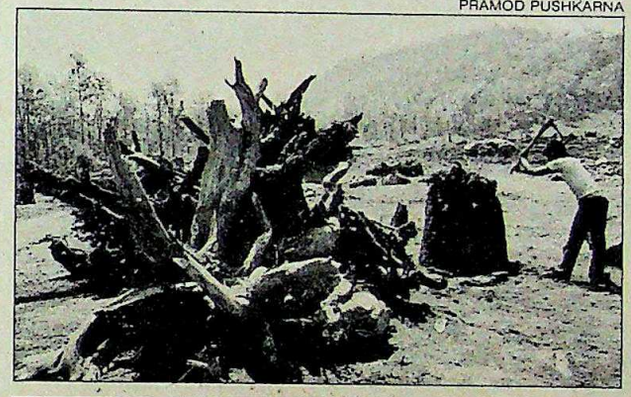
But the damage to the forests is only a small part of the project's social cost. Thirty-two villages will be submerged. Their 15,000 tribal inhabitants will lose their livelihood and way of life. The compensation they are paid is a poor substitute for their land. With no one to advise them on how to invest this money, they will soon spend it and become paupers. Many will drift into towns seeking work that doesn't exist.

But even this is not the worst of the fate in store for them. If the experience of a hydel project in Mandla district, not far from Bodhghat, is anything to go by, the lands will be taken away but compensation will not be paid for years. The dispossessed will thus become destitute.

What will Madhya Pradesh gain from this project? Bodhghat will provide hydro-power which can be used for meeting peak demand from an installed capacity of 500 MW. It will, however, deliver an average of only 106 MW throughout the year. In 1982-83, the state had an installed power generation capacity of 2097 MW, but in addition a number of the National Thermal Power Corporation's superthermal power plants are coming up in the state, and it will get a handsome slice of their power as well. Since the project will take 12 years to complete, and Madhya Pradesh's power generating capacity is rising at 9.5 per cent a year, Bodhghat's actual contribution around 1998 is likely to be minuscule.

Stumps of felled trees in Bodhghat

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



> "Is there any case for a hydel project that destroys more than 10 million trees, renders destitute 15,000 tribals in 32 villages and then delivers power that can be supplied by thermal plants?"

Is this worth the damage that it will inflict? Is there any case for a hydel project that provides only electricity and no irrigation, when thermal plants can deliver even peak power although at the cost of a drop in their efficiency?

The answer to a layman is obvious. Why then is the Madhya Pradesh Government so keen to go ahead with the project? Why, for that matter, did the Kerala Government fight tooth and nail to implement the Silent Valley hydel project, in the face of world-wide protests and Mrs Gandhi's own repeatedly expressed reservations? The answer may lie in a totally unexpected area: perhaps we should stop looking at what the state will gain *after* the power starts flowing, and see what its minions will gain even before the project gets off the ground.

All hydel project documents talk about the amount of land, including forests, that will be submerged. But this is a convenient euphemism. While the land is submerged, the trees on it are not. The first act of the project authority or the state Government, even before the project authority is set up, is to clear all the trees on the land to be submerged. The trees are then sold.

Some idea of the value of the timber may be had from the fact that sal commands as much as Rs 250 to Rs 300 per cubic foot. Given the thickness of the trunk and the height of the mature trees, the final value of each tree is at least Rs 10,000 as sawn furniture-wood, and another Rs 2,000 to Rs 3,000 as firewood. In fact it may be a good deal more, for deodar trees in Himachal Pradesh are being auctioned for Rs 35,000 each.

At only Rs 15,000, the two million or so sal trees in Bodhghat are worth Rs 3,000 crore—more than three times the estimated cost of the project. Madhya Pradesh can therefore build at least two Bodhghats out of the slaughter of this one forest, without asking for a paisa from either the Centre or the World Bank. But as experience with past hydel projects has shown, the state itself will get a tiny portion of the sale proceeds of the "submerged" trees. The balance will be shared by politicians, officials, engineers, timber contractors, an army of wholesale and retail traders and the entire timber and furniture industry of the country. That is the true lobby behind hydel projects. Taking it head-on requires more than pious expressions of concern for vanishing forests or immiserised tribals.

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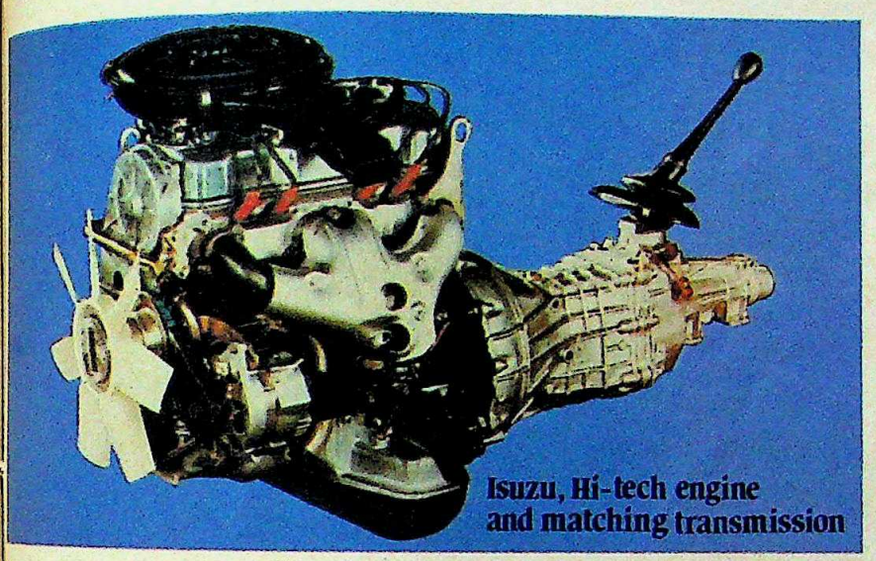

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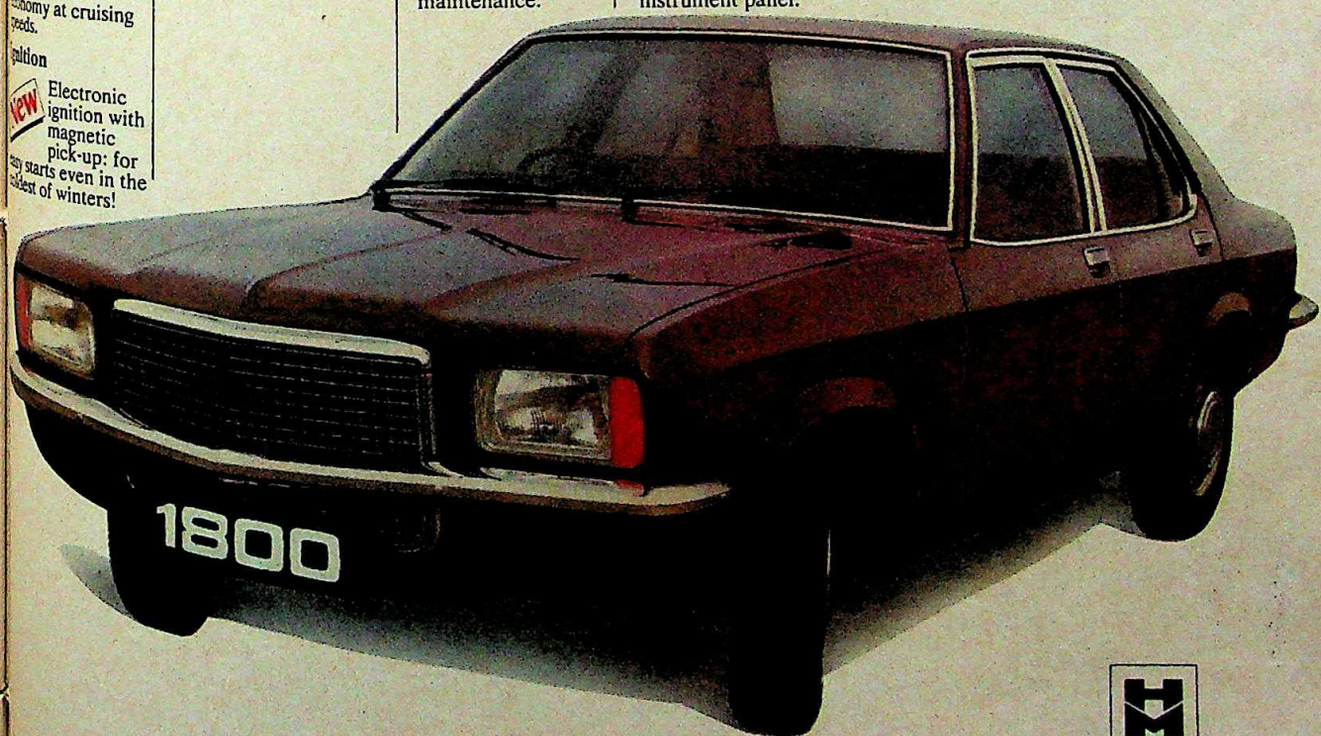

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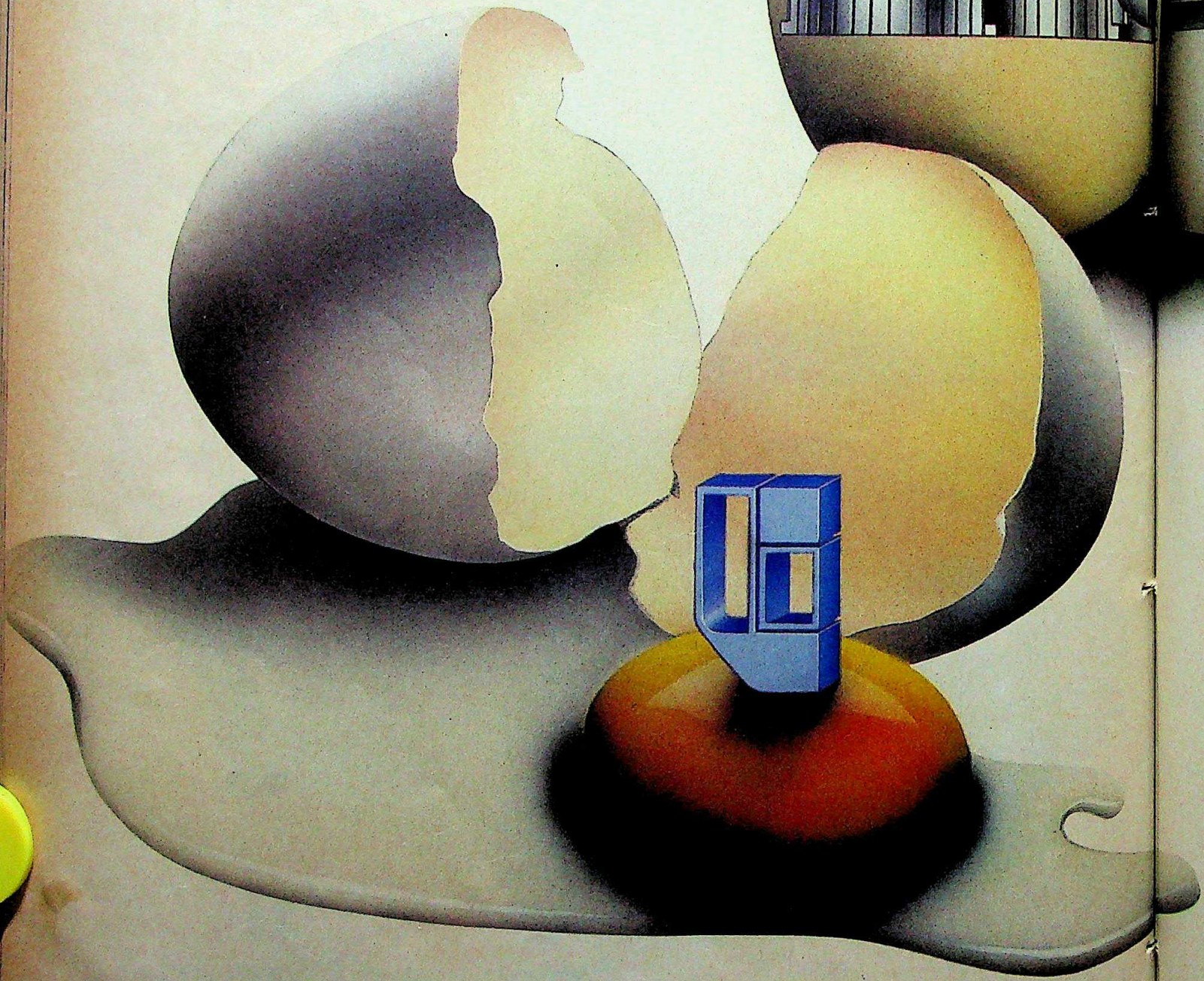

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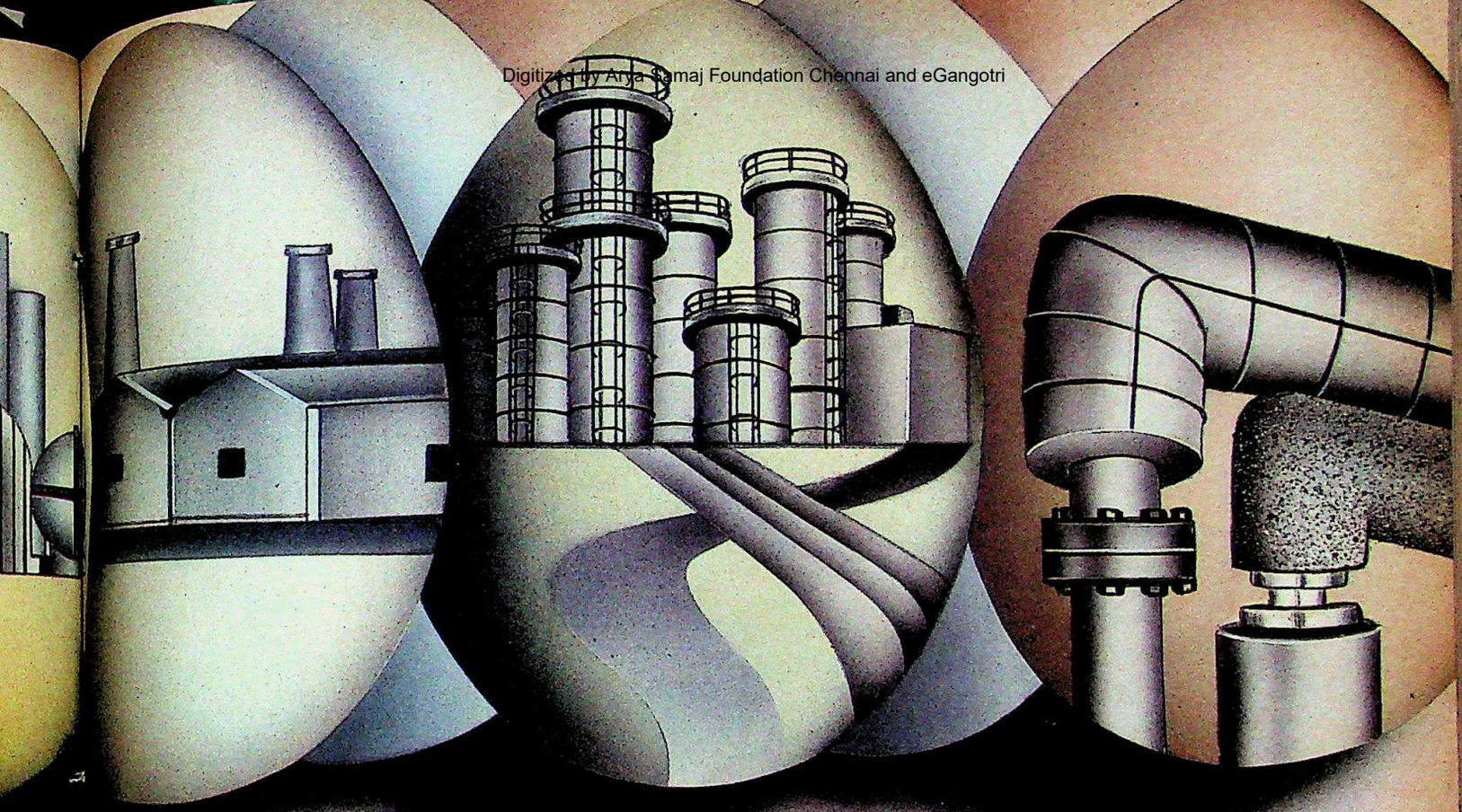

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TAMIL NADU INDUSTRY

Changing Gear

FOR years, they were widely viewed as citadels of conservatism. And rightly so. For Tamil Nadu's corporate heavyweights rarely assayed the new frontiers of business, preferring instead to stick to their traditional turf. But the times are a-changing in the south too. Throwing overboard the stifling caution of yesteryear, big business in the state is testing the waters of enterprise.

Corporate entities such as the TVS group and the Murugappa Chettiar-run Tube Investments (TI) are diversifying into an impressive range of greenfield areas, investing fat sums in major projects, and tying up prestigious foreign collaborations. Notes S. Viswanathan, managing director of Enfield India: "The business scene in Tamil Nadu has suddenly become dynamic, highly competitive and hi-tech."

Viswanathan's 31-year-old company, which had confined itself to two-wheelers and farm engines, is now making a sortie into television sets and microwave ovens. The TVS group, which had doggedly remained in the automotive components business for decades, is moving into computer peripherals, refrigerators and washing-machines. Rane, which also has been in the automobile components industry for the last quarter century, is busy putting up a five-star hotel in Madras. And the Murugappa Chettiar group is braving the audio tape and cassette market, while Southern Petrochemicals Industries Corporation (SPIC) is readying to leap into industrial electronics. Madras Rubber Factory (MRF) is entering the toy market and has tied up with US giant Hasbro.

"It looks as if the industrial houses of Tamil Nadu have begun to look forward to the 21st century," says a senior Tamil Nadu government official. He is right, of course. Anxious not to be left behind while the business community elsewhere sallies forth onto the fast track, the state's big companies are eagerly scouting for opportunities to grow. Explains A.C. Muthiah, vice-chairman and president of SPIC: "The diversification plans of these companies are the result of firms wanting to cash in on the new growth areas of electronics and chemicals." Adds Sundaram Clayton Managing Director Venu Srinivasan: "Computer use will explode in the 1990s and in the 21st century. So it is only natural that we should have identified computer peripherals as our new business area."

"The diversification plans are the result of firms wanting to cash in on new growth areas of electronics and chemicals."

A.C. MUTHIAH
vice-chairman and president of SPIC

The desire to get in on the ground floor of new growth areas is not, however, the only factor that is propelling the current diversification drive. As Enfield's Viswanathan argues: "Industrial houses in Tamil Nadu are generally exploring new areas of business because there are new people heading these organisations. Also every line of business, however successful, reaches a saturation point."

The old order has yielded place to the new in more ways than one: a younger, more ambitious breed of industrialists is at the helm of companies. At TVS, Venu Srinivasan is 33, his brother Gopal, a Sundaram Clayton director, is 29, as is Srinath Ratnam, the joint managing director of Sundaram Industries. At Tube Investments, M.M. Murugappan, president of Murugappa Electronics, is 31. Indeed, Rane Managing Director L. Lakshman at 40 may well be among the oldest of the new tribe.

"The business scene in Tamil Nadu has become dynamic, highly competitive and hi-tech."

S. VISWANATHAN
managing director, Enfield India

Then, the diversifying business groups have evidently read the market signals correctly. The demand for traditional products is tapering off in a fiercely competitive market, and offering a wider range of wares obviously makes sense. Enfield India has reached a point where further investments in two-wheelers will result in diminishing returns. Even firms whose fortunes are flourishing in the market-place are hedging their bets. Says P.R. Sundaravadivelu, chairman of SPIC Electronics and Systems Ltd (SPEL), the new electronics firm that SPIC has launched: "We are diversifying because we don't want to put all our eggs in one basket." Also, companies such as SPIC are flush with funds and so can invest in capital-intensive projects. For good measure, the Kothari group has diversified into processed foods and has tied up with General Foods of the US.

Certainly, the TVS group is investing substantial sums of money: Rs 90 crore

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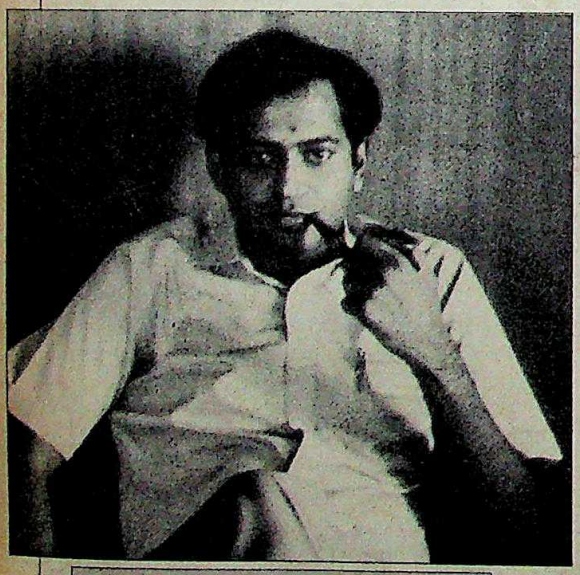
in new projects and Rs 150 crore in modernising existing plants. Over the next five years, the group will add nine new firms to its existing stable of 19 companies. The scorching pace of growth is expected to push group turnover from Rs 702 crore to a staggering Rs 1,230 crore. Among the new companies are: TVS Electronics which will turn out computer peripherals (tape drives, disc drives); TVS Chemicals (engineering plastics, resins, polymers and surface coatings at Pondicherry); and the consumer durables enterprise. Last fortnight, Gopal Srinivasan winged his way to the US to sew up collaboration deals for washing-machines, dishwashers and refrigerators.

THE new spirit of enterprise at TVS is, however, tempered with caution. In keeping with the group's practice of not turning out four-wheeled vehicles because this could affect the group's components business from automobile manufacturers, computers are similarly a no-no. Explains Venu Srinivasan: "We will never go ahead with computers because then we would be competing with other computer firms who will be our customers for peripherals."

Such dilemmas are, of course, peculiar to the business enterprise that T.V. Sundaram Iyengar founded some 50 years ago. And if electronics is the buzzword among many of the state's industrialists, it is because it offers them market opportunities that they cannot afford to ignore. Says SPEL Executive Director M.N. Sivamoney: "The demand for integrated circuits in the country is expected to touch 100 million by 1990; less than 10 million are now made in India."

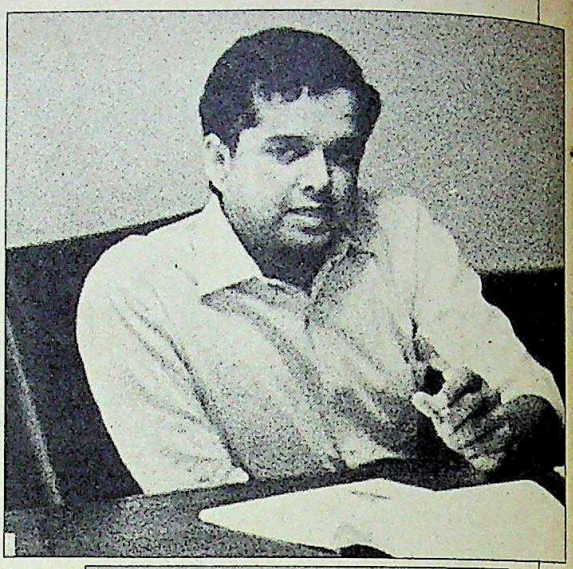
Electronics grips the attention of others too. The TI group's Murugappa Electronics was scheduled to begin trial production this month in Mysore of audio-magnetic tapes in collaboration with a Japanese company, and company President Murugappan unhesitatingly claims that his venture can take on its five competitors—even though its products will be more expensive. Arguing that the demand for cassettes will triple from 90 million to 270 million by 1990, Murugappan says: "We can market our product because the audio tape market can be expected to be quality conscious."

If that displays the new mood of confidence in Tamil Nadu, there is more. Enfield has jumped into the cluttered TV market—and believes it can hold its own against the competition. Reason: at well under Rs 2,000, the Enfield Electronics' black and white sets will enjoy a price advantage. "They can wind up as a second television set in many homes," maintains an Enfield official. Even its 20-inch colour model will be comparatively cheap at Rs 6,750 because the firm will be buying the kit from the state-owned Electronics Trade and Development Corporation of India. Such calculations have still to be tested in the market-place, but Enfield reckons that branching out makes sense when break-even levels are low and little capital is required. The bill for a washing-machines, vacuum cleaners and microwave ovens venture in collaboration with Magic Chef of the US will be just Rs 2 crore.



"Computer use will explode in the 1990s. So we have identified computer peripherals as our new business area."
VENU SRINIVASAN
managing director, Sundaram Clayton

Unensnared by the electronics rush the Rs 50-crore Rane group is treading other trails. It is making an ambitious foray into hotels. Rane has floated a new company called Pleasant Hotels which will set up by early 1987 a deluxe hostelry near Madras' international airport in suburban Meenambakkam. Says Rane Managing Director Lakshman: "We were looking at a number of areas, but the hotel business seemed very attractive. There is a serious dearth of five-star hotel accommodation in Madras and our study found that the city attracts a lot of business traffic. The tourist traffic in the state is also said to be growing at the rate of 15 per cent or more a year. So we decided to take the plunge."



"There is a serious dearth of five-star hotel accommodation in Madras. So we decided to take the plunge."
L. LAKSHMAN
managing director, Rane

With almost everyone who's anyone taking the plunge, the outcome of the new rush of projects will almost certainly be faster industrial growth in Tamil Nadu. Till a little over a decade ago, the state ranked third in industrial terms. That pride of place has long been yielded to rivals like Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu now does not even find a place among the top 10 industrialised states in the country. But, as Rane's Lakshman says: "The business houses of Madras which are embarking on large-scale diversification plans will take the state back to near the top of the country's industrial table." All the projects and hopes may not materialise, but there is little doubt that Tamil Nadu is witnessing some form of industrial resurgence.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

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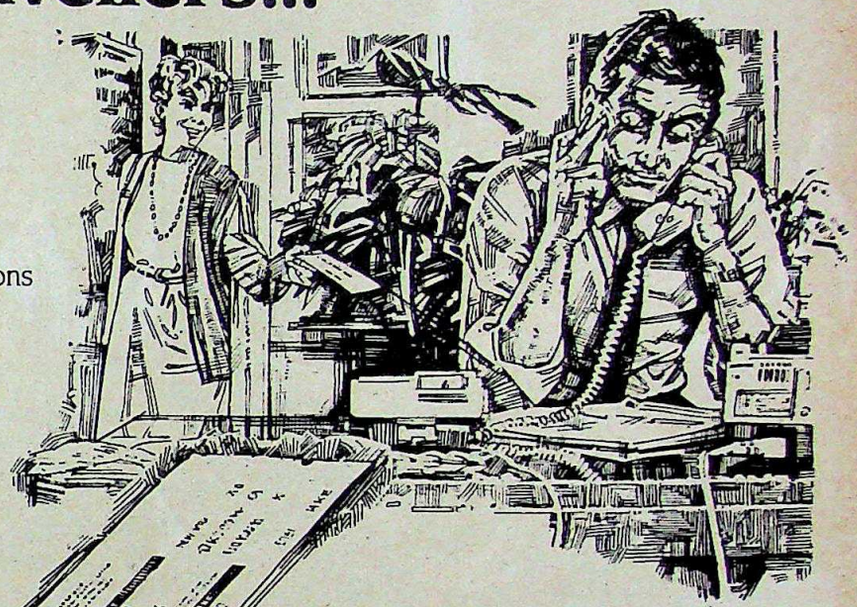
Transatlantic business travellers...



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MARKET RESEARCH

Boom Time

IT is open season for hunting wives this month. Not, however, with connubial aspirations. Pathfinders, the market research arm of advertising agency Lintas, is hot on the trail of over 10,000 housewives nationwide in what may be the first ever comprehensive syndicated psychographic survey in this country.

The survey of the urban housewife's mental make-up and consumption habits marks just one more milestone in market research's triumphant progress over the years. Long regarded by industry as one of those new fangled management tools which had no place in a developing economy, market research is now being embraced with gusto by both the private sector and the Government. The predictable result: more market research firms are springing up (Consumer Focus, for one), outfits already entrenched in the business report phenomenal growth rates (an average of 30 per cent annually), and the competition in the still small market is hotting up. Equally significant, money is now being pumped in to radically change research operations. The recently launched television programme rating scheme, for example, will cost Rs 50 lakh in meters alone.

Market research in India hasn't yet descended to the level in the US, where people get asked whether they put water on the toothbrush before squeezing out the paste or after, or not at all. But it's getting there. "People have come to realise how important research is. There is more consciousness of its value," says Ranjit Chib, chairman-cum-managing director of Marketing Research and Advisory Services (MRAS).

Certainly, private companies are shelling out more on research than ever before. Tobacco colossus ITC, for instance, spends Rs 40 lakh a year just to keep tabs on the market and recently pioneered a lifestyle study along the lines of the Pathfinders' survey. Hindustan Lever forks out upwards of Rs 80 lakh annually on research, most of it on in-house work—and the money is regarded as well spent. Lever's Vice-President for Marketing Siddhartha Sen, points to Lyril soap as one of the triumphs of market research: "We took two-and-a-half years to put the package together. We had to position the product carefully, find out consumer perceptions and it cost us a huge pile. It was worth it."

All the research may not, of course, get the right results. Hindustan Motors once hired four agencies to independently project the demand for Ambassador cars in the face of competition from new models. All four said the Ambassador wouldn't sell. The company consigned their reports to the dustbin and the Ambassador continues to coast along. Undaunted—and indicative of the new mood—Hindustan Motors continues to rely on market research.

But growth is also coming because of a new interest in market research on the part of the Government, and its role in liberalising the economy. "Competition means that you cannot just sell what you want," contends Chib. "You have to find out what the consumer wants—and that needs research."

Indeed, the Government itself is spending much more on research. The health, tourism and finance ministries have commissioned studies on a host of subjects. One example: a Rs 24-lakh study on family planning by three research agencies was handed over to the Health Ministry early this year. Says Marketing and Research Group (MARG) Chairman Titoo Ahluwalia: "This Government feels we can forecast almost everything. What is more important, there is a genuine open-mindedness. More work has been done for the Government in the past year than in five years put together." Adds Ramesh Thadani, general manager of Indian Market Research Bureau (IMRB), the grand-daddy of the country's research outfits: "Government spending these days is about 7 to 8 per cent of our turnover. A few years ago, it was insignificant."

Predictably, then, outfits like Pathfinders believe they can easily hawk their information, the stiff price notwithstanding. A Pathfinders report will cost Rs 30,000 apiece for early bird clients. "Many companies have shown interest already," insists General Manager Pranesh Misra.

And so the hunt for housewives is on. And if some time this month your afternoon siesta gets disturbed by a seemingly inane "Are you more relaxed than other people?" or "Do you wear perfume at home?", don't yell for a strait-jacket. After all, remember you are helping to build up a profile of the Indian psyche.

—PARTHASARATHI SWAMI

Long regarded by industry as one of those new fangled management tools which had no place in a developing economy, market research is now being embraced with gusto by both the private sector and the Government.

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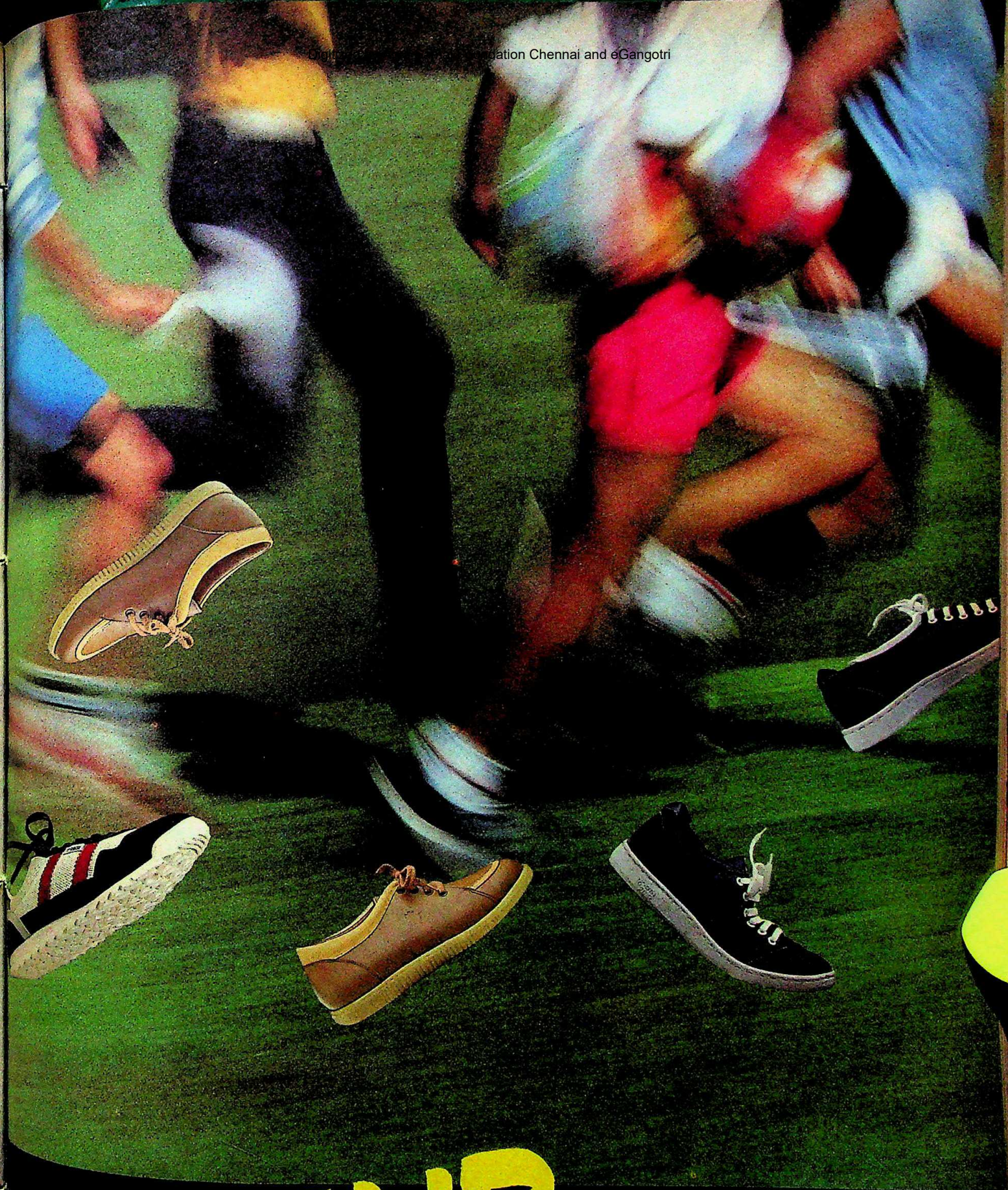

FOOT LIB

NORTH STAR®

It's a great feeling

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Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

At a very young age, he could play the harpsichord and violin, improvise fugues, write minuets and read music perfectly at first sight. The rest is history.

Whosa

five-year-olds don't

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osays
on't make history.

It all began with a lone F-27 taking off from Guwahati on January 26, 1981. Three years later, Vayudoot was still the favourite subject of the sceptics.

But a job had to be done.

And aviation history was made.

Highest operational growth — worldwide.

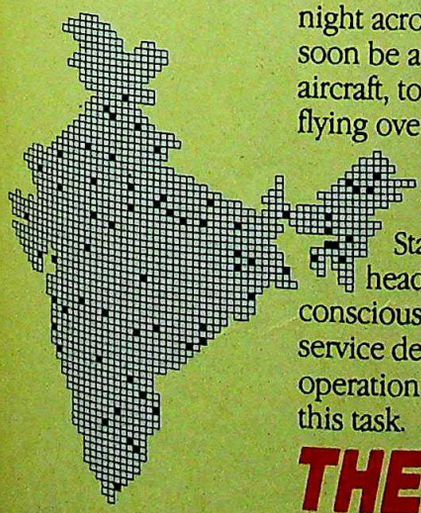
Amongst the airlines in the world, Vayudoot's network has been growing at a phenomenal rate.

32 stations in one year—an unparalleled achievement. By 1988-89, Vayudoot's network will have grown from the present 67 stations to 130.

What is remarkable is that expansion has taken place alongside profitability. The current year's operation will not only wipe out losses totalling Rs. 1.76 crores, but will in fact achieve a healthy profit-objective of Rs. 75 lakhs.

10 new Dorniers. Highest fleet utilisation.

The Vayudoot fleet of Dorniers, Avros and Fokkers is flying day and night across the network. The fleet will soon be augmented by larger-capacity aircraft, to meet future demands of flying over 5,00,000 people in 1987.



Customer Service — the accent on quality.

Statistics alone don't make headlines. And Vayudoot is conscious of the fact that customer service demands priority. The whole operation is being geared up to fulfil this task.

Cabin crew personnel have been recruited. And an all-station communication link-up is on the cards to facilitate quick reservations and service.

Modern management ethos.

Vayudoot is more than just a flying operation.

The organisation has successfully launched innovative ideas, such as the highly imaginative night-mail service, the 'Rent-a-Plane' scheme and the holiday packages.

A crucial aspect of the ethos is the constant striving for high productivity and low overhead costs. And a team of dedicated personnel is geared to customer satisfaction and corporate excellence.

The whole operation runs with clear, planned strategies. To fulfil a very definite task.

Of airlinking remote, inaccessible places.

Of saving time in transportation.

Of opening up the country for tourism.

Of boosting trade and business.

Of bringing India closer to Indians.

It's the very idea behind Vayudoot. And it's making history.

वायुदूत
Vayudoot

THE VITAL LINK. NATION-WIDE.

VAY-9192 A

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FARM COMPANIES

Bitter Harvest

ROUND one to the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission (MRTPC). The Delhi-based Marudhar Services Ltd, one of a new breed of farm investment companies, has owned up to its sins of omission and commission in its advertisements.

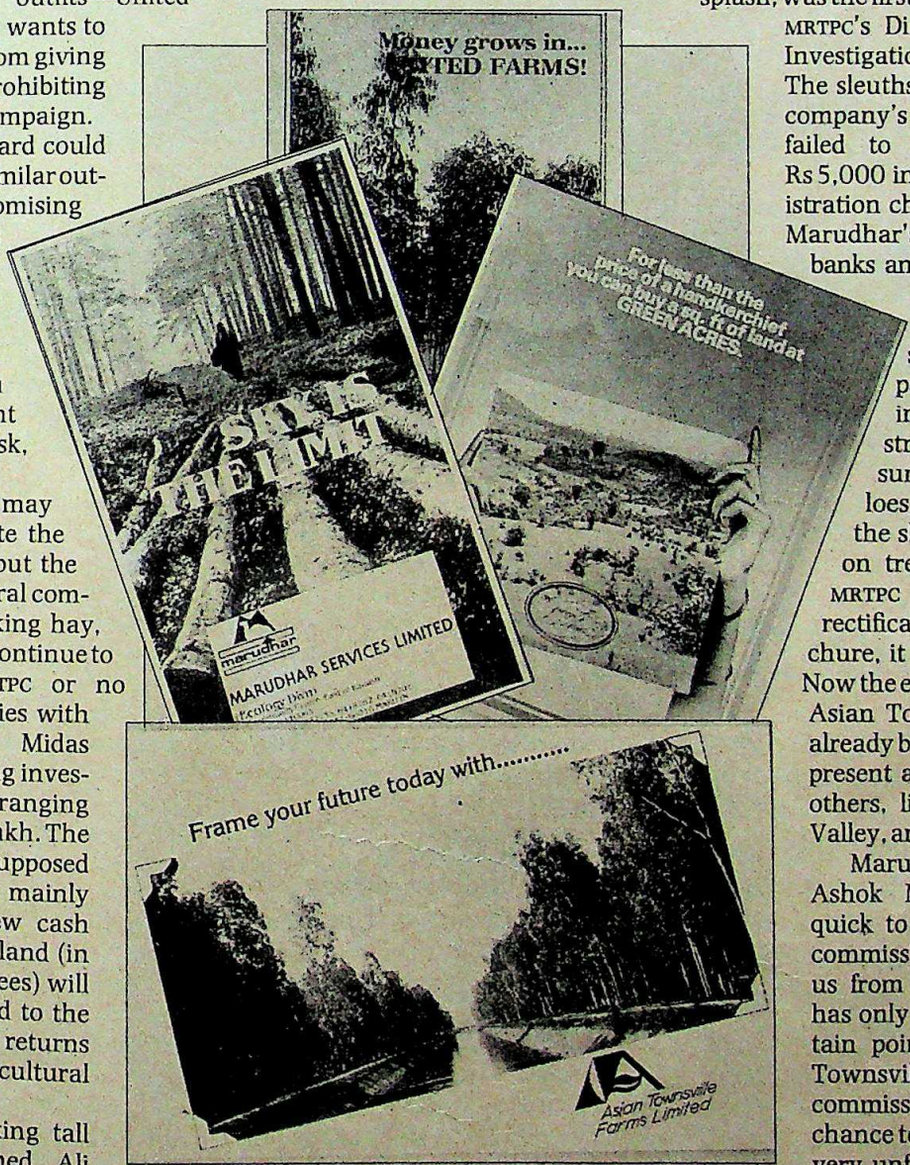
Round two has just commenced. Lawyer S.S. Kumar has filed a caveat before the MRTPC on behalf of another of the farm investment outfits—United Land and Housing. He wants to stop the commission from giving an interim ruling prohibiting United's promotion campaign.

Rounds three onward could involve several other similar outfits that have been promising astronomical returns on tree-growing projects. "Money grows on trees," the banners have been screaming. "More than triple your investment in six years—zero risk, tax-free."

The MRTPC may or may not be able to separate the wood from the trees, but the new breed of agricultural companies have been making hay, and think the sun will continue to shine on them—MRTPC or no MRTPC. These companies with the self-proclaimed Midas touch had been coaxing investors to chip in sums ranging from Rs 2,000 to Rs 2 lakh. The companies are then supposed to set up plantations, mainly for timber, with a few cash crops thrown in. The land (in some cases only the trees) will be formally transferred to the investor so that the returns qualify as tax-free agricultural income.

"We are not making tall claims," says Jamshed Ali Syed, chairman-cum-managing director of the Bombay-based Gold Valley Agro-Development. "We have agricultural experts on our board. They and others have looked at all our plans. Our cultivation mix consists of pineapples, eucalyptus and teak. On each acre the pineapples will fetch between Rs 15,000 and Rs 20,000 annually, the eucalyptus Rs 1.2 lakh every seven years, and the teak Rs 7 lakh every 10 years."

Gold Valley is the most lucrative of the schemes on offer: Rs 12,101 invested today is supposed to bring in average annual returns of Rs 20,000 from the third year onwards. This is apart from the far more substantial teak and eucalyptus bonuses. Over the 23-year-period that the plantation programme is scheduled to last, individual takings could top Rs 20 lakh. Small wonder there are so many eyebrows raised.



The astronomical returns promised by farm companies in advertisements for tree-growing projects have aroused the suspicions of the MRTPC.

Others in the line seem tame by comparison. Though Marudhar has an upmarket plan, it is focusing mainly on its one-acre units, which sell for Rs 30,000 and are worth Rs 90,000 after six years or Rs 2.7 lakh after 12 years. Green Acres in Bombay has stuck to the same lines, though its initial asking price is a shade lower at Rs 25,000. But United is only handing out its eucalyptus trees. For Rs 2,000 you can own 50 of them.

Such bounty was bound to raise suspicions. Marudhar, which had made a Rs 20 lakh advertising and marketing splash, was the first to feel the heat of the MRTPC's Directorate-General of Investigation and Registration. The sleuths discovered that the company's advertisements failed to mention an extra Rs 5,000 in processing and registration charges. Furthermore, Marudhar's use of the logos of banks and an insurance company in the advertisements seemed to suggest that the company had their backing, which was not strictly true. These and sundry other peccadilloes, including the use of the slogan "money grows on trees" found it in the MRTPC dock. After suitable rectifications and a new brochure, it was let off the hook. Now the eagle eye has turned to Asian Townsville, which has already been told to suspend its present advertisements. Some others, like United and Gold Valley, are also under scrutiny.

Marudhar Chairman Ashok Mehta, however, is quick to point out that "the commission has not debarred us from doing business, and has only told us to rectify certain points". And an Asian Townsville official says: "The commission did not give us a chance to be heard, which was very unfair. Its ruling has affected our business and our reputation." In turn, Lawyer Kumar adds that the schemes are safe, that investors have entered into legally enforceable agreements and accuses the MRTPC of sloppy investigation.

But the moot point remains: Can these companies deliver the

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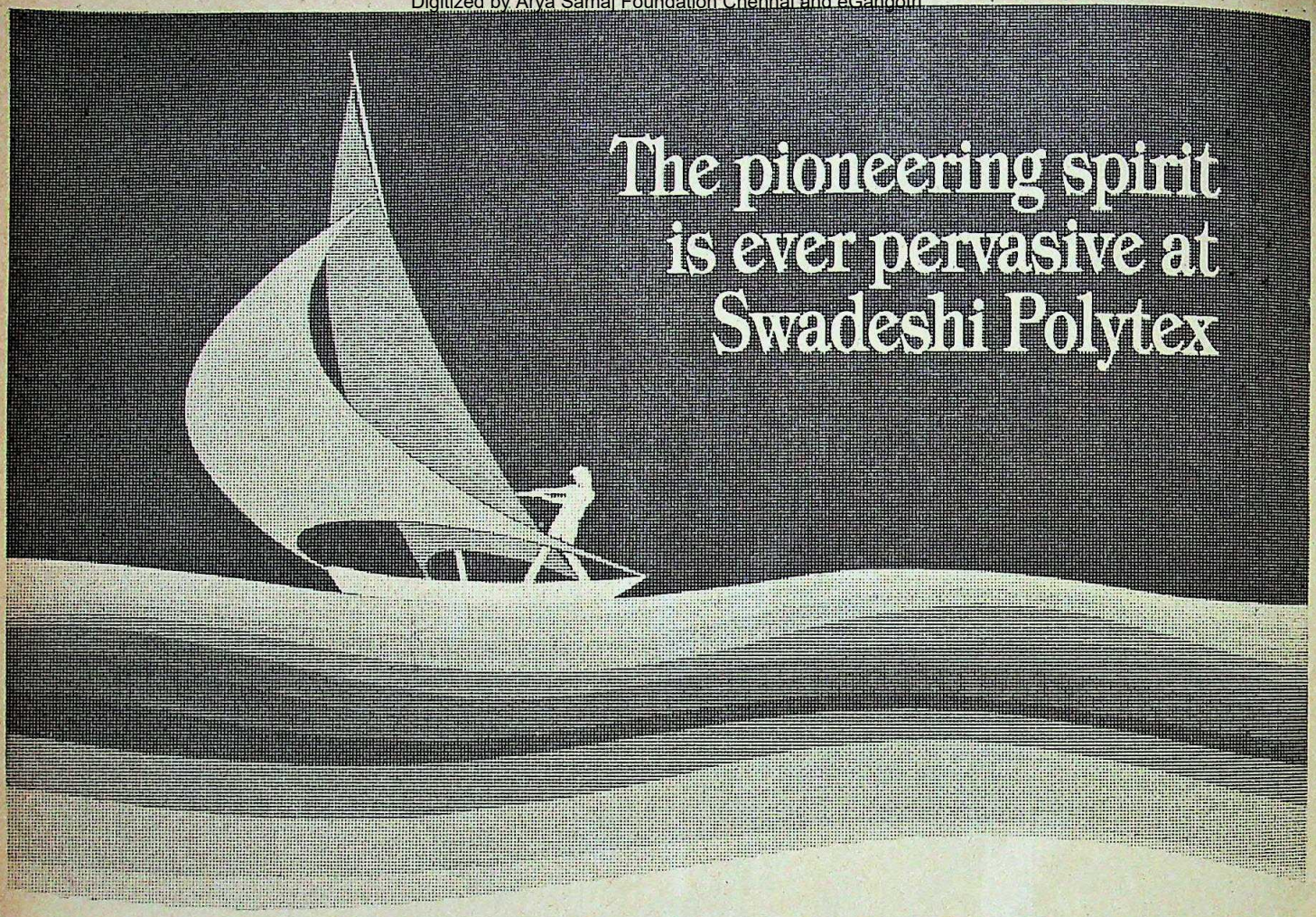

Initiative.

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Headed by an enterprising group of committed professionals, the present management is steering the company's course to newer levels of success. To carry on the pioneering tradition.

Enthused by a new zeal and accelerated production pace, the company is on its way to newer achievements.

And higher goals.

SP jailene®

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creating tomorrow's fibre today.

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goods? "Where is the doubt?" asks Mehta. "Each acre will have 2,000 trees which, even given a 25 per cent mortality rate, will be worth Rs 3 lakh after six years. The investor will get his Rs 90,000 and we will clear Rs 2 lakh." But investigative wing lawyer B.B. Ahuja was equally certain when he declared before the MRTPC that "there is absolutely no asset-backing for the promise of such an amount as profit". The companies counter with the fact that agricultural experts have testified to the viability of the schemes. Kumar produces a report by an independent agency which suggests even higher profits.

The rub, however, is that if the plantation does fail through an "act of God" the company is not liable to pay off, an aspect which has been glossed over in the publicity blitz. "One has to take these risks," says Gold Valley's Syed. "But unlike most other companies, we make this point very clear in our brochures." But Green Acres is so confident of success that it wants to do away with this too. "We are working out a system in which we can give iron-clad guarantee," says Chairman S.W. Sangamneheri.

The other debatable point is whether this will indeed qualify as agricultural income—the tax-free aspect being as big a draw as the handsome returns. Though Mehta argues that there is a strong body of case law to back up such claims, not everybody is so sanguine. While that is a matter for the courts to eventually decide, the shrewder operators like Gold Valley and Green Acres have set themselves up as cooperative societies, which will make obtaining tax exemption much easier. "We have done our homework," claims Sangamneheri.

That may be so. But if this is such a lucrative area, and the shortage of wood for paper is a perennial problem, why didn't others get in before this? While Syed feels that people tend to look down on agricultural income as something reserved for the poor, Sangamneheri says that it was putting the idea together that took so long. Now that it has caught on, adds Mehta, "everybody is getting in". It does not need much money to start with—the investors' funds are used for even the land purchase. It does not need much expertise either—not for those who are interested in making a quick buck. Now, however, with the MRTPC initiative and the publicity it has generated, the quick buck may not come quite as quickly.

—PARTHASARATHI SWAMI
with bureau reports

FASHION INSTITUTE

Designers' Mark

IN the shopping arcade of New Delhi's Samrat Hotel, an institute is slowly taking shape which could alter the entire character of the Indian garment industry. The National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), which when it opens in January will be India's first fashion institute, does not look like much at the moment. But if things go according to plan, it could one day produce an Indian Kenzo or an Issey Miyake.

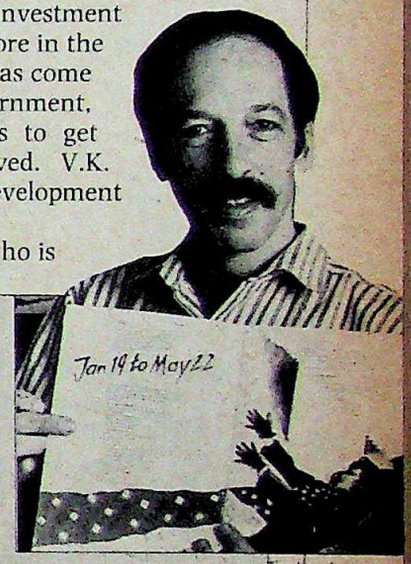
Indian garment exports have multiplied tenfold in the past decade, but the country's garments enjoy the sort of world-wide reputation that goods marked 'made in Japan' once had: cheap, tacky, low-end. NIFT has come about because the Government and the garment industry realise that things do not have to be this way.

NIFT does not as yet have premises of its own, but most of the 6,000 members of the Apparel Export Promotion Council have already received an elegant brochure announcing the first four-month course for senior fashion design coordinators, starting January.

And the man overseeing every minute detail is Richard Streiter, dean of the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York, who will be in India for two years to set up NIFT. Streiter has great faith in India's ability to throw up "talent and artistic brilliance", but slightly less faith in its ability to insist only on the very highest quality, which is why he is involved in every last detail: "What I am going to try and create is an institute as good as FIT, of the very highest international standards." So when he and an FIT team selected only two instead of six Indian faculty members, it was because they felt that nobody else in the short-list of 41 was of top quality.

NIFT will begin by offering three basic courses. But Streiter hopes that it will eventually, like FIT, be able to offer courses in everything to do with fashion technology. Even in its initial stages it will have facilities that are now unavailable in India. There will be a fashion library, a western and Indian garment collection, and a record of every little detail connected with the apparel industry so that buyers and manufacturers know exactly where to find what they are looking for.

The initial investment in NIFT (Rs 9 crore in the seventh plan) has come from the Government, but the idea is to get industry involved. V.K. Agnihotri, development commissioner (handlooms), who is vice-chairman of the NIFT board, said that the Government had been thinking about creating such an institute since 1979. "We feel that the way to beat the quotas that western countries have imposed on our garment exports is to produce higher quality garments rather than quantity." According to him, the Government turned to FIT in New York for assistance mainly because it had set up similar institutes in Israel and Japan.



The National Institute of Fashion Technology, coming up under the guidance of Richard Streiter of New York, plans to provide facilities unavailable in India.

But exporters feel that although such an institute is needed, it should be run by industry rather than the Government. Said Deepak Seth of Pearl Agencies: "We have been asking for such an institute for years, but frankly I am worried about the fact that the Government seems to have taken it over. I don't feel that they can understand our needs or the conditions under which we work." Amit Judge of Januck, also said that NIFT needed to have courses even for those exporters who wanted to expand and develop their businesses but did not know how to.

Streiter is confident that the garment industry will be as involved in the running of NIFT as the Government. Says Streiter: "Without that it couldn't run. If the industry does not become involved my work here would be a waste."

—TAVLEEN SINGH

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THAPAR CASE

Saving Face

IN the end, it was nothing but a search for a face-saving formula. And a compromise was eventually reached. But perhaps both the concerned parties—the Finance Ministry and the man whom it had summarily jailed for violating foreign exchange regulations, industrialist Lalit Thapar—lost some face. Thapar had to apologise and plead guilty to charges that he had vigorously denied earlier; the Finance Ministry had little choice but to drop criminal proceedings in the aftermath of direct criticism from the prime minister, no less.

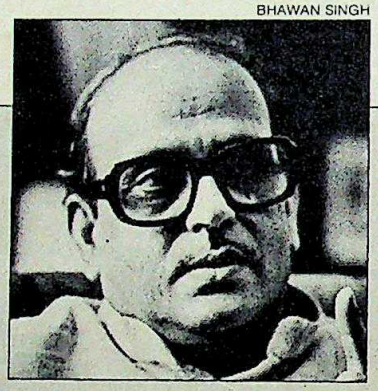
Nevertheless, Finance Minister V.P. Singh proved a point. Any doubts on this were quickly settled with the second apology in a week—this time from FICCI President R.P. Goenka, who hastily expressed his regret about having complained of a "raid raj". Most important, the finance minister stayed undisturbed in the Cabinet reshuffle.

But this was not achieved without virtually unprecedented back-room manoeuvring. The mandarins of the Prime Minister's Secretariat and the Finance Ministry struggled to work out a strategy that would make a compromise not look like a compromise. And after a series of closed-door confabulations between Revenue Department officials and Thapar's advocates, a compromise was worked out. Thapar, the dapper chairman of a Rs 600-crore industrial empire, sent a three-page letter to Bhure Lal, the now-dreaded head of the Enforcement Directorate, saying: "It is now realised that there has been a violation of the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act" and that "we hereby tender unconditional apology for the above violations of the FERA and assure you that this practice will not be repeated in future."

That apology was not wrung out of Thapar without some arm-twisting. Immediately after Thapar's sensational arrest in early September, the charged atmosphere had been filled with anti-Finance Ministry sentiment. However, Singh is nothing if not a fighter, and he ordered his officials to dig further. Initially, the enforcement officials had been following only cases relating to the non-remittance of foreign exchange from Seychelles and Indonesia. Now they spread their net to other countries and eventually confronted the group with a list of 18 charges. At the same time, Bhure Lal and his investigators (some of whom were annoyed by the pressure on them) subjected half a dozen senior Thapar executives to gruelling interrogation. Bhure Lal himself spent a few days in Bombay scrutinising RBI files on the Thapars' overseas dealings. He then sent a 20-page report to the finance minister, which was finally forwarded to the Prime Minister's Secretariat.

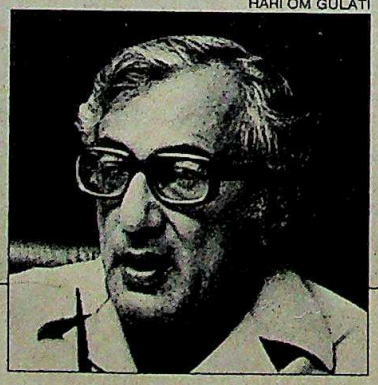
When the Thapars got wind of the scope of the prosecution case, they quickly changed strategy and sued for peace. The group not only offered to accept its guilt, it also mobilised leading industrialists close to the centres of power to intervene on its behalf. Once it was known that the company was willing to negotiate, Singh directed his officials to extract an unconditional apology. And it was left to Revenue Secretary Vinod Pandey and Bhure Lal to prepare a draft listing all the charges, and to recommend that the Government could decide against criminal proceedings if the Thapars agreed to adjudication of the cases by the directorate.

BHAWAN SINGH



Though V.P. Singh wrung an apology from the Thapars there was no doubt that L.M. Thapar had been let off lightly due to pressure from many quarters.

HARI OM GULATI



The Thapar group, after consulting its advocates, duly submitted a letter of apology to Bhure Lal. Singh now swung into action. As soon as the letter landed at his desk, his officials summoned a press conference where copies of the letter were handed out, while Bhure Lal sat in a corner twirling his moustache. Said a combative Singh: "This apology is evidence that the Government does its homework well before it strikes. All those who pooh-poohed the raids must be feeling ashamed of themselves for their irresponsible utterances against the Government." FICCI's Goenka came in for a special tongue-lashing, and details of his group's tax cases were disclosed to the assembled journalists. Goenka's apology quickly followed. Thapar was not available for comment.

Still, Singh was hard put to defend his decision to drop criminal proceedings despite having a cast-iron case. Over 500 FERA cases—many of them involving big business houses—are pending either in the courts or for adjudication. And though Singh asserted that all the foreign exchange that was due would have to be repatriated, and that the Thapars would have to pay up fines that would be imposed, his promise of an amnesty scheme for FERA violators had all the signs of a hastily-conceived offer designed to suit the circumstances.

The Thapar apology also made it clear that the group continued to contest three of the more important charges against it. The letter also said the violations were unintentional, and that there were "a number of mitigating circumstances...In most cases we had sent information to RBI or Ministry of Commerce."

Though Singh was putting up a good public performance, there was little doubt that Thapar had been let off lightly because of pressure from a variety of quarters. Said a Delhi-based industrialist: "All of us are crooks according to the finance minister; but why does he spare some and hang others? Obviously he yields to some kinds of pressures and tries to cover it up." Corporate circles also pointed out that the voluntary disclosure scheme for excise evaders was similarly drawn up after a raid on a Bombay-based refrigeration company led to a furore. So Singh may have got the upper hand in the Thapar skirmish, but he has not emerged unscathed.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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When the vase is Satsuma, the walls are Luxol Silk.

Luxol Silk. It is the only emulsion paint you can tell with your eyes closed. Just run your fingers over the silken, super-smooth finish.

Luxol Silk. Its perfect silk finish makes it so easy to wash, so easy to keep bright and clean looking for years and years.

Luxol Silk. Choose from over forty shades of silk. And from a whole new range of whites that whisper.

Drape your walls with Luxol Silk
— the richest emulsion in the world.

Luxol Silk

BERGER PAINTS

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...and Garden creates the new woman

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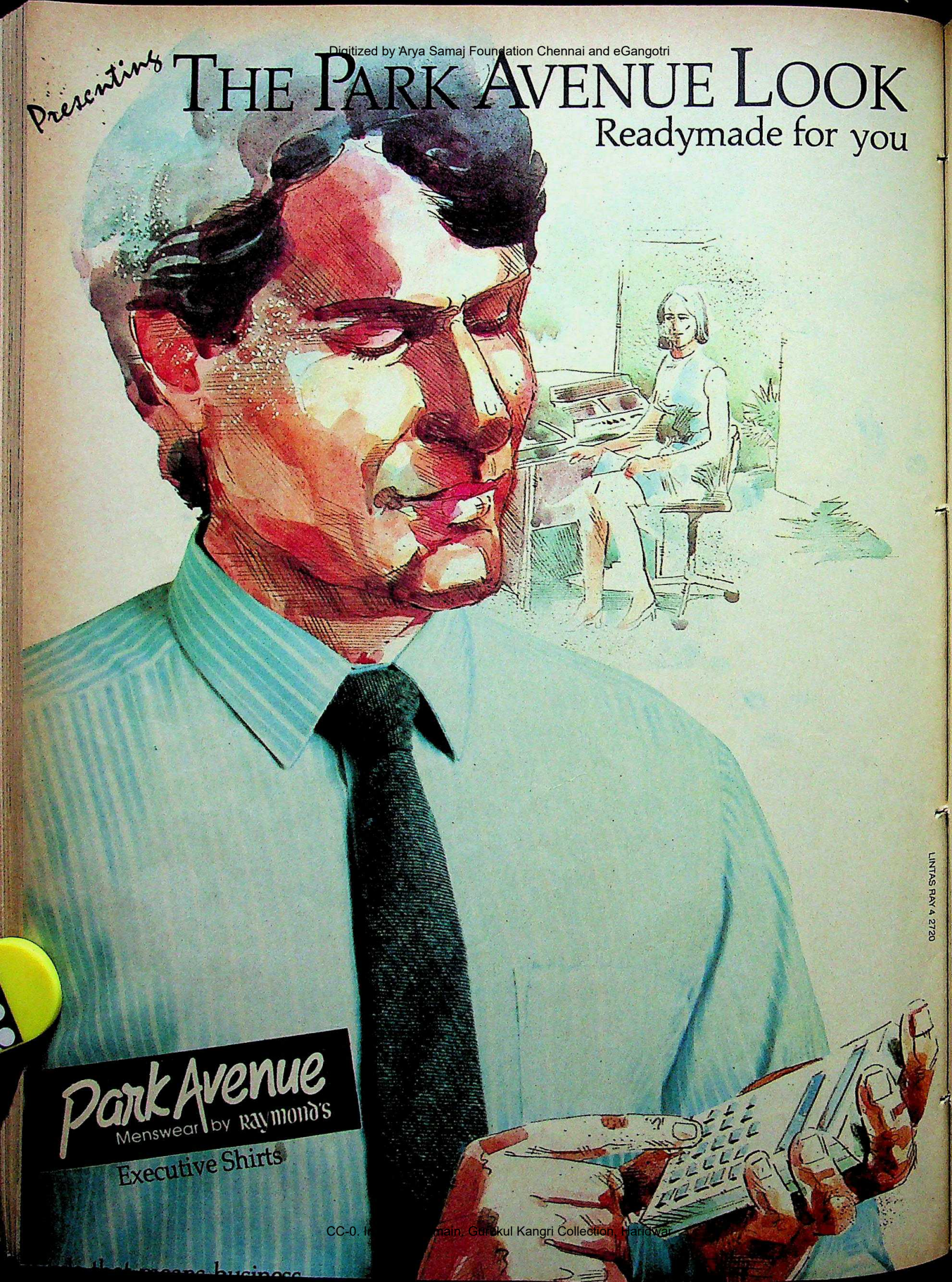

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LIGHT RAIL SYSTEM

Future Moves

DELHI'S broad boulevards are the envy of virtually every other city; but they are no longer a motorist's delight. The capital city already has a quarter of all the motor vehicles in the country's 11 largest cities, and the vehicle population is growing 10 times faster than the human population. The predictable result: bumper-to-bumper traffic snarls that clog the city's main arteries and make life increasingly difficult for its 2.5 million commuters.

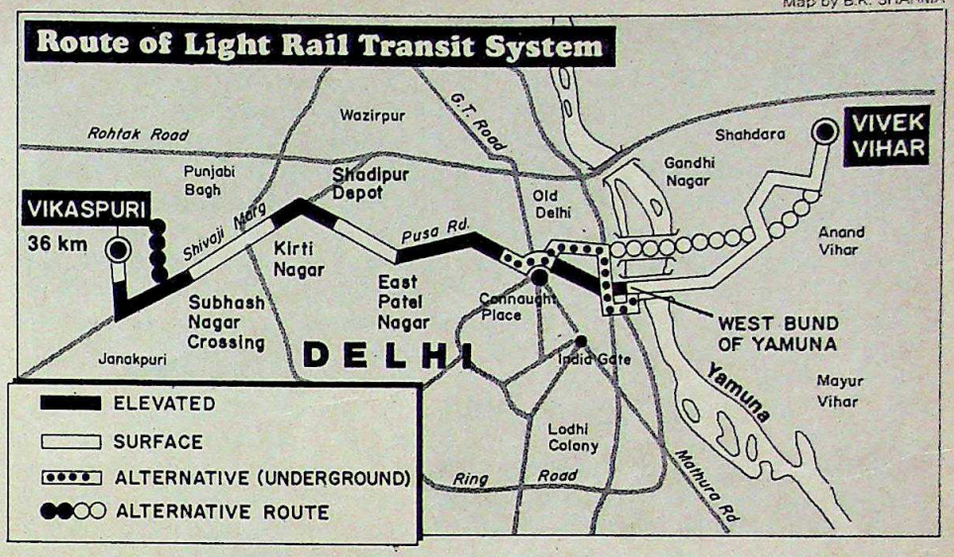
But there is hope round the corner. Last fortnight, the Government accepted an official report by a nine-member committee recommending for Delhi a light rail transit (LRT) system, a cross between an underground and the suburban systems found in Calcutta and Bombay. Work on the Rs 520-crore project could begin in a year's time, and be ready four years after that.

While the final verdict on the venture awaits a report by an inter-ministerial committee on metropolitan transport systems, the signals right now read go. Says Madhavrao Scindia, minister of state for railways: "The route has been accepted in principle. I'm very keen on the project." Adds Prakash Narain, chairman of the Railway Board: "The inter-ministerial committee has already said that the LRT is one of the options." Indeed, the Government appointed a task force last fortnight to examine the type of LRT system. One possibility: an M-Bahn, or a magnetic levitation-based system, that will float on an air cushion above the rails.

Clearly, the LRT decision marks a major milestone for the country's traffic-choked cities. As a Delhi Administration official puts it: "This is extremely important because a number of other cities will soon become metros with populations of one million or more. All of them will need transport systems with higher carrying capacities than buses."

In the capital, the LRT is to snake its way above the surface, on the surface and possibly even underground along a 36-km-long stretch from east Delhi across the Yamuna river to the western outskirts. It will converge with Delhi's existing circular rail system at four points and have 36 stations. Says the report: "Wherever the LRT is elevated, sleek and sensitive designs will have to be thought of and adopted."

Map by B.K. SHARMA



The Light Rail Transit System is to snake it's way above the surface, on the surface and possibly even underground along a 36-km-long stretch from east to west Delhi.

Scindia: go signals

The proposal is in fact part of a more ambitious 200-km-long network that the Delhi Administration had submitted to the Planning Commission a couple of years ago. The commission proved lukewarm because money was scarce, but the Government now seems determined to go ahead. "The east-west link is the first phase. Phase two will be a north-south link," says Scindia. "The east-west corridor has the maximum volume of passenger trips," explains a member of the railway board-appointed committee. "In 1981, the number of passengers moving through the corridor varied between 10,000 and 40,000 every hour. The figure must have gone up since then," he says. (Buses can carry at the most 8,000 passengers an hour.) The system can ferry 20,000 passengers hourly each way and will take a great deal of pressure off the roads.

But the bill could be a cool Rs 800 crore if the project has to go underground for 8 km, as some committee members had proposed. Even if just Rs 520 crore is required, where will the money come from? One suggestion doing the rounds is that the railways, the Urban Development Ministry and the Delhi Administration chip in 2 per cent of their annual or seventh plan budgets for city transport systems, each of the four metropolises getting its share of the kitty. But this may not be enough to fund a rail transit system. And Narain admitted that "plan funds cannot meet this requirement. We will have to look for unconventional sources of money". At least one of the options being considered is to rope in the private sector to contribute the equipment and run the LRT. Scindia says that the idea is "very, very nebulous at the moment". Adds Narain: "We can avoid a monopoly situation."

Another question is who will run the system? The railways may be reluctant because they already lose Rs 85 crore every year on running the country's existing suburban systems. Another option: metropolitan transport bodies for various cities. Yet another committee is now studying the various alternatives.

Then, the project's four-year deadline seems optimistic. A shortage of funds and land acquisition problems have delayed Calcutta's metro for years, and delays can exact their own toll in the form of cost and passenger traffic estimates going awry. But the alternative is utter chaos on the roads. As the Delhi Administration official said last fortnight: "If the transport system doesn't work, it can paralyse a city. We have to do something before it is too late."

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI

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RELIANCE INDUSTRIES

Badly Bruised

THE Bombay stock exchange (BSE) buzzed with the rumour that Reliance had been raided, and the company's share price dropped. Eventually it was the exchange which was raided, but Reliance dropped further. For a scrip which was tipped to touch Rs 500 this Diwali, the Rs 218 it is being quoted at is very evidently a sign of hard times.

"Investors have lost confidence. Many of them are getting out," says BSE President R.L. Dalal. That is a plausible enough explanation for the dramatic drop in the price of a high-flying scrip which, at one stage, gave the impression that it could defy the law of gravity. And behind the lay shareholders' new perception of a flamboyant company is a host of factors, not the least of which is the fact that the company has apparently lost its clout with the Government. Several people in government who are supposed to be friends of Reliance have moved out, or been shifted to places from where they can be of little help.

But the place where it really counts is the bottom line. Reliance turned in handsome profits of Rs 71 crore last year, and the lion's share of this was from its polyester yarn operations. But yarn prices have since slumped, from a high of Rs 182 in March last year to a mere Rs 158.50 today. So Reliance's pickings will be substantially less than last year. Says the former president of the All India Crimper's Association, Jamnadas Moorjani: "The company will have virtually no profit." Moorjani is almost certainly over-stating the problem. But there is little doubt that Reliance's profits could be affected in the same manner that the rival Orkay's have been. "Orkay's latest results were a big disappointment," says Dalal candidly. "Reliance's fate may be similar."

Adding to the company's woes is the fact that the product from its new polyester staple fibre (PSF) plant at Patalganga ran into initial quality problems. For a stock-market that is already on tenterhooks because of the recent Rs 1 crore payment crisis and the raids, the spread of such information may well be reason enough to push the share down further.

Reliance itself is unfazed. "These are the teething troubles you face with a new plant," says Executive Director Anil Ambani. "We can't just throw away our initial production: things will improve very soon."

But things, ever since the *Indian Express* campaign against the company started early this year, have not been improving. Reliance had sought an issue of convertible debentures at a premium of Rs 190. But bear battering forced it to bring down this premium to Rs 115. The Government is yet to give the go-ahead even at this reduced level. Any further fall in the share price means that it will have to settle for a still lower figure. And the company is yet to hear from the Centre on its long-pending application for the share issue of its leasing venture.

To top it all, the Reliance plant for making purified terephthalic acid (PTA), expected to come on stream later this year, suffers from an excise disadvantage—despite intense lobbying by Reliance. Thus, while the alternative raw material for polyester production, di-methyl terephthalate (DMT), has no excise burden, PTA has been saddled with a 15 per cent impost. The Government is in the process of reviewing the matter, but the skeptics already feel that Murphy's Law has overtaken the company—anything that can go wrong will.

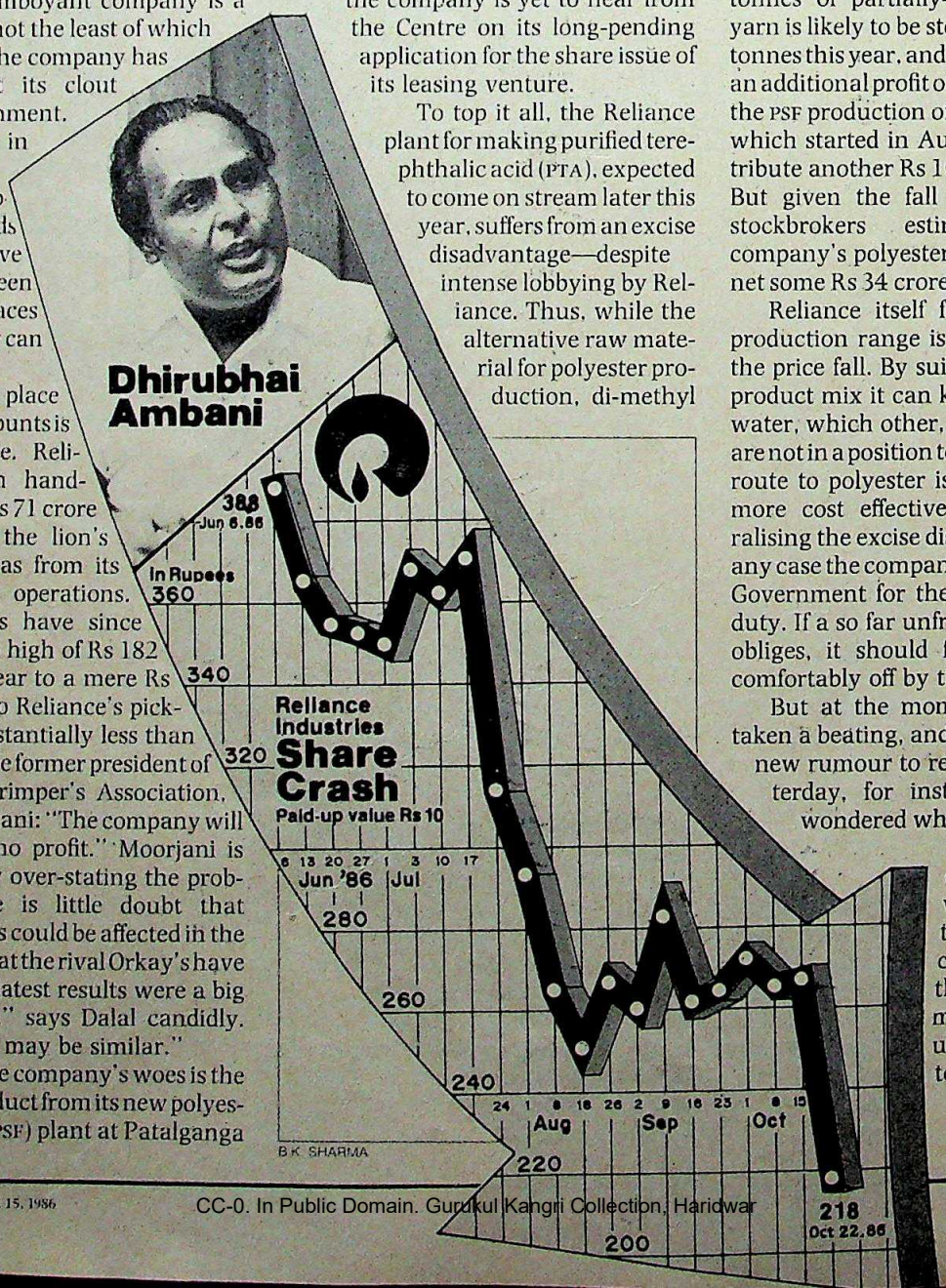
The stock-market is now rife with reports of internecine quarrels, and of a fight for control—since Chairman Dhirubhai Ambani has taken a back seat for health reasons. As a leading sharebroker says: "The market operates on rumours, and the rumours aren't good."

But rumours apart, it is the polyester price which is really going to make the difference. Reliance is the single biggest producer of polyester yarn. In July, for instance, of the total production of 7,440 tonnes, the Reliance contribution was 3,241 tonnes. The next on the list was Orkay with only 802 tonnes. The total 1985 Reliance production of 24,764 tonnes of partially-oriented polyester yarn is likely to be stepped up to 30,000 tonnes this year, and this should bring in an additional profit of Rs 6 crore. Besides, the PSF production of 80 tonnes a day—which started in August—should contribute another Rs 10 crore to the kitty. But given the fall in prices, leading stockbrokers estimate that the company's polyester operations should net some Rs 34 crore less than last year.

Reliance itself feels that its large production range is a cushion against the price fall. By suitably adjusting the product mix it can keep its head above water, which other, smaller companies are not in a position to do. Besides the PTA route to polyester is some 17 per cent more cost effective than DMT, neutralising the excise disadvantage. And in any case the company has written to the Government for the removal of excise duty. If a so far unfriendly government obliges, it should find Reliance very comfortably off by the year-end.

But at the moment, Reliance has taken a beating, and every day brings a new rumour to replace the last. Yesterday, for instance, the market wondered when the share would reach Rs 500. Today it ponders on whether it will drop to Rs 150. The crucial question is whether today's pessimism will prove as unfounded as yesterday's optimism.

—PARTHASARATHI SWAMI



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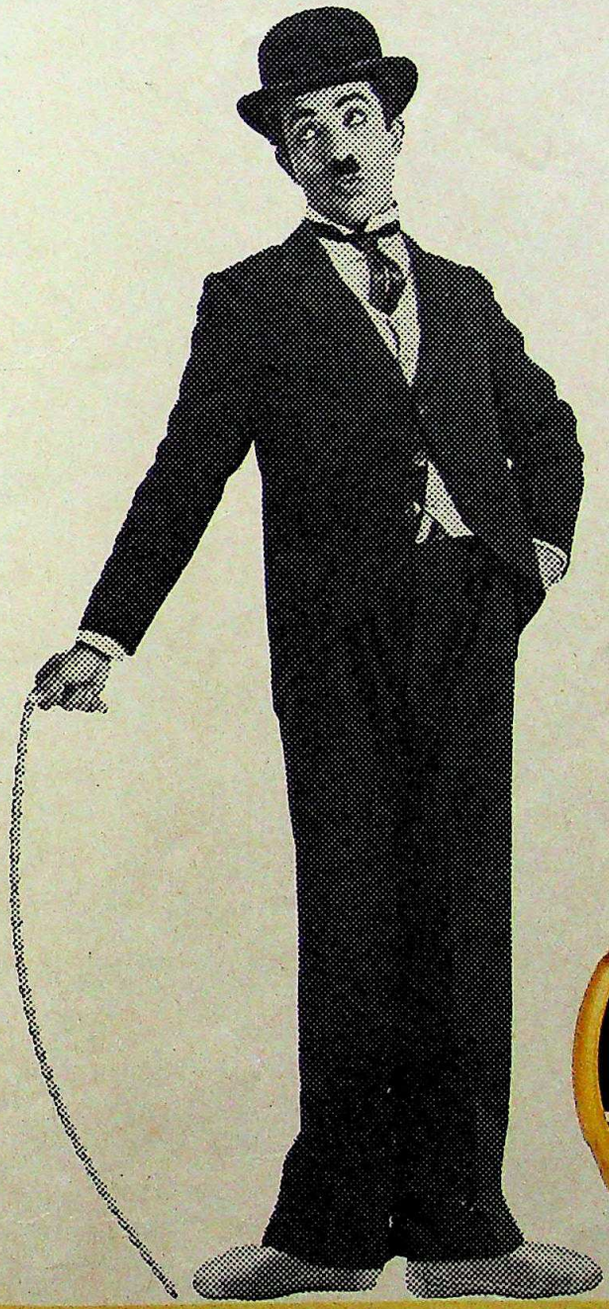

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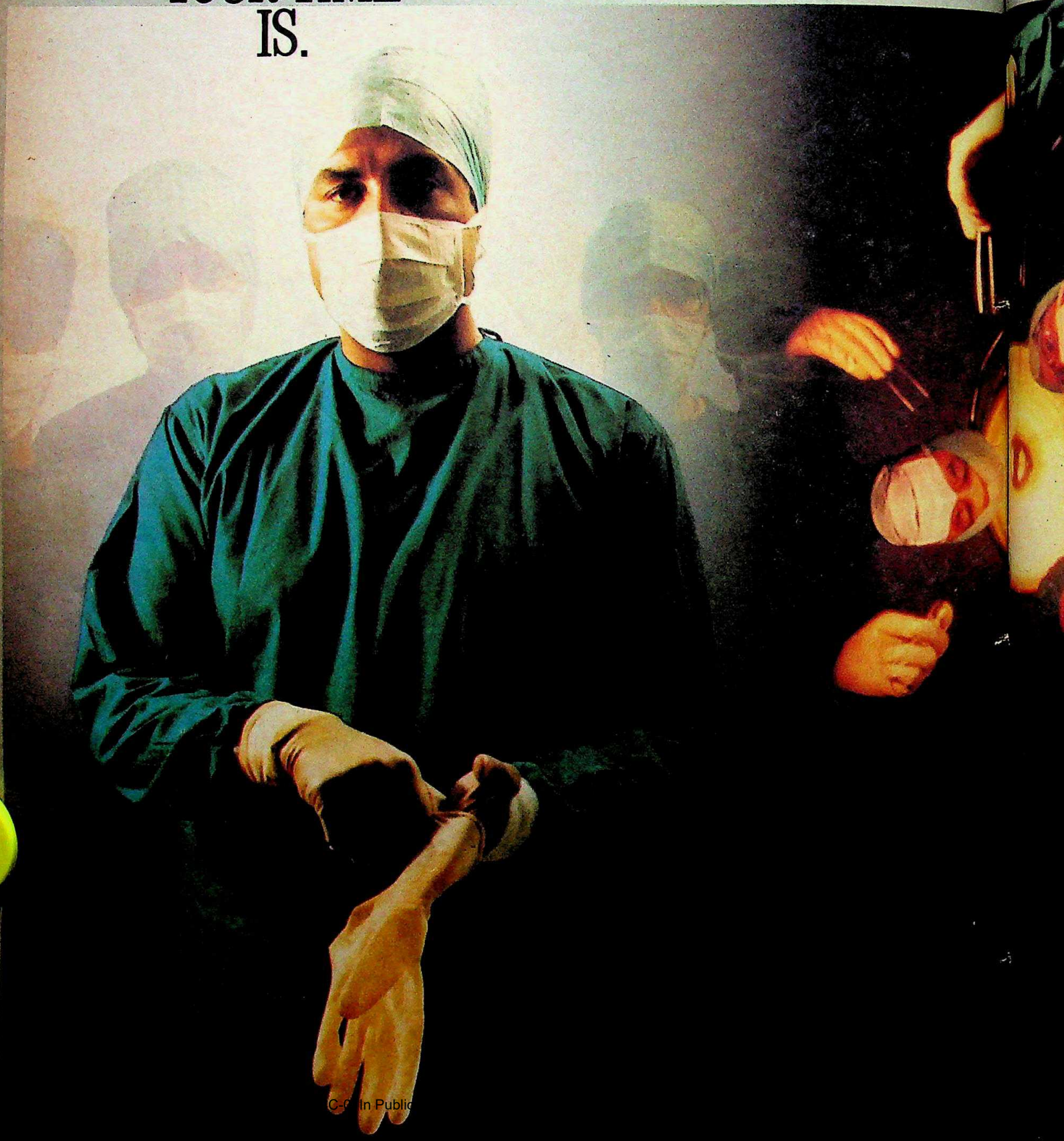

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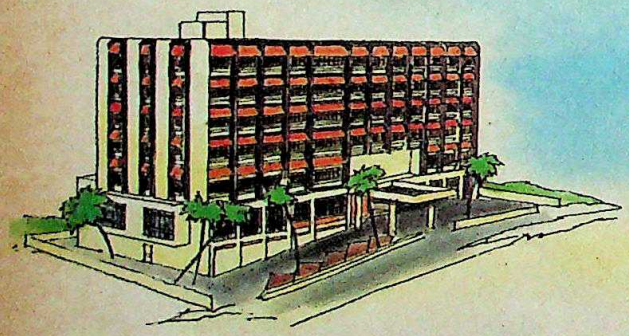

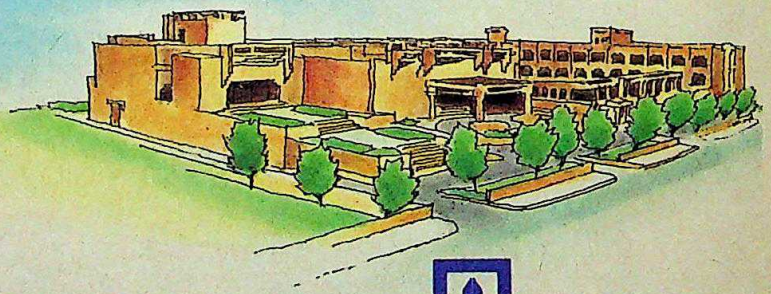

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Aurangabad	Rama International	Gwalior	Usha Kiran Palace	Mangalore	Manjarun
Baroda	Vadodara	Jaipur	Mansingh	New Delhi	Maurya Sheraton
Bangalore	Windsor Manor	Jodhpur	Umaid Bhawan Palace	Patna	Maurya-Patna
Bhavnagar	Nilambag Palace	Kargil	Highlands	Srinagar	Gurkha Houseboats

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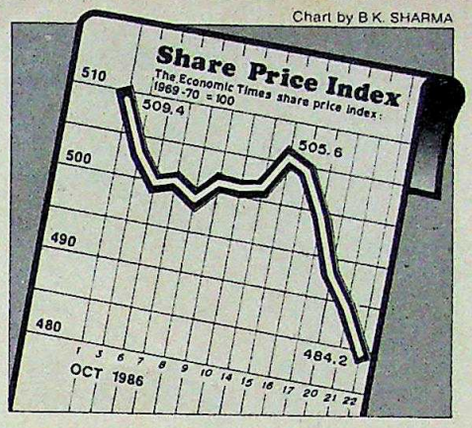
THE MARKETS

Bear Hug

IT has been a cheerless Diwali for the stock-markets, with the fireworks being provided by tax raiders and brokers who have not been able to pay up when asked to. The Cabinet reshuffle didn't help matters: V.P. Singh remains where he was, in a position to bear down on the business and trading community, and the bulls don't like it a whit.

Reliance, whose fortunes have taken a bit of a beating, somewhat predictably led the retreat, losing Rs 50 in the space of just a week. By the end of the fortnight, the high-flying company's share price, at Rs 220, was barely 55 per cent of the year's peak of Rs 391. Smaller fortunes were lost on other counters too: Lakme, Larsen and Toubro, Ponds, Atlas Copco and others lost more than 10 per cent of their market value in just seven days of bear hammering. Even such favourites as Premier Automobiles and Kinetic Engineering lost heavily, as did J.K. Synthetics. And TISCO dropped below Rs 1,200 for the first time in several months. Inevitably, *The Economic Times* share price index plunged from 509.4 in early October to 484.2 three weeks later, most of the fall coming in the last week.

Chart by B K. SHARMA



With memories of payments problems to be erased, the after-tremors of the tax raids likely to last for some time, and the market already lacking in optimism without these unexpected setbacks, it will take a brave man to forecast another upturn for some time.

Meanwhile, questions were inevitably asked about the seeming lack of control over trading in the ring. The default by a broker who had accumulated over a million shares of Modi Rubber seemed to have caught the market authorities unawares, and their failure to declare him a defaulter and their decision to effect a compromise whereby he paid up less than his full dues did little credit to the market. Similarly, there was excessive speculation in Orkay and Premier Automobiles, with charges of insider trading surfacing yet again. Premier, in fact, crashed from Rs 990 to Rs 775 in just a few days, following leaked reports that the company faced a problem in selling its vehicles. With shenanigans such as this going on, it was small surprise that the taxmen decided to strike for the second time this year.

There might be a partial recovery in the immediate future as a natural adjustment process following the bear hammering of the last fortnight, but the outlook beyond that is none too good. The industrial growth rate has been dropping, the foreign exchange crunch gets increasingly obvious, and the next harvest will be poor because of the disappointing monsoons. The corporate sector can hardly remain unaffected by these macro-developments, and at some stage company results will begin to reflect the broader economic realities.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1986 HIGH	1986 LOW	CLOSE 22.10.86	Change in Fortnight
Ashok Leyland	45.00	23.00	35.50	9.50 +
Associated Cement	389.00	186.00	205.50	10.50 –
Atlas Copco	138.00	64.00	115.00	12.00 +
Asian Paints	280.00	130.00	226.25	6.25 +
Avery India	149.00	100.00	143.00	6.75 –
Bajaj Auto	4525.00	1950.00	4225.00	100.00 +
Baroda Rayon	490.00	210.00	215.00	17.50 –
Bata India	121.50	54.00	117.00	3.00 +
Bayer	680.00	445.00	610.00	15.00 +
Bharat Forge	86.00	48.00	63.00	2.00 –
Britania Ind.	178.50	85.00	174.00	10.00 +
Blue Star	120.50	75.00	97.50	13.75 +
Bombay Dyeing	123.00	77.00	88.00	5.50 –
Brooke Bond	96.75	56.00	80.00	0.50 –
Ceat Tyres	560.00	240.00	490.00*	70.00 –
Century Spinning	1690.00	710.00	770.00	42.50 –
Chloride India	132.00	86.00	124.00	nil
Colgate	357.50	200.00	338.00	15.50 +
DCM	58.50	26.25	38.87	4.87 +
Dunlop	74.50	49.75	70.00	5.50 +
Elecon	127.00	80.00	102.50	nil
Escorts	117.00	69.00	91.00	1.00 +
Finolex Cables	125.00	36.00	112.00	13.50 +
Food Specialities	375.00	164.00	192.00	3.00 –
Garware Nylon	61.50	29.00	30.50	3.50 –
G.E. Shipping	36.00	13.00	19.00	0.25 –
Gujarat St. Fertilisers	182.00	92.50	154.00	7.00 –
Grasim India	99.00	59.00	93.50	3.50 +
Hind. Cocoa	232.50	97.50	225.00	25.00 +
Hindustan Lever	192.00	124.00	181.00	3.00 +
Hindustan Motors	128.50	37.75	47.30	0.70 +
Hind. Dorr	660.00	290.00	300.00	10.00 –
IEL	84.50	61.50	61.50	4.40 –
Indian Hotels	157.00	87.50	92.50	2.50 –
Indian Organic	97.00	63.00	76.00	3.00 –
Indian Rayon	151.00	100.00	127.00	2.50 –
Indrol	485.00	200.00	442.50	42.50 +
Ingersoll-Rand	505.00	250.00	280.00	7.50 –
ITC	78.00	53.00	76.50	2.50 +
J.K. Synthetics	132.00	90.00	93.50	12.50 –
Kinetic Engineering	385.00	220.00	325.00	25.00 –
KSB Pumps	495.00	205.00	240.00	5.00 +
Lakme	195.00	115.00	120.00	17.50 –
Larson & Toubro	204.00	102.00	103.00	11.00 –
Lipton	69.00	46.50	63.50	2.50 –
Lohia Machines	70.00	21.00	30.50	6.50 +
Madura Coats	92.00	51.00	67.00	5.00 +
Mahindra & Mahindra	86.00	41.00	42.00	6.00 –
Motor Industries	1000.00	430.00	440.00	40.00 –
National Organic	840.00	512.50	550.00	35.00 –
Nirlon	77.00	29.00	29.50	2.00 –
Orkay Silk Mills	192.00	111.00	148.00	4.00 –
Otis Elevator	182.50	88.00	182.50	25.00 +
Peico Electronics	104.50	48.00	65.00	3.00 –
Ponds	390.00	200.00	330.00	20.00 –
Premier Auto	990.00	555.00	742.50	235.00 –
Ranbaxy	160.00	105.00	135.00	9.00 +
Raymond	97.00	67.00	68.50	6.50 –
Reckitt & Colman	159.50	81.25	156.00	6.00 +
Reliance Industries	392.00	212.00	218.00	50.00 –
Shriram Fibres	88.00	35.00	36.50	nil
Sandoz	135.00	62.00	122.50	10.50 +
SPIC	184.00	46.75	46.75	8.75 –
Tata Steel	1610.00	1090.00	1192.50	52.50 +
Telco	910.00	575.00	595.00	45.00 –
Vulcan Laval	162.50	45.00	53.75	1.25 +

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	8.2598	8.1813
Austria	Schilling	100	92.7315	91.5669
Bahrain	Dinar	1	34.1560	34.0758
Bangladesh	Taka	100	43.2990	43.2207
Canada	Dollar	1	9.3113	9.2366
Denmark	Kroner	1	1.7323	1.7184
Egypt	Pound	1	18.2998	18.2080
France	Franc	1	1.9880	1.9723
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	1.6572	1.6448
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.7980	0.7838
Iran	Rial	100	16.9530	16.8030
Italy	Lira	100	0.9339	0.9000
Japan	Yen	100	8.3000	8.2000
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.8028	0.7990
Kuwait	Dinar	1	43.9660	43.8998
Malaysia	Dollar	1	4.9218	4.8814
Mauritius	Rupee	1	0.9860	0.9774
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6110	0.6010
Netherlands	Guilder	1	5.7672	5.7218
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7559	0.7436
Singapore	Dollar	1	5.9439	5.8932
Spain	Peseta	1	0.0970	0.0900
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4499	0.4330
Sweden	Kroner	1	1.8923	1.8773
Switzerland	Franc	1	7.9359	7.8732
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.2870	0.2800
Thailand	Baht	100	50.0000	49.0000
UK	Pound	1	18.5185	18.3958
USA	Dollar	1	12.9375	12.8450
UAE	Dirham	1	3.4960	3.4880
USSR	Rouble	1	14.3880	14.3790
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	6.5500	6.4500

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 23.10.86.

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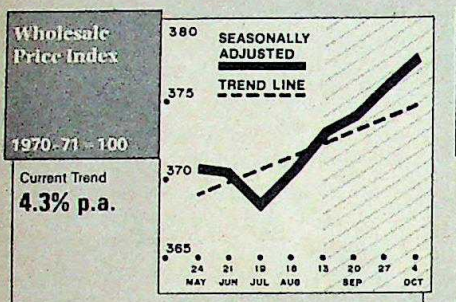
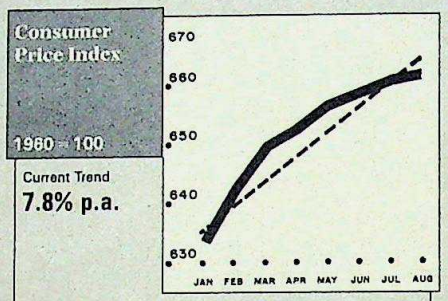
Conservative monetary and credit policy, a steady rate of inflation, a somewhat mild recovery in the price of gold and a relatively worsening balance of trade seem to be the highlights of the current economic situation, as seen from the events of the last fortnight .

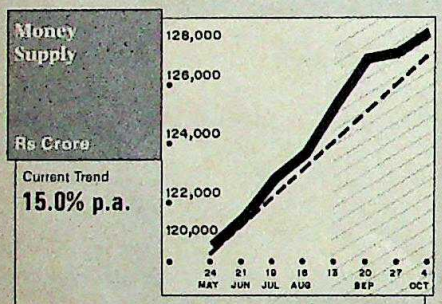
All data are seasonally adjusted. The current trends are computed on the basis of six-months (weekly data) or two-years (monthly data) figures. Quarters in text refer to the calendar year quarters.



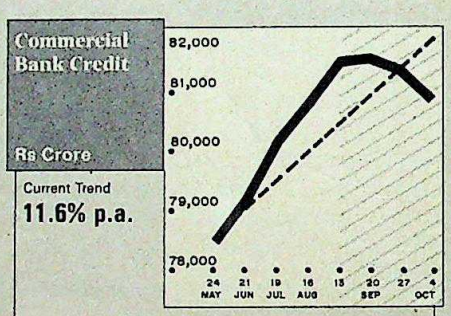
Stability in wholesale prices, customary in the last two years, continues. The inflation rate in 1986 will be just above 4 per cent.



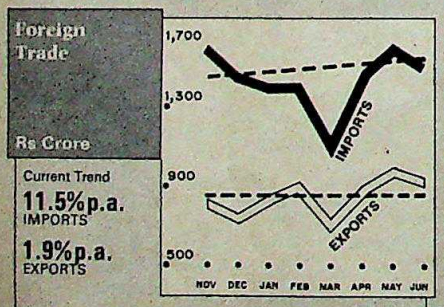
Consumer prices were steady. The second quarter of 1986 showed a much smaller increase of 1.2%, compared to 3% in the first quarter.



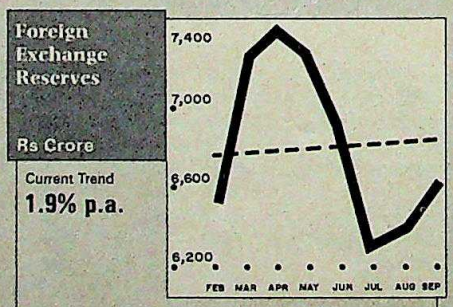
Monetary policy reamins conservative. The RBI should take a more expansionary stance, given the remarkable stability in prices.



With commercial bank credit growing only at 11.6% p.a., the genuine needs of industry and trade may not be fully met.



With imports growing at 11.5 per cent p.a. and exports at 1.9 per cent, the balance of trade is affecting an otherwise healthy economy.



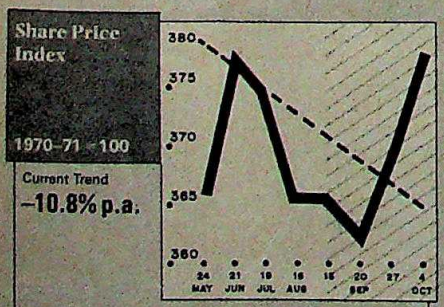
The decline in foreign exchange reserves was reversed in August and September, with an increase of 1.1 and 3.4 per cent respectively.

WHOLESALE PRICES

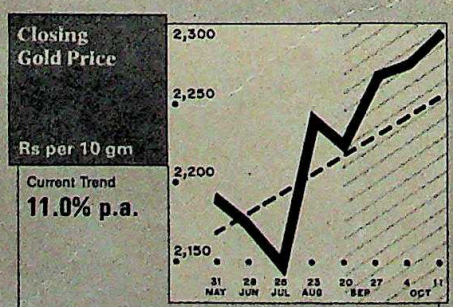
Growth of Items in September, 1986

	% Growth
Copra	22.75
Solvent Extracted Oil	12.66
Coconut Oil	12.28
Oranges	12.14
Gingelly Oil	9.61
Mustard Oilcake	9.43
Onions	7.59
Turmeric	6.73
Zinc	6.11
Coffee	5.34
Rape and Mustard Seed	5.11
Gingelly Seed	4.58
Tea	3.83
Milk	3.72
Arhar	3.66
Cashew-Nuts	3.28
Barley	3.23
Groundnut Oil	3.16
Ghee	3.14
Atta	2.51
Groundnut Seeds	2.5
Mustard Oil	2.45
Caustic Soda	2.19
Ragi	2.19
Urad	2.13
Silk Raw	2.04
Coir Fibre	2.03
Betel-Nuts	1.82
Meat	1.66
Biscuits	1.61
Logs Timber Bamboo	1.55
Taploca	1.53
Moong	1.46
Gur	1.38
Machine Tools	1.31
Copper and Alloys	1.27
Coal	1.24
Mining Machinery	1.17
Groundnut Oilcake	1.13
Formulations	1.09
Bolts and Nuts	.98
Pet Crude and Natural Gas	.98
Pig Iron	.95
Handloom & Powerloom Products	.89
Aluminium	.88
Wheat	.86
Rails	.84

Of the 139 series considered, 102 of them with a total weight of 65.65 had a positive growth and 37 of them with a total weight of 20.976 had a negative growth.



The large drop in share prices between April and May has been arrested, but the future seems uncertain, especially due to the tax raids.



The fall in gold prices in September was shortlived. The yellow metal is back in business, with the festival season round the corner.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1986	1985
Coal Thousand Tonnes, September	11940	10804
Saleable Steel Thousand Tonnes, September	706.8	629.4
Cement Thousand Tonnes, September	2760	2660
Fertiliser Thousand Tonnes, September	599.8	487.3
Revenue Earning Traffic Million Tonnes, September	21.51	20.51

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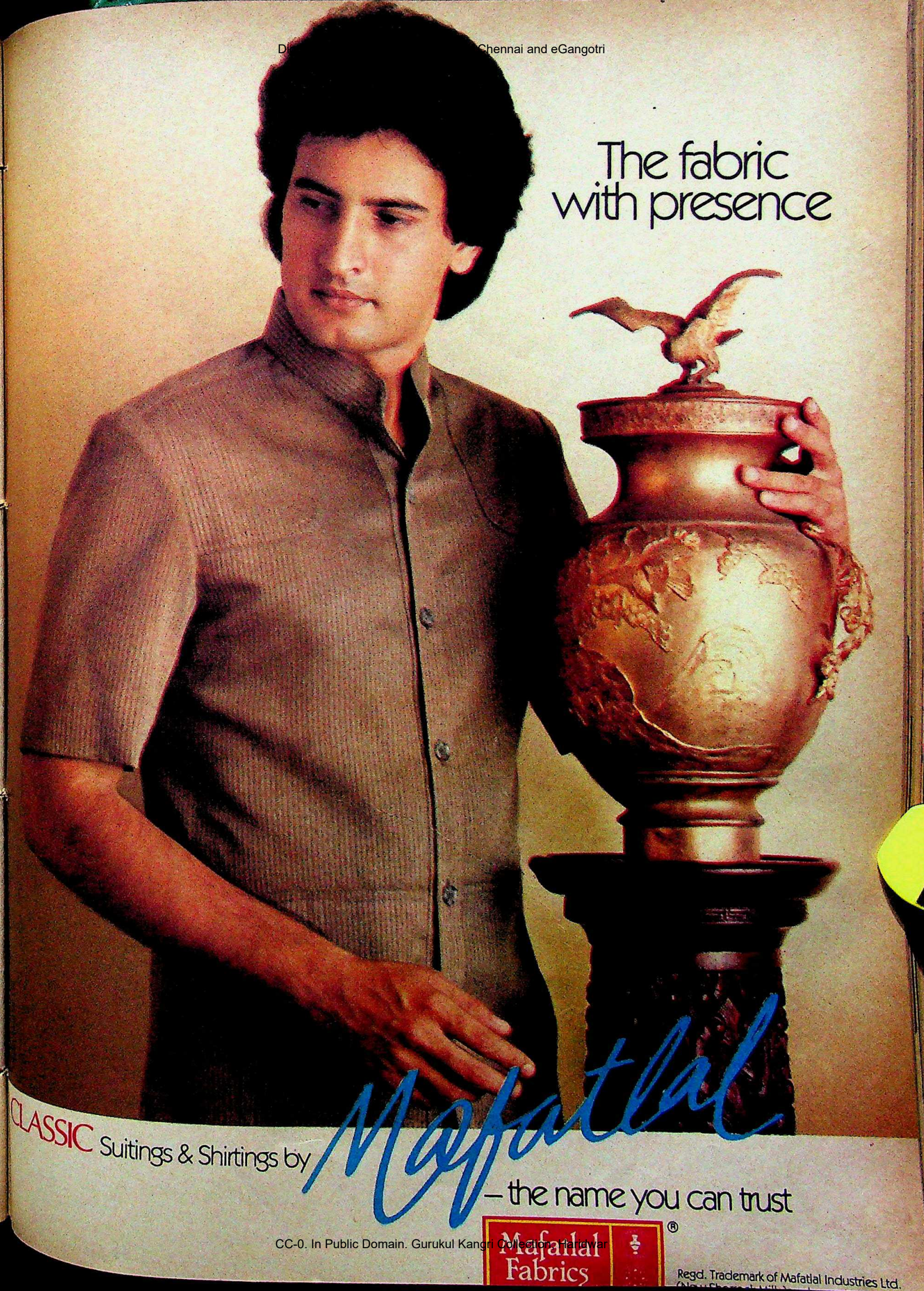

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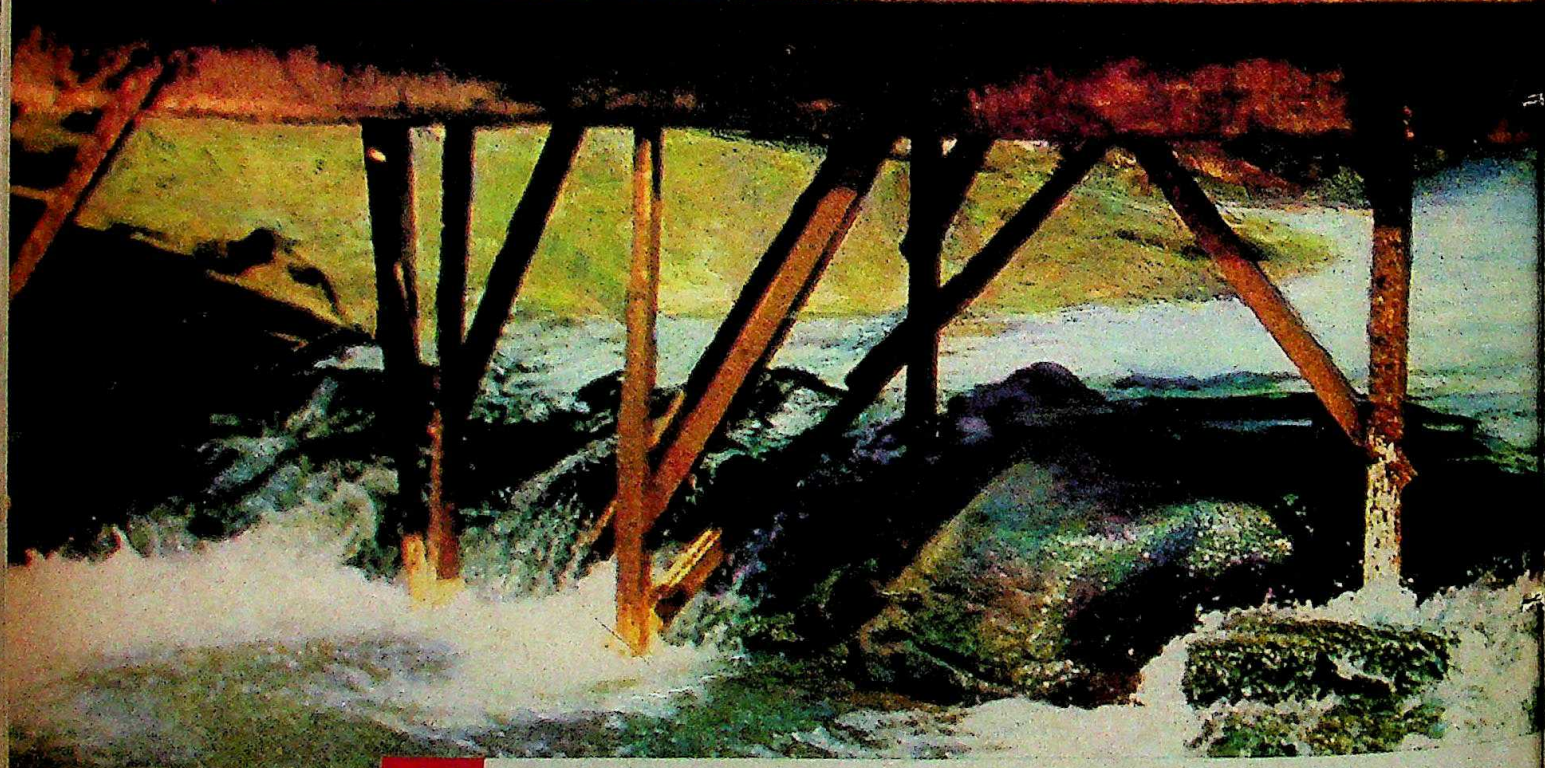

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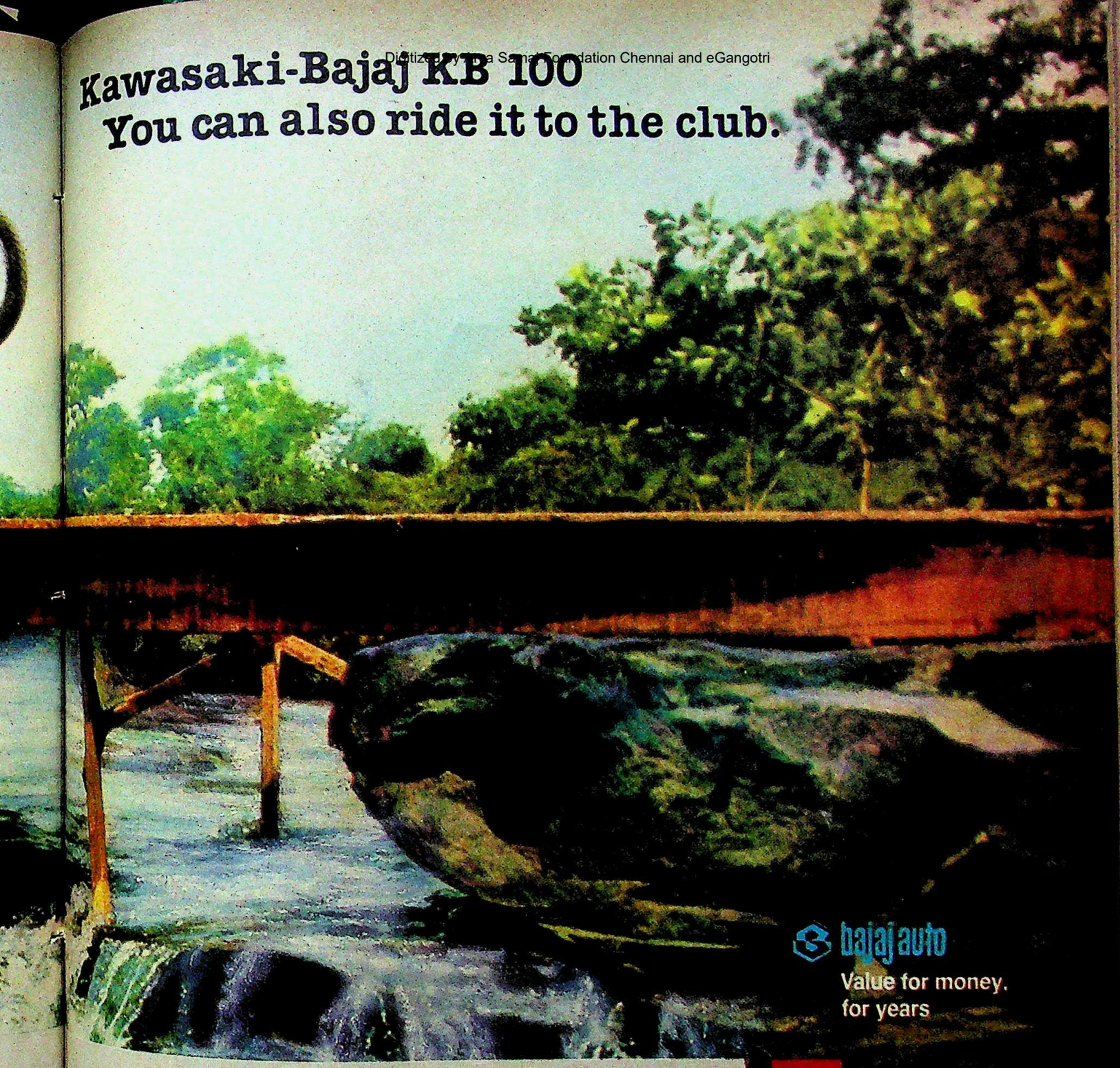

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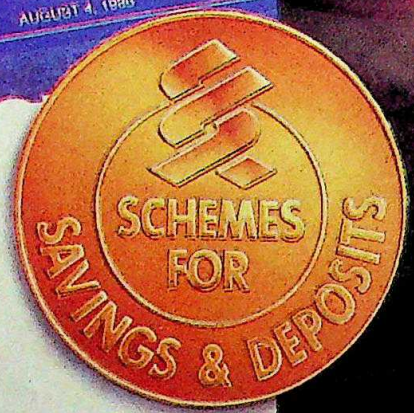

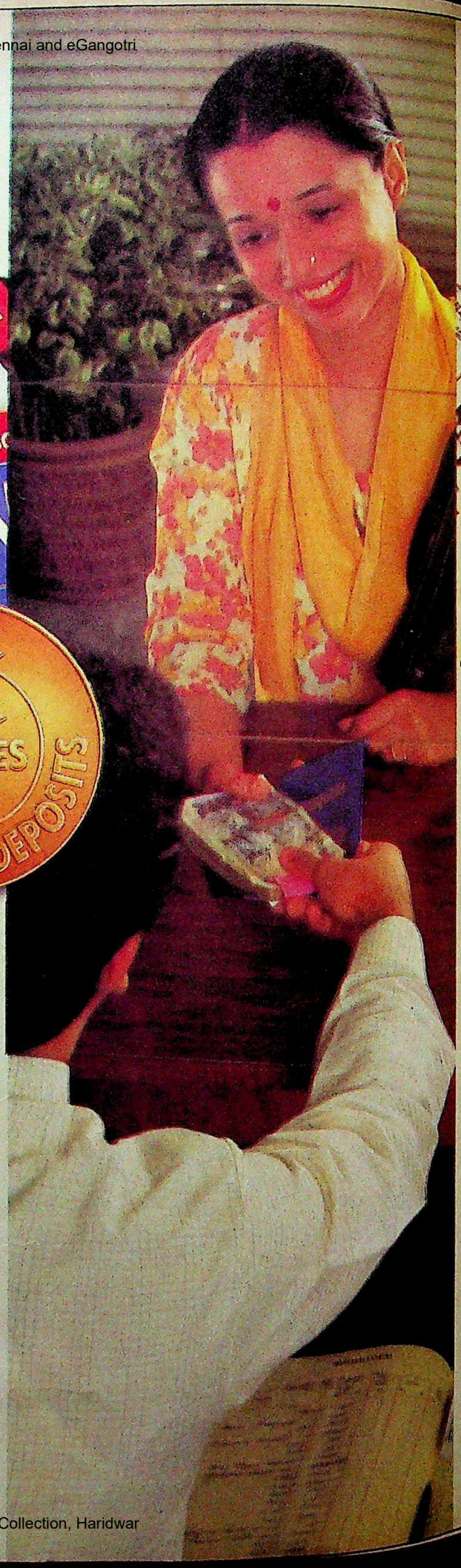

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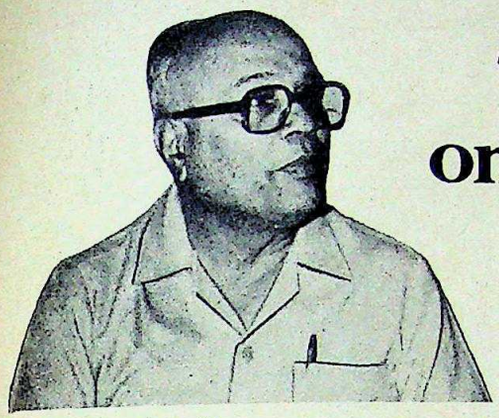

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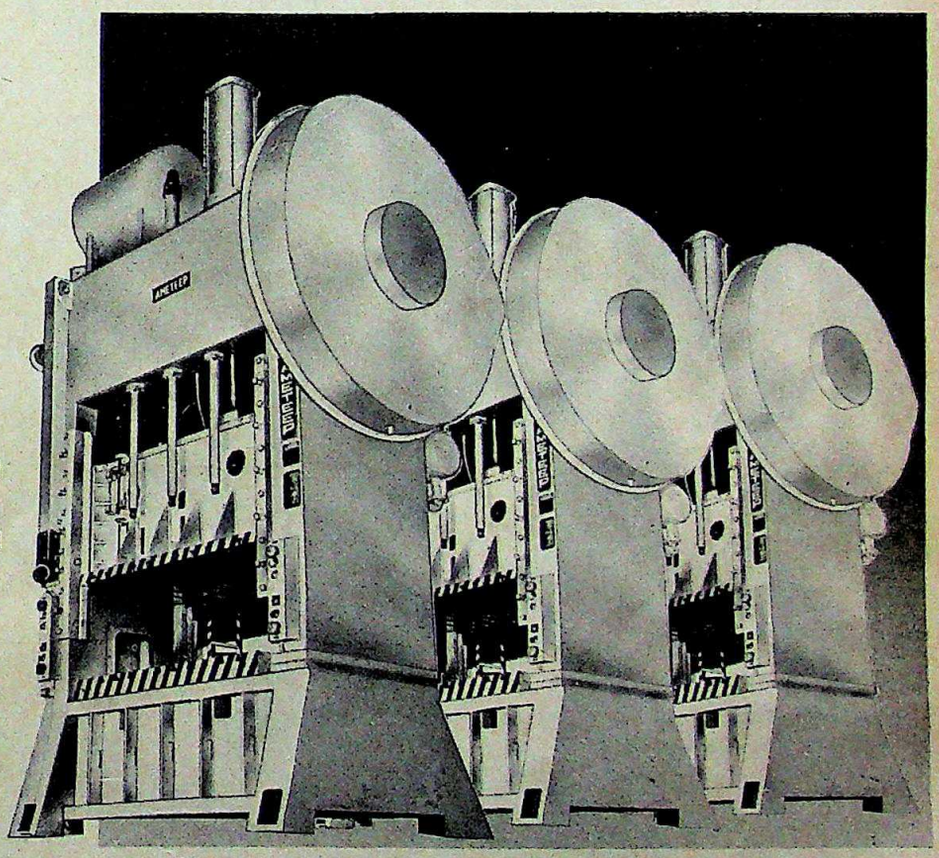

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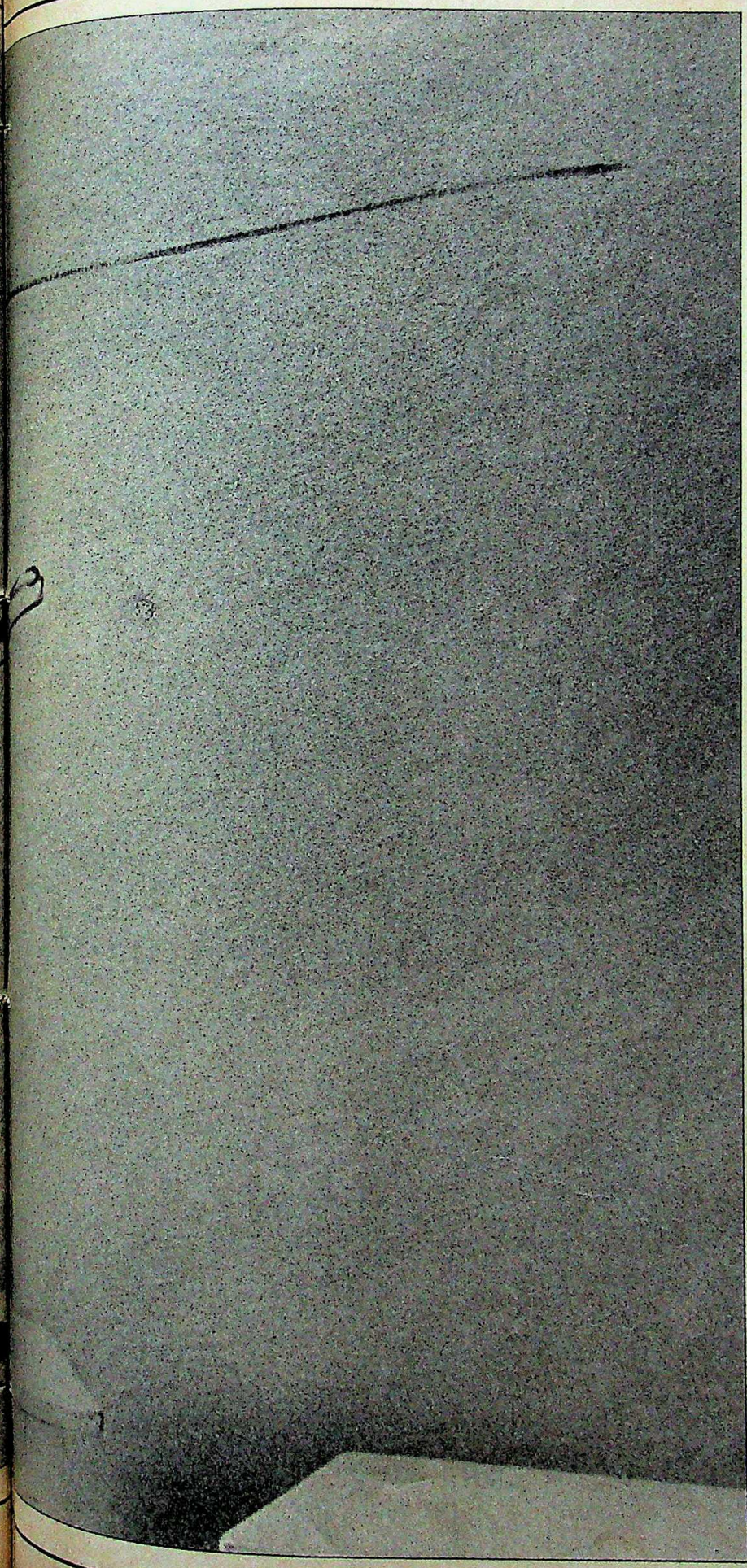

Unwed Mothers

IT is a theme as ancient as time itself: the chain of sexual misadventure, betrayal and denied motherhood. The tragedy of unwed motherhood in India harks back to Hindu mythology with the legend of Kunti who, made pregnant by the Sun God, ultimately had to abandon her first-born, Karna. For modern-day Kuntis, fate is no different—if anything, it is even more cruel. In the legend, Kunti goes on to marry and becomes a queen. But for the overwhelming majority of contemporary Indian women, unwed motherhood signals a catastrophic severance from traditional society and normal filial aspirations. Such women are too traumatised to want to be women again. Even worse is the fate of the children: unwanted, abandoned and more often than not, consigned to the garbage heaps of society. In short, nobody's babies.

But there is a flicker of hope in this scenario of despair. Social service organisations, like the Calcutta-based International Mission of Hope (IMH), are for the first time beginning to tackle the trauma of unwed mothers. The IMH has opened two centres—in Calcutta and Madras—to shelter unwed mothers and arrange for their children's future. The aim, as IMH founder Cherie Clark Prakash says, "is to restore the self-respect of these women and make them realise that they remain human beings capable of living life as any other woman."

That is no easy task. Progress is slow, and the results are often uncertain. But at least a beginning has been made in IMH's Calcutta home—Asha Kendra: each woman housed in this nondescript three-storeyed building tucked into a bylane in the city's Lake Gardens area is a testimony to the process.

Saba, 30, was taken in with the first batch of unwed mothers for the IMH programme launched this year. Abandoned by her sisters in an ashram in the suburbs of Calcutta where she was seduced by a local watchman, Saba found her way to Asha Kendra in May, when she was several months pregnant. Saba existed in a fantasy world where she was a

Mona (left) and Anwara: unwanted burden

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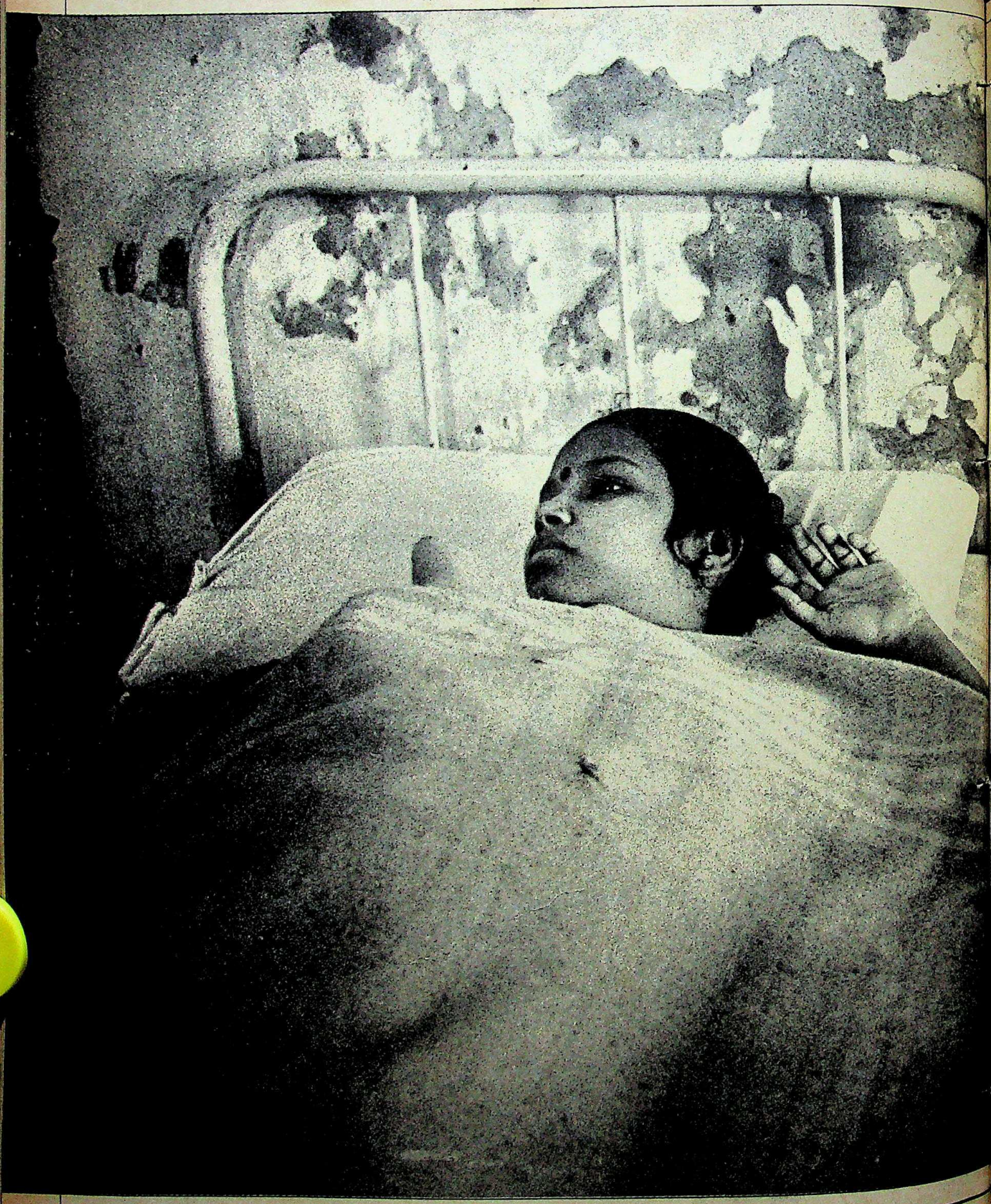

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ravishing beauty whom men found irresistible. In truth, she was a deformed hunchback, her half-crazed eyes more frightening than alluring. Recalls the head of Asha Kendra, Mamata Gupta: "Every time the baby moved inside her, she would whimper in terror and retreat into her fantasies." Today, after having finally delivered herself of her terrible burden last month, Saba is gradually gathering herself together, trying to return to normalcy. "I will earn my own living," she declares with striking determination. "And any man who tries to get funny will get a slap."

THE dominant emotion in all the mothers at Asha Kendra is fear and loathing at the experience that led them here. "The girls never talk about their experience directly," says Gupta. "Most of them concoct the most incredible stories to explain their pregnancy—one girl even claimed she became pregnant after swallowing medicine." At the root of this fiction is self-revulsion and a desire to erase memories, obvious from Saba's remark: "I don't know how this happened but I have learnt my lesson and it will never happen again."

Sometimes, the unmarried mothers at the Kendra are not women at all. Four of the girls at the Kendra were 15 years old or less, oblivious of the implications of motherhood but only too aware of being in some terrible trouble. "All four of these girls worked as maid servants and, although they will not talk about it, it is certain that they were sexually exploited by the males in the households where they worked," says Gupta. One of the girls, 15-year-old Basanti Mondal, claimed she had been raped but Gupta found it was the man of the house where she had worked who was responsible. Even after the pregnancy, he wanted Basanti back, but Gupta whisked the girl back to her village.

Debjani, another 15-year-old at the Kendra, senses she has been abused and misused: "I came to Calcutta on my own because I wanted to work instead of studying," she explains in her touching, almost childlike lisp. "Now I will return to my village in Diamond Harbour, I will never work again and only study." Debjani does not even think about the baby growing inside her, and her sole desire right now is to get rid of the unwelcome swelling in her belly as fast as possible and return to the security of her home in the village where, incidentally, her

Anwara averts her face from her newly-born child

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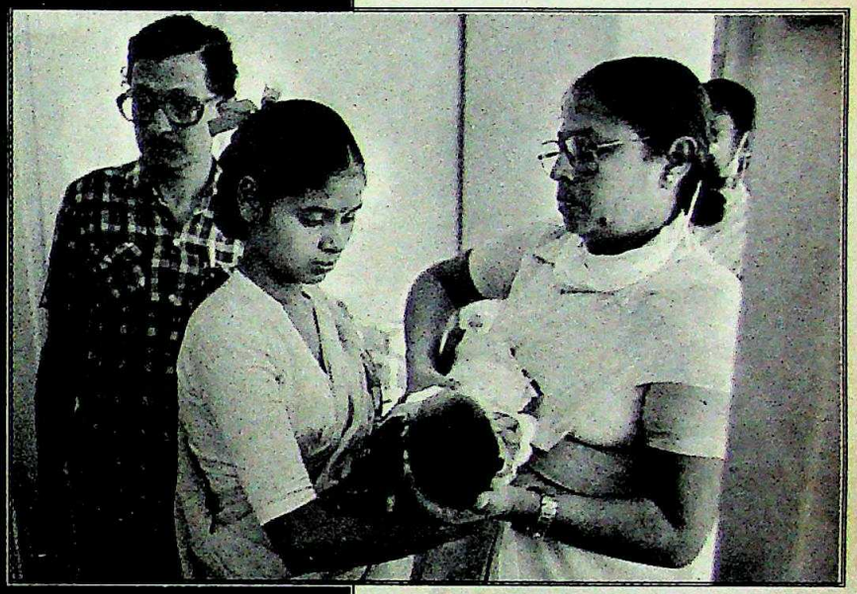
family is still ignorant of her condition.

The thought of looking after their child just does not occur to these young teenagers. "How can I look after a child? I am a child myself," asks Anwara Khatun plaintively. Anwara's is one of the most tragic cases at the Kendra. Believed to have been used as a prostitute in one of Calcutta's notorious red-light districts, this 14-year-old frock-clad girl had learnt



(Left) Rameshwari with baby; (inset) handing over her child to nurse

of no way of living other than by amusing men and selling herself. "I can dance very well," she would boast, and soon after the delivery returned to her mother in the red-light district, resigned to being a child used by men for their pleasures.

Perhaps fortunately for all the wo-

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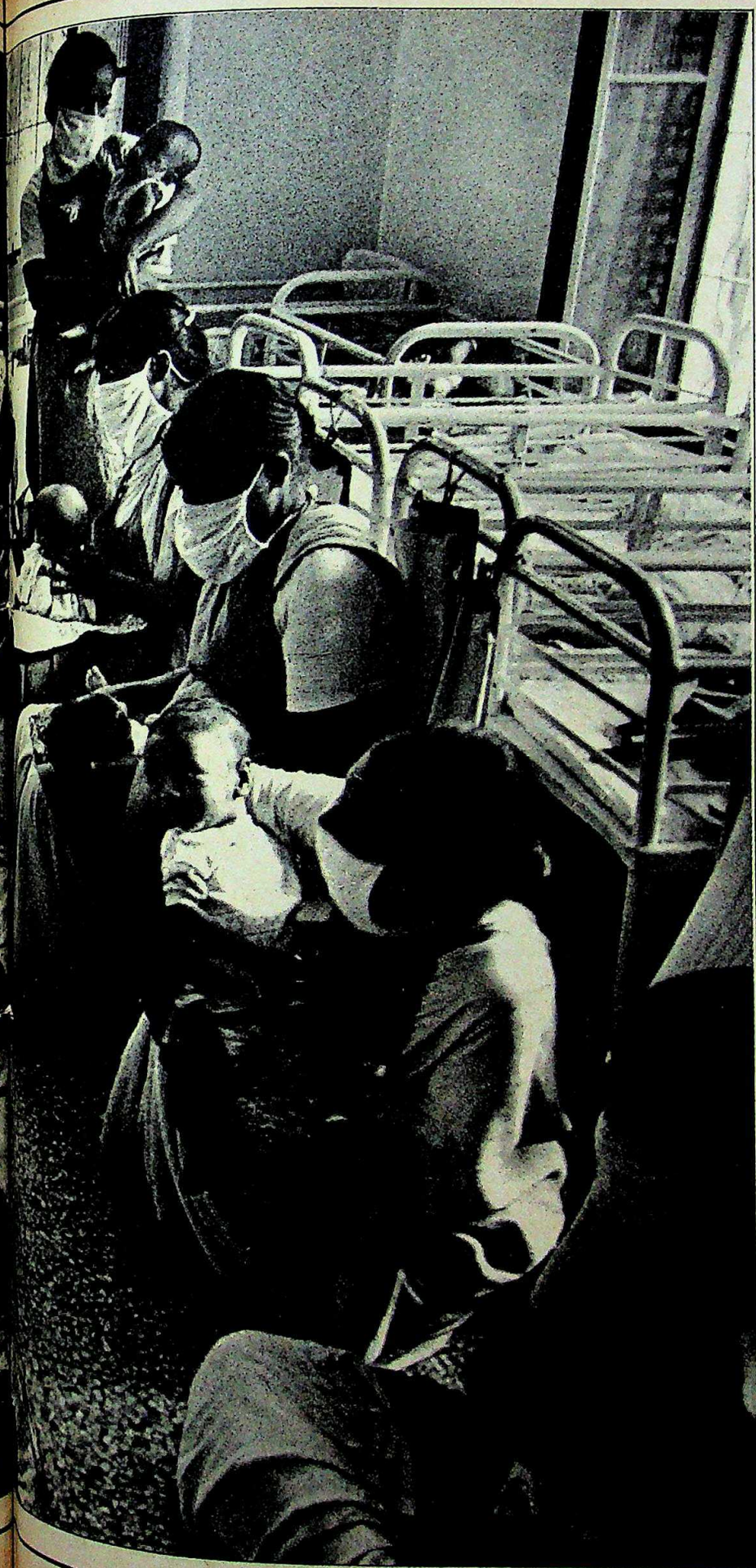

men, the emotional bonds with the baby growing inside them have been long broken. "The girls generally have extremely easy, pain-free deliveries," remarks Gupta. "And they are not even curious to see the babies." The Kendra's workers do not encourage the girls to breast-feed their babies either, in order to prevent mother-child attachment from developing.

WHEN Mona Das, an 18-year-old Oriya girl, arrived at the Kendra, she was weeping disconsolately, unable to believe that she would be able to lead a normal life again. Abandoned at Howrah Station by a boy she had loved and expected to marry, Mona had been rejected by her relatives in Calcutta when they found she was pregnant. But finally, when she was made to understand that life did not end with broken love and an illegitimate baby, Mona recovered quickly. Last month she had a normal delivery and returned to the Kendra the very next day, offering to stay on and work for the Kendra's programme.

Unwed motherhood is cataclysmic when the emotional bond with the unborn baby is strong and the mother has to abandon the baby for economic or social reasons. Every week unwed mothers from all over the city arrive at IMH's offices in New Alipore to leave their babies behind. "For these women who have wanted a child but have either been betrayed or deserted, the final wrench can leave a permanent psychological scar," says Cherie Prakash. These women have felt all the pains of motherhood, the insistent tuggings of the baby and have dreamed of leading a normal married life.

"I keep explaining to people that the majority of unwed mothers are not rape victims or whores or loose women but simply girls who had all the aspirations of their sex," says Prakash. "Even if a woman survives the trauma of having to give up a baby she wanted, what finally destroys her is the inability to return to the society she came from." Some like Pratibha, a convent-educated graduate from Madras, are lucky to get employment in the IMH itself, which is still mainly an adoption service. Pratibha's family refused to keep her after she got pregnant and the man she was living with refused to marry her. Realising that she could not give the baby a proper life, she offered him for adoption and decided to take up a job at the IMH.

An average of 80 unwanted babies are

Unwanted babies being nursed at Asha Kendra: adoption hope

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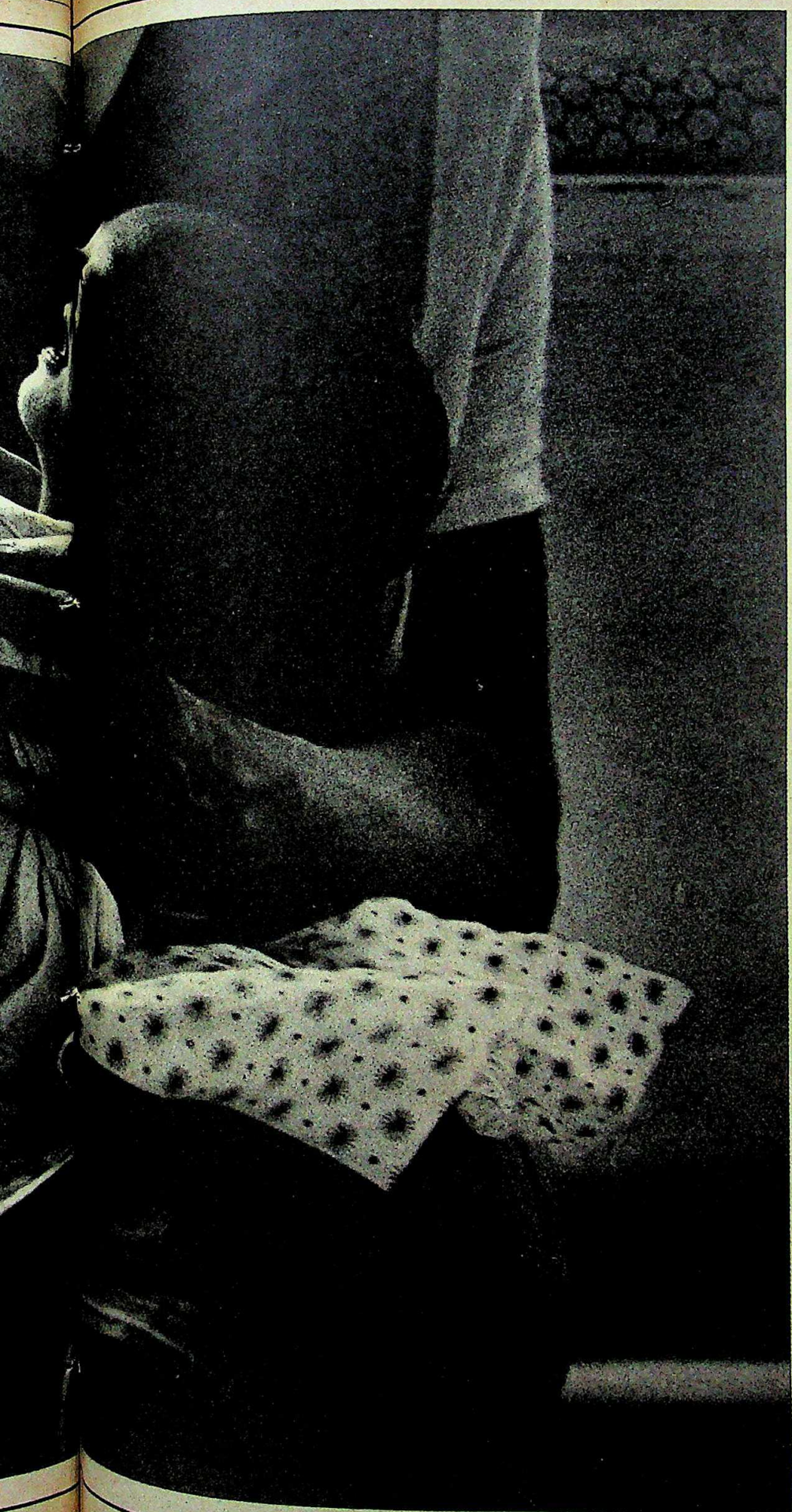

Baby with nurse: alone in the world

brought to IMH's Calcutta office—and some 90 per cent of the babies are delivered by unwed mothers. "Most of these women come into Calcutta from district towns and admit themselves under an assumed married name," says one of the house staff in the Government hospital in Calcutta. These women deliver their babies secretly and slink back to their mofussil homes, their fates lost in the avalanche of mundane tragedies.

BUT at least the unwanted children today can get a better life than anything their unfortunate mothers could provide. A number of adoption services in the city, including the IMH, have now organised placement services for these unwanted children (for a price, of course—and it is a paying proposition). Most of the children are sent to the United States and Europe—of late even to a few Indian families. When the IMH was started in 1978, most doctors and hospitals were suspicious and babies trickled in ones and twos every month. Today, the IMH alone sends more than 300 babies abroad.

The babies, many of whom are premature (suspected late abortion cases), are kept in a well-maintained nursery for a few months and offered first to Indian couples for adoption. "Just keeping some of the babies alive is a problem as they are incredibly small and undernourished when they come to us," says Prakash. Protected in cabins with ultra-violet light and watched over by doctors, the babies at the Mission of Hope have an amazing survival rate and grow up healthy and uncomplicated.

But the problem of unwed motherhood remains and grows as sexual relations become freer in society. "The principal sufferers unfortunately are the poor, the uneducated lower class girls, most of whom have no scientific notion of what menstruation is all about," points out Gupta. Adds Mrs V. Dutt, counsellor at the Marie Stopes Abortion Clinic in Calcutta: "The educated middle class girl today has no problems about pregnancy—95 per cent of them arrive in time and have an abortion without any psychological side-effects." While abortion cases have risen considerably—from 974 in 1979 to 15,024 in 1985 (at the Calcutta Marie Stopes Clinic)—so has unwed motherhood in the slums of Calcutta and the district towns of West Bengal. And it is only the lucky ones who find their way to places like the Asha Kendra.

—INDRANIL BANERJIE

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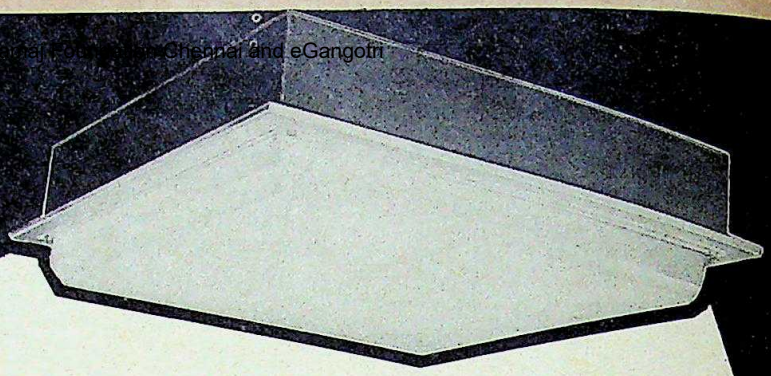

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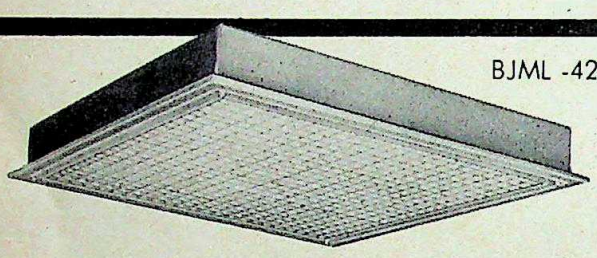

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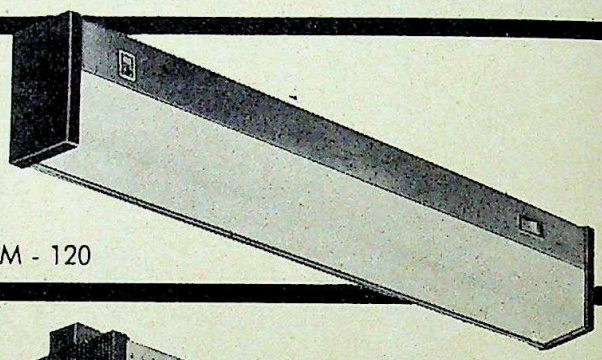

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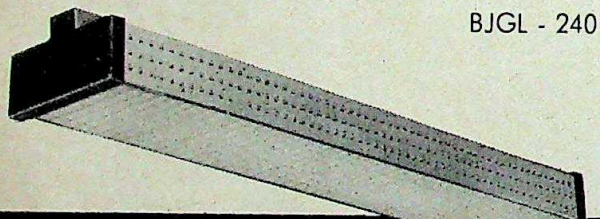
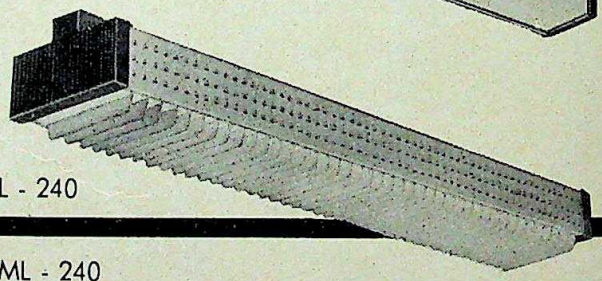


BJGL - 240



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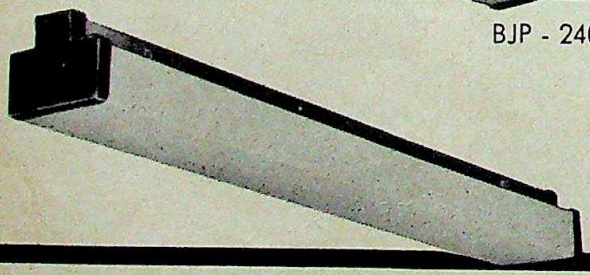

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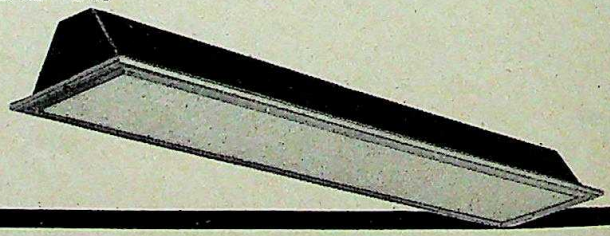

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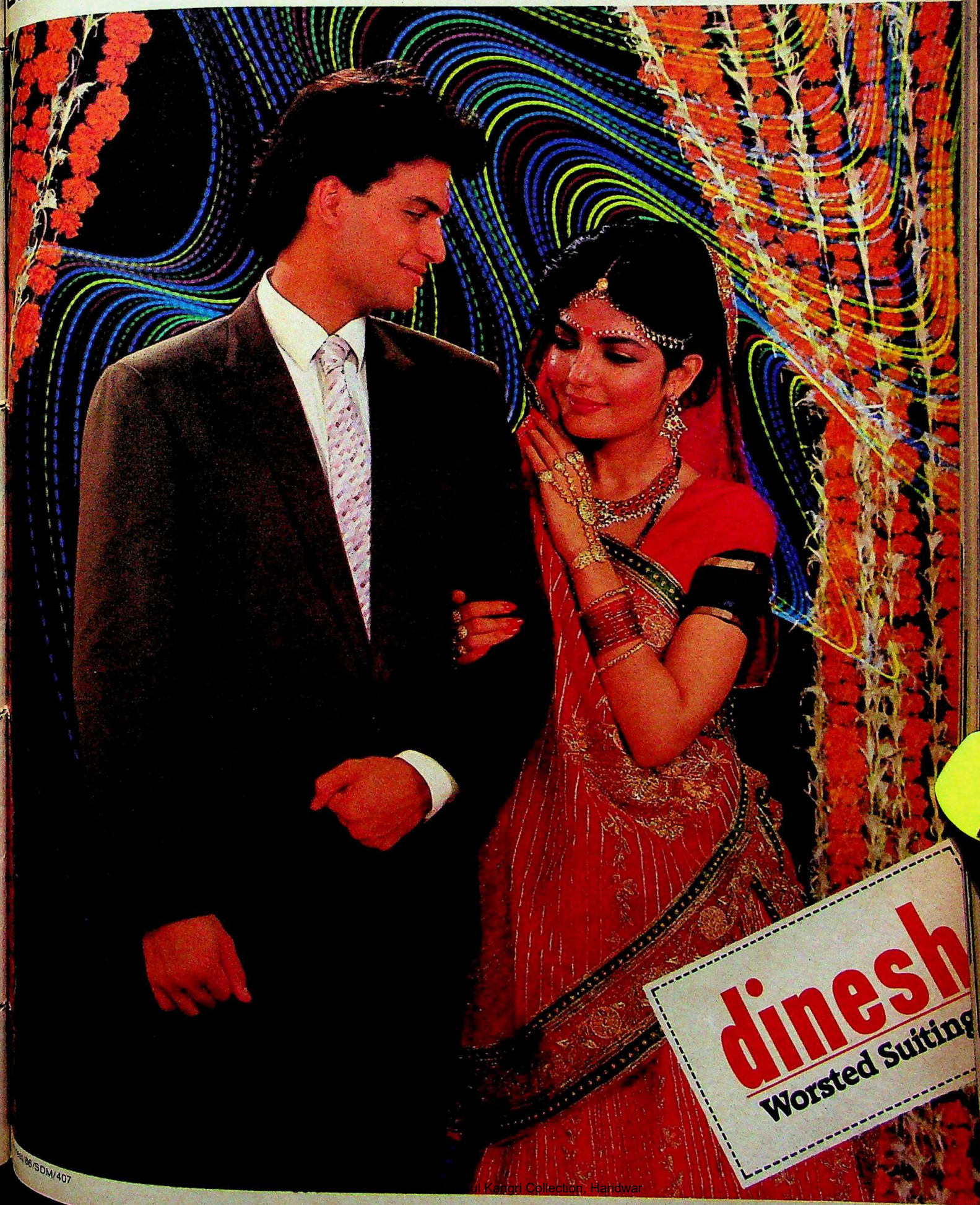

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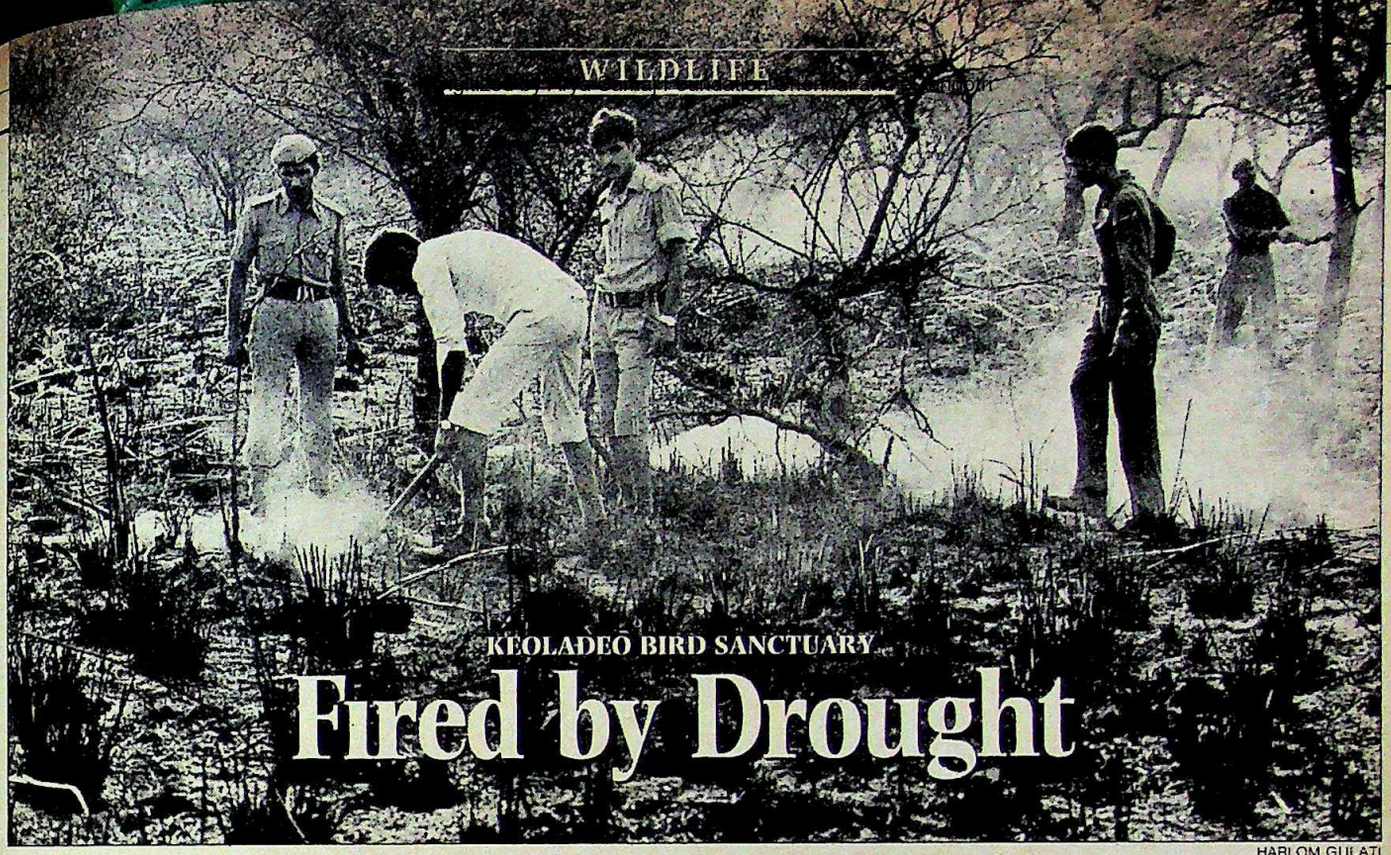

KEOLADEO BIRD SANCTUARY

Fired by Drought

HARI OM GULATI

Forest guards engaged in fire-fighting operations

THE fire was sudden. Its origins mysterious. A total of 108 hectares of verdant grassland at the world-famous Keoladeo Bird Sanctuary near Bharatpur in Rajasthan was reduced to a blackened and scarred ruin in a matter of hours. But as forest officials took stock of the damage last fortnight, there was some cause for relief. Wildlife had escaped unscathed, no lives were lost and the area affected was negligible—far less than similar fires that cut a swathe through 3 sq km of the sanctuary last year.

How it started and where exactly it began will have to await the findings of two inquiries currently underway. The first alarm was sounded by a forest guard in the Koladhar area at 11.30 a.m. on October 15, alerted by the pungent odour of smoke. Initially, it appeared the blaze would be quickly brought under control. Using asbestos sheets attached to long wooden poles to beat the flames with and fire extinguishers, the fire-fighters worked with clockwork precision till the weather decided to play a hand. High velocity winds turned the flames into a raging inferno and when it looked like crossing the fire-lines—carefully laid to prevent such an eventuality—and spreading to other areas, the local administration called in fire tenders from the Bharatpur ammunition depot of the army and units from as far away as Agra, Jaipur and Alwar.

Fortunately the fire-line was not crossed and by 6 p.m. that day, the fire had been put out. Welcome rains on October 17 eased fears of another conflagration but Rajan Mathur, deputy chief wildlife warden, confessed he was puzzled by the whole affair. As he pointed out: "October is much too early for a fire. The season is normally December-January when the grass has completely dried up. The problem is that nobody has come forward to give any evidence which would help us in our investigations."

Park officials were not discounting the possibility of the fire having been deliberately started. Suspicion centred on the 12 villages lying all around the park—there have been recurrent instances of villagers climbing over the 5-ft high wall which encloses the park to cut grass for their cattle.

While a parallel investigation by the state development commissioner is underway, the park officials are now strengthening fire precautions throughout the 29 sq km area of the sanctuary. Besides round-the-clock patrolling by forest guards, bore wells are being dug all over the park to obviate the need for fire tenders to make the arduous trip over dirt tracks to the centre of the sanctuary to draw water.

A more immediate problem, says Mathur, "is the worst water crisis we have had in years". For the first time in recent history, the sanctuary runs the danger of its marshes drying up by the end of December or early January. Poor rainfall around Jaipur and Sawai Madhopur, from where the Banganga and Ghambir rivers drain floodwaters into the Ajan reservoir in Bharatpur, has reduced the water levels in the 11 sq km of lakes to dangerously low levels.

The Irrigation Department is being asked to provide more water but they have none to give. Artesian wells are being tapped to provide water in areas where the birds are in need but as Mathur helplessly admitted: "You can fill a puddle or two artificially, not an entire marsh." Plans have been mooted for bringing in water from the Pachna dam, 100 km away in Karoli district, but its feasibility remains in doubt.

Barely 300 egg-laden nests have been spotted compared to 1,500 in 1985 and over 200 varieties of birds ranging from egrets to storks and cormorants have postponed breeding. The showpiece of the sanctuary—the Siberian crane—is due only in early December but forest officials say the birds might fly away by the end of January when the water table dips to its lowest level. Worse still, most of the migratory birds that come here are vegetarians. They feed on a particular kind of grass found in the marshes and once this reed dries up, they are unlikely to stay. The Department of Environment in New Delhi has been informed of the gravity of the situation but no solution has been forthcoming. Bharatpur is giving more than its share of sleepless nights to ornithologists.

—SURYA GANGADHARAN and TANIA MIDHA

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Mr. Krishnan, Farmer, Cochin

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NATIONAL CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Ethnic Extravaganza

IF the people ask for bread, give them a mela. The greater the hunger, the bigger the mela. The three-week orgy of festivity—an overflowing smorgasbord of culture called the National Cultural Festival—begins in Delhi on November 8. With a budget of Rs 5-crore and a performing cast of over 4,000 artistes from all over the country ("the budget of a multi-starrer", says one of the cultural impresarios), India's ethnic Woodstock will either be a magnificent success or a magnificent failure.

Culture to the *galis* of Delhi is the theme song of this festival. Quite simply: take culture to the people. The folk artistes from India's seven newborn zonal centres (three of them yet to be baptised) are going to be lodged in an army camp at Khanpur, on the outskirts of Delhi. For the performers, the festival is a quantum leap into the 21st century—data concerning each of them and their respective arts will be fed into a computer and constituted into a "resource bank" to be drawn upon in future.

The best focus on the festival is the rather mystical number of seven. The country has been carved into seven cultural zones. Each zone has been given Rs 30 lakh for the grand manifestation of Delhi *chalo*, part of the roughly Rs 70 crore that has been earmarked for the seven centres in the current five-year plan. Since culture has gone to the *maidan*, there are going to be seven *mukhya* (chief) *maidans* in November, and seven gates to get to them. The festival has seven themes and the seven colours of the rainbow—one colour for each zonal centre. Delhi, appropriately enough, has seven parliamentary constituencies.

The extravaganza is supposed to take off catalysed by each of the cultural cauldrons of the seven zonal centres (Udaipur, Shantiniketan, Allahabad, Patiala, Thanjavur, Dimapur and Nagpur). But it appears that the cultural cauldrons are not yet on the boil; the fires not quite lit under them in the hurry to have the November festival, which will be an annual feature in Delhi.

Still, the zones may yet blossom. Lucknow has had a mini-manifestation, as has Faridkot with the Baba Farid Festival. But headed as they are by bureaucrats, there are no great expectations from these places. The big bash may end up more like a Republic Day pageant in slow motion. In fact, the ideal time would have been near Republic Day, when the performers would have been in Delhi anyway.

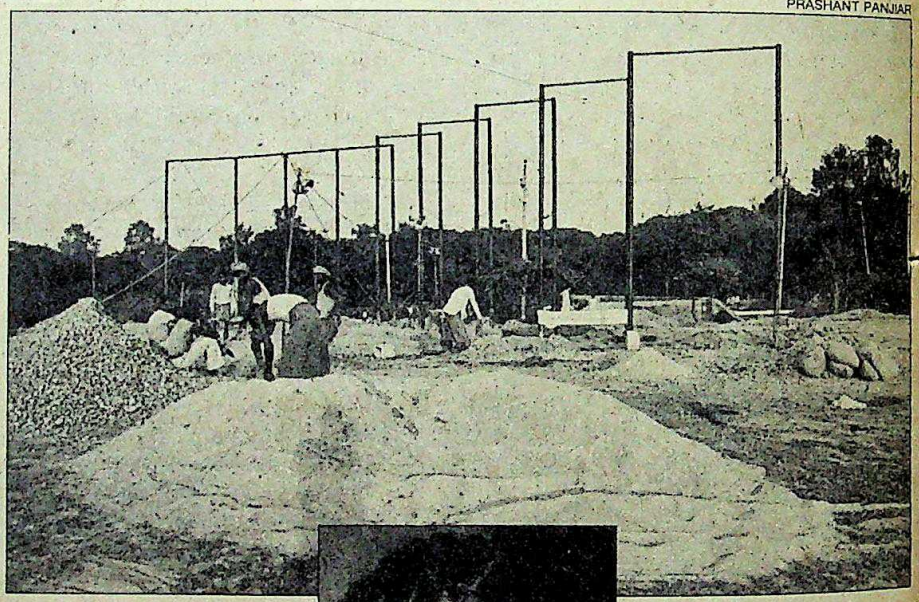
The national cultural festival and the zonal centres are the brain-children of the prime minister who, according to the report of the committee of the National Cultural Festival, has emphasised the need for "awareness and participation at the grass-roots level and the need to involve the people in a sense of cultural commonality". In other words, culture should be brought out of the museums. J.P. Aggarwal, MP and chairman of the organising committee of the festival, says: "We have forgotten the poor. What is their life apart from *roti-rozi?*" And so to the banks of the Jamuna, the neon-lit capital beckons.

The magician for the occasion is Rajeev Sethi, the director-general of the festival, who has an all-purpose wand which can conjure manifestations of culture, and dazzle. Says Sethi: "There should be a 20-point programme for culture." He believes that the festival "should be looked upon as a training centre, a shaking-up exercise for the zonal centres which are too new. We do need a certain amount of preparedness to catapult us into spontaneity. Spontaneity as an excuse for the lack of organisation is not spontaneity".

Imagination has certainly been given a long leash. The festival opens with a big bang. The prime minister is supposed to visit each zonal centre, following which each zonal group will form into processions and become "a stream of lit torches converging on the lawns of the Red Fort around twilight". The seven zonal centres will then form a rainbow. The climax of the evening: 4,000 white pigeons will be released, one each by the 4,000 participants. Inside the festival ground, a forest of lamps, symbolic of the tree of life, will come alive with each participant lighting a lamp. There will be food pavilions, handicrafts and textiles from each state. Mingling in the grand moving bazaar will be acrobats, jugglers, magicians and puppets. The overture to the festival is called *Bharat Milan—Dilli Mein Desh Ka Pravesh* (India comes to Delhi).

And the curtain rings down with *Manthan: Dilli se Desh Tak* (From Delhi to the country). The Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium will resound with music, even its expansive lawns. The grande finale: all the participants will move towards the Jamuna River, on which they will float lighted lamps. The absolute end: an all-night concert on the banks of the river. Some of the special events sound unique. *Goonjte Pathar* (echoing stones) brings together ancient monuments and forgotten maestros, albeit with a message: Birju Maharaj dancing at Abdul Rahim

PRASHANT PANJIAR



DDA park being prepared for the mela; and (inset) Sethi

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Khanekhana's tomb followed by an audio-visual on the monument; action painting by the peripatetic M.F. Husain in the south Delhi colony of Hauz Khas; the Calcutta youth choir singing Gospel rock in front of old churches; Madhavi Mudgal dancing in front of Jantar Mantar, "showing the measure of the cosmos—the sun, the moon, and the stars—against the measure of man". There will also be an all-night concert in Suraj Kund, across the border in Haryana. Yet another original concept is the *Khas Bagh* (special garden). There will be four cultural Hyde Parks where poets and players will share the platform.

The festival is also a big birthday party; in fact two. The two special days are the birth anniversaries of Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi. November 14 each year is for children, and this year even more so: kite-makers will make and fly kites and then present these to the children. Communal cooking follows with a contribution of *ek-ek-muthi* (individual handfuls) of grain from each home. The children's brigade will take a pledge against child marriage and dowry and be given a certificate for their participation in the event. Each child will be given a green khaki jacket for a *Haree Sena* (green army) which will be launched on November 19, Mrs Gandhi's birthday—which from now on is Environment Day. Spic-Macay, which has been taking Indian culture to students, will also be active.

Culture is on the move, but the engine has a political make. The division of the country into seven cultural zones, a cultural map super-imposed on the linguistic one which has been straining at its boundaries, might in concept be a good idea. But the line between populism and culture easily blurs. Says Sethi: "It would be populism if the elite was handing down. But seeing the energy coming up from all our *mohalla maidans*, I would say that it is an elitist remark to say populist."

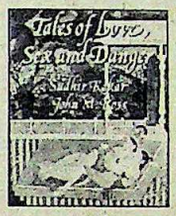
Some 10,000 letters have come in response to the advertisement for a name, theme and slogan for the happening. Most are about unity in diversity. Says Sethi: "If we can have logos for Pepsi and Maggi, why not culture?"

Whatever happens in November, culture has become a buzzword for our politicians. A few years ago, Ranjit Singh Gaekwad, MP, had asked all the members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha to send two entries representative of culture in their constituencies, for an exhibition to be inaugurated by the prime minister. Only three entries came in. Would they now dare?

—MADHU JAIN

Erotic Feast

LOVE, SEX AND DANGER
by SUDHIR KAKAR & JOHN M. ROSS
Oxford University Press
Price: Rs 140; Pages: 249



YOU can have sex without love but there can be no love without sex. Denis de Rougemont maintained that both unalloyed sex as well as sexless attachment become tedious; the one degenerates into pornography, the other into parable. Psycho-analyst Sudhir Kakar (*The Inner World and Shamans, Mystics and Doctors*) and John M. Ross accept this assumption as well as Freud's assertion that fear is an essential ingredient of love. "Our book title tells it all," they affirm, "the inevitable triad: love, sex and danger."

Isn't every sexual intercourse a repetition of much the same sort of exercise performed in bed by two parties? No, assert the authors: "each erotic act and actor is unique." The novelist Milan Kundera explains this unquenchable thirst for new sexual experiences in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. He says that in every sexual encounter "there is always the small part that is unimaginable. When he saw a woman in her clothes, he could naturally imagine more or less what she would look like naked.... And then the pursuit of the unimaginable does not stop with the revelation of nudity: it goes much farther. How would she behave while undressing? What would she say when he made love to her? How would her sighs sound? How would her face distort at the moment of orgasm?"

To illustrate their theme the authors have chosen 12th century love epics from three cultures: Indian-Hindu, Perso-Islamic and European. They start with stories of adolescent love: Romeo and Juliet. Laila and Majnu (with Punjabi folk tales Sohni-Mahiwal and Heer-Ranjha thrown in), Radha and Krishna. Thereafter they deal with adulterated love of mature men and women in which wives cuckold their husbands, fathers seduce their daughters and siblings engage in incestuous intimacy.

Shorn of the psycho-analytical jargon there is a lot of fascinating information in this book which will shock prudes and wound the susceptibilities of the devout. Though lawmakers condemned adultery as a crime punishable with death, the adulterous liaison between the older, married Radha and Krishna, and Krishna's dalliance with countless milkmaids roused Indian poets and painters to ecstatic heights. In the Indian poet-dramatists' world women were divided into three categories: courtesans (*veshyas*), wives (*svakiyas*) and "others" (*parakiyas*). The last category was further sub-divided into young girls (*kanyakas*) and married women (*parodhas*). Of these only one, the *parodha* i.e. another man's wife, could give love its full expression, mingling illicit passion with danger of discovery. They quote a Sanskrit poet in support:

So there are
women who attract with
their loose ways
prostitutes
and there is the deep shyness
of one's own wife
the most beautiful and most
graceful showing
her love
opening flower
but who in this world can
fill one with joy
like another man's wife
loving with naked breast.

Despite censors of morals it was the love of Radha and Krishna that became the driving force behind the Bhakti cult. Bhaktas visualised themselves as females longing to be ravished by their lover god (*Pritam*). The devotee found fulfilment in the same way as a woman in orgasmic ecstacy. Krishna became the paradigm of Indian lovers because his love-making never ended in an orgasm; he was *Acyuta*, the one whose seed does not fall. He gave continuous (*nitya*) pleasure to Radha and the *gopis* none of whom got impregnated by him.

The book ends with an attempt at a synthesis and summary of the different kinds of erotic love spelt out in the epics. The authors have chosen Russo-American novelist Vladimir Nabokov's autobiography *Speak Memory* to trace its development through the life of one man whose passion was collecting butterflies—from the caterpillar to the silken butterfly flitting among flowers before it is pinned on a board for preservation.

The layman may find the analytical part of the authors' treatise somewhat far-fetched and indigestible. Nevertheless, he will thoroughly enjoy the feast laid out for him. It is informative, thought-provoking and unputdownable.

—KHUSHWANT SINGH

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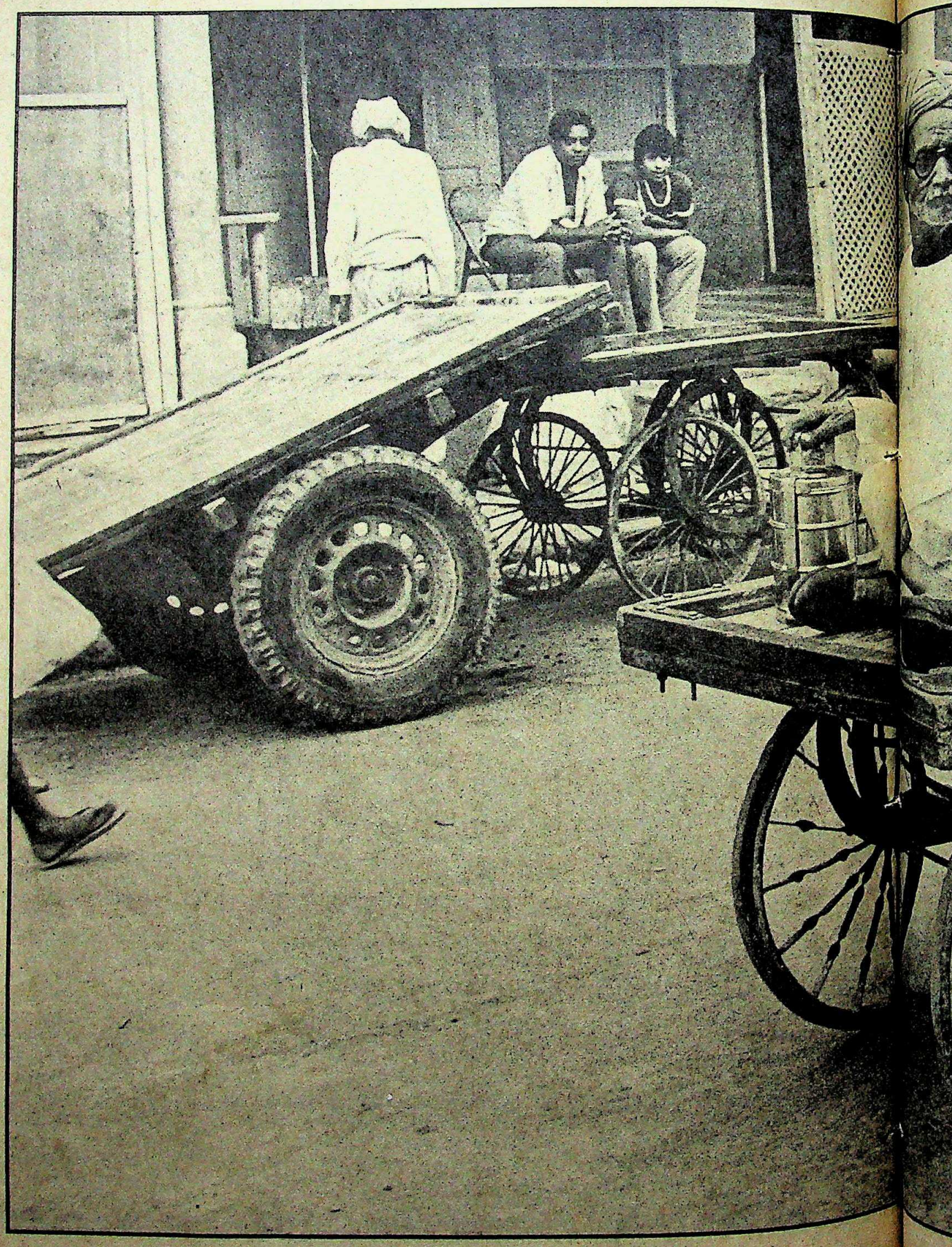
SNAPSHOT

BY PRASHANT PANJIAR



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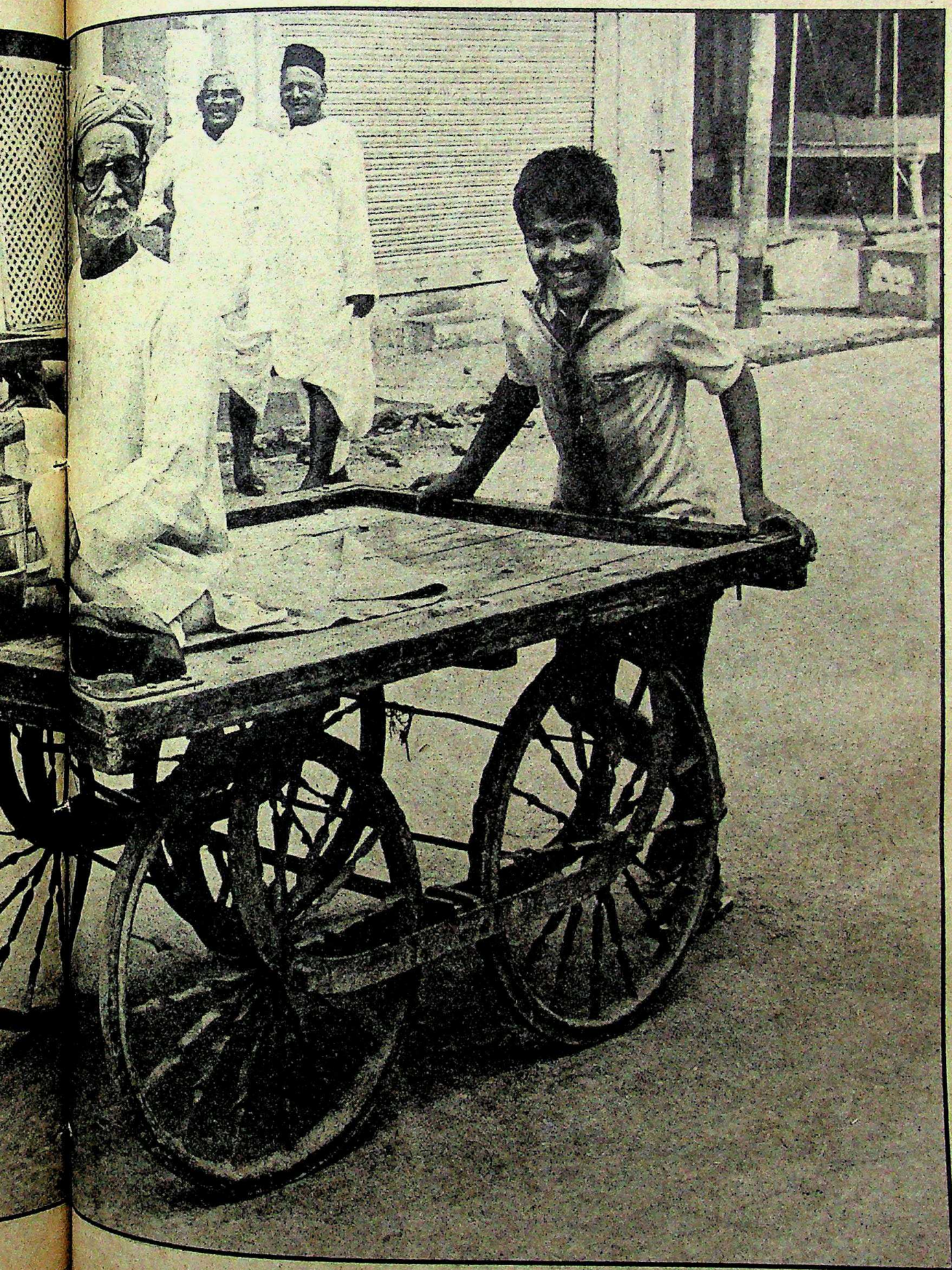

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COMMERCIALS

The Golden Voices

THEY are truly the hidden persuaders. The anonymous voices on radio and television commercials enticing listeners to buy the products they are plugging. But even in the cacophony of commercial jingles, there is one voice, rich and authoritative, that dominates the rest, selling everything from Marutis to Johnson's Baby Powder. Awe-struck advertising executives, as usual, have a phrase for it. They call it 'The voice of God'.

In a sense, Partap ('Pat') Sharma is a god—of the air waves. Virtually every English language commercial currently being aired on Doordarshan is signed off by a voice that has now become as familiar to television viewers as their own—the voice of Pat Sharma. Already, in Bombay's booming television commercial industry, Sharma has acquired an unmatched reputation. "His is one of the best voices in the world. I don't think there will be anything comparable to him for a long time," says the creative head of a large advertising agency.

To millions of television households, Sharma is just a familiar voice on the box. But to a vast majority of advertisers, it is a voice in a million. Most advertisers insist that their agencies get Sharma for their commercials at any cost. So heavy is the demand for his time that the commentator, sometimes exhausted from zipping from one recording studio to another in his Mercedes, has been forced to book a studio himself and ask the clients to show up at appointed hours. Once, a desperate advertiser armed with a tape-recorder even pursued Sharma to Mahabaleshwar where he was holidaying with his English wife Susan and their children.

Sharma, almost single-handedly, has given commercial commentating a new elevated status and financial independence. Sharma is paid a minimum of Rs 1,000 for a 30-second commercial spot. For 10 months' work, recording commercials and audio-visuals, he grosses a tidy Rs 2-lakh annually, half of which goes, he says, in travel, telephone bills, research and the cost of maintaining a fully-staffed office near his sea-side flat in Bombay.

"Initially I would be exhausted emotionally and mentally," confesses Sharma, "but I wanted to give social status to commentary. Before my time commercial commentators did not command so much respect." But his work on commercials and audio-visual slide presentations by companies also allows Sharma to pursue his other interests—writing, acting and in the last few months, producing an ambitious television serial sponsored by BBC's Channel four on the Raj, seen through Indian eyes.

Success, however, has not come all

Photographs by NAMAS BHOJANI

"I wanted to give social status to commentary. Before my time commercial commentators did not command so much respect."
PARTAP SHARMA

"All the youngsters are breathing down our necks now, but anybody new coming up should take care not to copy me or Partap."
BRIJ BHUSHAN

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that easily. Sharma has always been something of a non-conformist. His first full-time job was as a junior executive at Esso where he lasted exactly 12 days because, as he says, he found a nine-to-five job too constricting. Having rejoined the freelance circuit, he was once asked to read the prologue to a Tennesse Williams play in Bombay where pioneering commentator Ameen Sayani was present. Sayani, impressed with the voice and presentation, sent Sharma off to Films Division for an audition where he began his career as a commentator. "Those were tough days. Often my monthly income used to be Rs 75. But I was determined to make it on my own," he says.

Sharma soon established himself as a leading films division commentator while also pursuing his other interests like theatre, the odd film role (he played the hero in *Phir Bhi*), modelling and writing plays and children's books.

With the kind of success that has made Sharma an advertising legend in a comparatively short period of time, and despite the increase in the number of commercials and audio-visuals being made in recording studios mushrooming all over Bombay, it is surprising that the world of

LOUIS BANKS

Hot Tracks

FROM the smoke-filled night-clubs of Calcutta to the sound-proofed recording studios of Bombay has been a lengthy, if lucrative, transition for Louis Banks. In the '70s, playing with his band at the Blue Fox in Calcutta, pianist Banks had rapidly acquired a reputation as a jazz musician of great promise, who made international inroads when he toured Europe and cut the fusion record *Sangam* in West Germany.

Banks, stroking his trademark goatee and recalling those heady, jazz-filled days, says: "It was impossible to survive playing jazz in Calcutta, what with the power shortage and the political situation. So I packed my electric piano and came down to Bombay." That was in 1978, and Banks ended up like other struggling musicians in the orchestra pits of the Hindi film industry. He soon became a full-time member of R.D. Burman's film music ensemble.

But his talent and originality ensured that it couldn't last. "Jazz is my first love and Hindi film music is basically very restricting," he says. "So I put my band together again and we started playing at the Sea Rock. But the pace was too hectic, playing nights at the hotel and during the day at a film studio, so I gave it up after a year." By now, however, Banks had begun to acquire a sizeable following from his concerts and the Jazz Yatra. To move on to the advertising world was only natural.

Today, Banks is the most sought-after composer for commercials, anonymously providing the lilting tunes that invade countless homes. Composers earn between Rs 6,000 and Rs 8,000 per commercial. Banks can demand upto Rs 10,000 per composition. Says Suresh Mullick, Creative Director of Ogilvy, Benson and Mather: "It is musicians like Banks who have brought a modern flair to advertising music."

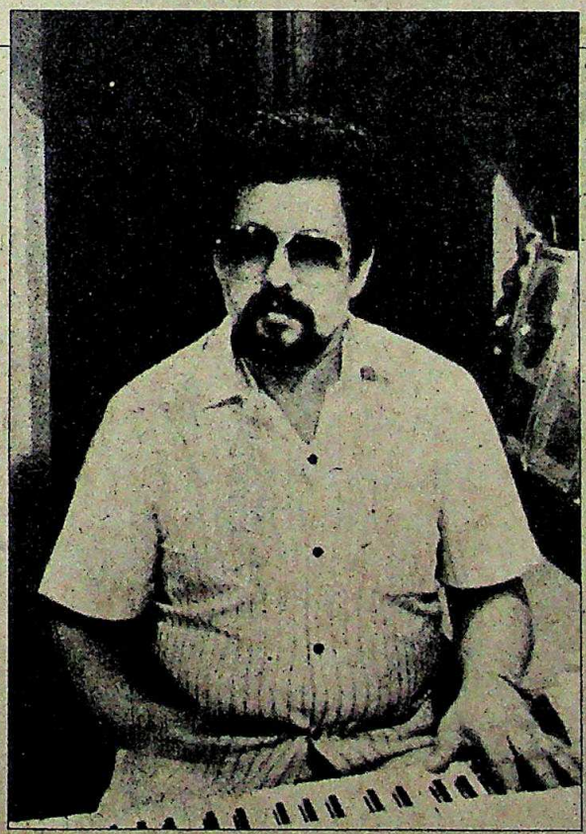
"I am really into advertising commercials, TV serials and film shows," says Banks. "In the beginning I had problems but now I relate to visuals a lot. I can think of a story-line and the action when I score music." Victor Banerjee's *August Requiem* marked his debut as a music director in cinema. Its moving, semi-classical score brought Banks his second film score—for Ramesh Sharma's *New Delhi Times*, and led to his most widely acclaimed film compositions—for Amal and Nissar Allana's TV serial *Raj Se Swaraj*.

Even as Banks bashfully acknowledges his liking for "these arty films", he is fast acquiring repute in scoring background music in Hindi films, which he has already done for *Kala Dhanda Goray Log* and *Hukumat*. HMV will soon release an album of Hindi songs, sung by Alisha Chinoy with music by Banks.

But Banks still has one hand firmly on the jazz chords. "Composing music for commercials is challenging and, of course, quite lucrative. But I must not lose myself," he says. "I must stay active writing and playing the kind of music I enjoy. That's why I do a lot of stage musicals—*Paper Dolls*, *Bottoms Up*, *Tarantula Tanzi*, and now Pearl Padamsee's *The Wiz*."

Banks is best known, however, as India's foremost jazz musician and it can't be long before Jazz reclaims its prodigal son. "Wait and see, I might soon be able to get a jazz club and another workshop going," he says spooning spaghetti hurriedly from a little tiffin box. But jazz fans will have to wait. To advertisers, Banks is 'hot' and his popularity spells, well, money in the banks.

—M. RAHMAN



"Composing music for commercials is challenging and, of course, quite lucrative. But I must not lose myself."

LOUIS BANKS

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television commercials is still largely under-populated. In English commercials, Sharma is the dominating figure with Nirmala Mathan and Sarita Sethi being the most commonly heard female voices. In Hindi again, it is mainly the ubiquitous voice of Brij Bhushan that dominates most commercials.

Versatile veterans like Ameen Sayani and Vinod Sharma offer two main reasons for the lack of new talent—the general standard of affinity with languages is dropping in India, and young people are not prepared to put in the hard work and training required to develop a good commentator's voice. "Once, I had started classes in my home in voice training," says Vinod Sharma (*Vicks ki goli lo, kich kich door karo*), "but after a few months the students would imagine they had gained enough proficiency and drop out."

THAT also explains why Partap Sharma is the reigning king of commercials. A thorough professional with limitless energy, Sharma says that he will not record a commentary even if there is one word in the script which he does not understand. "This means a little more preparation, but a commentator must love and understand the subject to speak with authority," he adds. Sharma feels that many good radio voices have not been able to adapt to the visual media, where the voice demands greater use of the imagination. He also believes that many young people do not have what he calls "the courage of their talent"—a successful commentator has to freelance, and not everyone, he points out, is prepared to take that risk.

One young commentator who has taken the plunge is Nikhil Kapoor, 23, who recently threw up a job with Mudra Videotech to strike out on his own. "It's a very tough profession to break into," he says, "Partap is first class and has all the advertisers by the short hair. But three months ago when he left town to work on his TV serial I suddenly started getting a lot of assignments. Now some advertisers keep coming back to me, and on a good day I average about six commercials and audio-visuals."

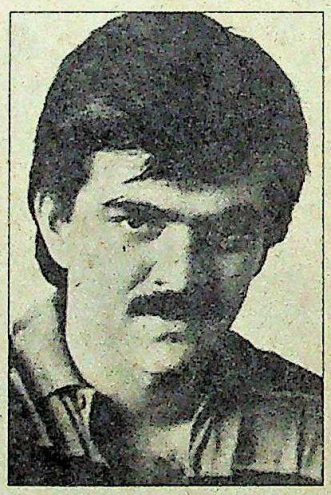
Besides Kapoor, the other promising young voice in English commercial commentary is that of Uday Mathan, son of the well-known commentator Nirmala Mathan. Then there are the older professionals from theatre and TV—Homi Daruwala, Ronnie Screwwala, Keith Stevenson and Harish Bhimani. But all the other commentators are usually paid much less than Sharma, with the lowest earning around Rs 350 for a spot.

LEONARD AARONS

Nirmala Mathan

Sarita Sethi

Vinod Sharma



Nikhil Kapoor

Despite the increase in the number of commercials and audio-visuals being made, it is surprising that the world of television commercials is still largely under-populated.

The Hindi commercial scene is more competitive even though Brij Bhushan, like Sharma, is the dominating deity. Bhushan, however, maintains that it is not that easy any more to stay on top and bag all the plum assignments. With the boom in commercial TV, he says, there are now 67 active male voices in Hindi in Bombay, of which at least 30 are full time professionals.

Like other veterans in the profession, Bhushan is also a man of many talents. Having started his career as a radio announcer at the age of 14, he has acted in Hindi films, been a music director, runs his own recording studio and has just produced a film with his wife Madhur, younger sister of Madhubala, as the heroine. "All these youngsters are breathing down our necks now," he says candidly, "but anybody new coming up should take care not to copy me or Partap. They should try and evolve something of their own."

Curiously, despite the variety of products advertised through commercials, the medium continues to be male-dominated with only a handful of women, like Nirmala Mathan and Sarita Sethi, being able to establish themselves. "It is an outdated feeling that only a male voice has authority," says Mathan. "If a voice has conviction you can sell a product. How can a male voice ever be suitable for baby powder or lipstick?"

Despite the discrimination, and the stranglehold exerted by people like Sharma and Bhushan, the television commercial scene is gearing for even bigger things. More than 30 per cent of agency budgets for brand advertising are now being spent on TV commercials, and the share is expected to go up to 50 per cent by 1990. With the boom have emerged more demanding advertisers, classier productions, and more money for commentators. But the nature of the work is such that the voice must perforce remain anonymous—unless of course, it is the voice of god.

—M. RAHMAN

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The war on poverty is our first priority

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Under the guidance of the Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi and leadership of the Chief Minister Shri Bir Bahadur Singh Uttar Pradesh made history by securing first position in the country under the 20 point programme.

Year of dedication and achievements

New

Our major achievements at a glance

Agriculture production
New record of one crore thirty lakh tonnes of kharif production as against the target one crore 6 lakh tonnes
Wheat production touches a new high of 1.65 lakh tonnes.

Rural Development
6.28 lakh families covered under I.R.D. programme.
407.26 lakh mandays generated under the R.L.E.G.P.
472.39 lakh mandays generated under N.R.E.P.

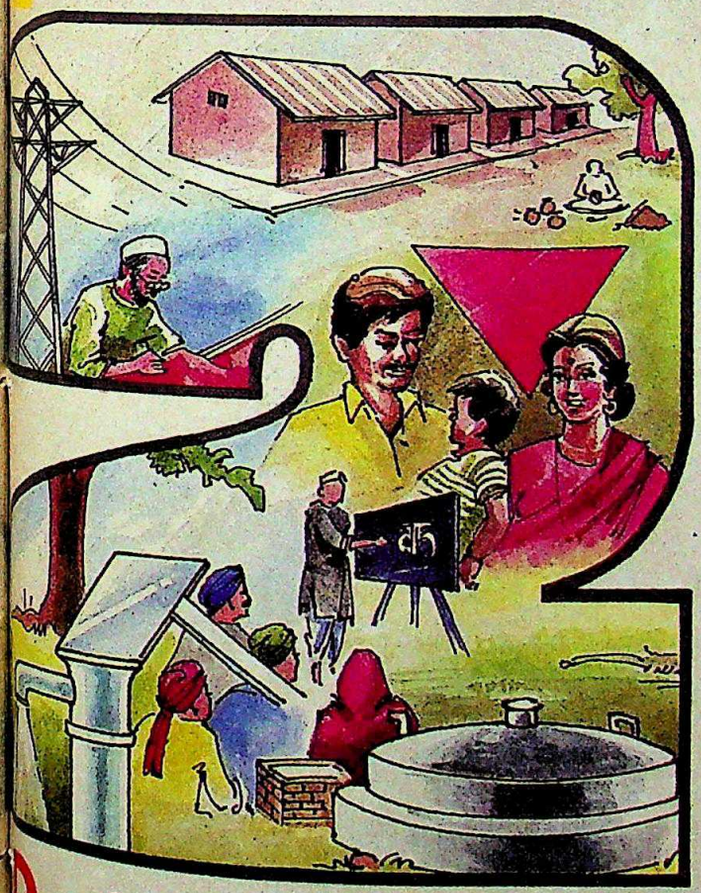
Industries
Sixteen thousand New Small Scale Industrial units set up during 1985-86.

Family Welfare
5.41 lakh persons undergo sterilisation

Minorities
U.P. Minorities Finance and Development Corporation distributed Rs. 70 lakh loans through Banks.

Forestry
Waste Land Board constituted 35.48 crore saplings planted during 1985-86.

Responsive Administration
More power to divisional level officers.
"AHMEDNAGAR" pattern of administration introduced for quick redressal of public grievances.



Point Programme

Committed to be first again

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...mation & Public Relations Department, U.P.

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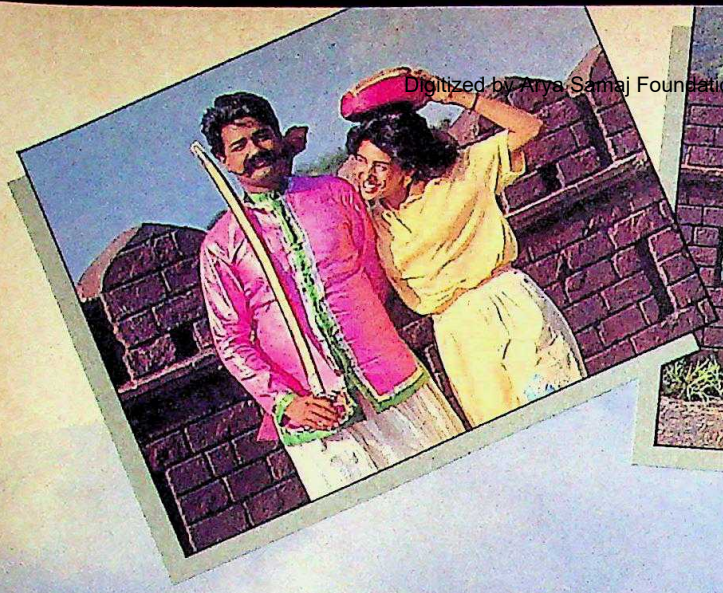

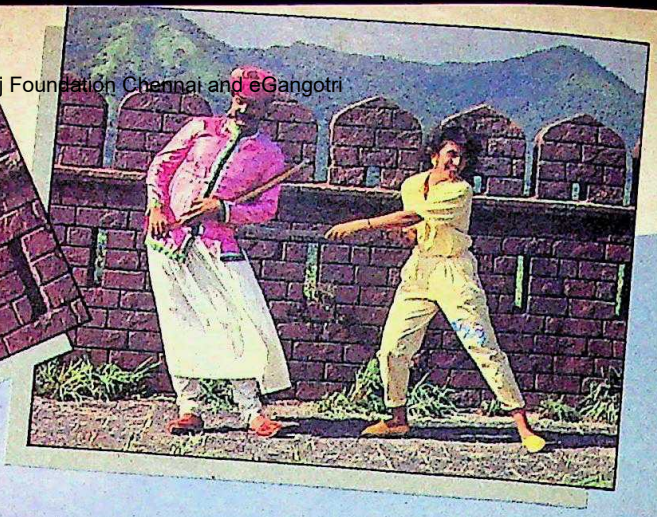

When dullness got its marching orders!

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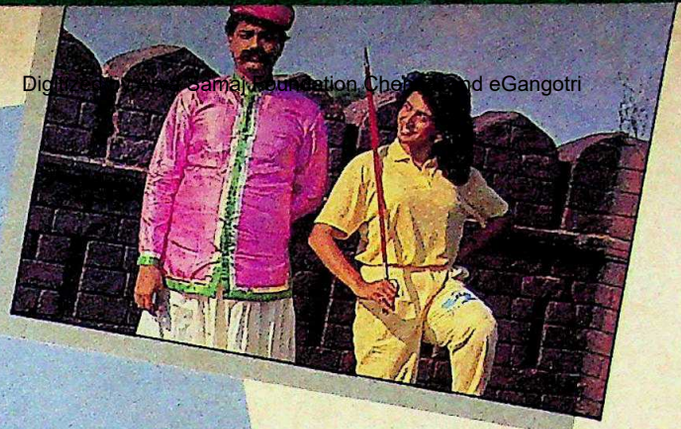
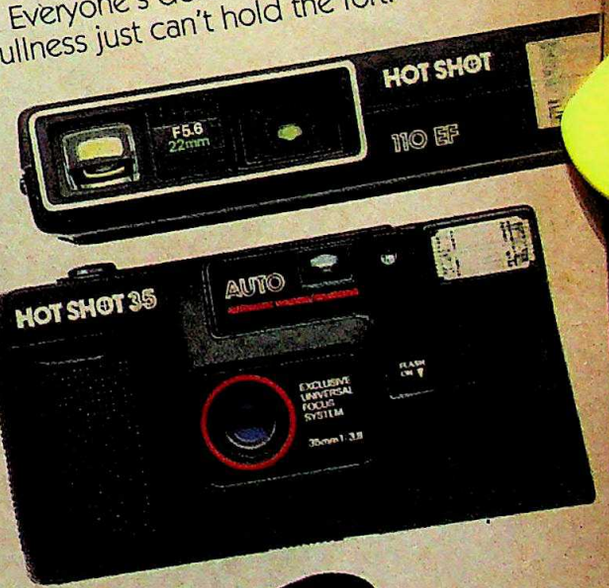


With Hot Shot, you can't forget
all the fun times you had.
Like the day the sentry fought hard.
To keep a straight face.
When he was caught off guard.
Again. And yet again.
Yes, with Hot Shot,
winning the battle against dullness is easy.
But then, isn't everything easy
with Hot Shot!
There's no focussing.
No checking exposures. No problems.
Choose any Hot Shot camera you like.
The popular Hot Shot 110.
Or the 35mm format with the exclusive
Universal Focus System.
Get just what you want.
A camera with a flash. Or a tele lens.
Or automatic features.
With Hot Shot, the focus is always on fun.
Everyone's defences are torn down.
Dullness just can't hold the fort!



HOT SHOT

Just aim. And shoot!

PHOTOPHONE INDUSTRIES INDIA LIMITED
7, Saki Vihar Road, Bombay 400 072

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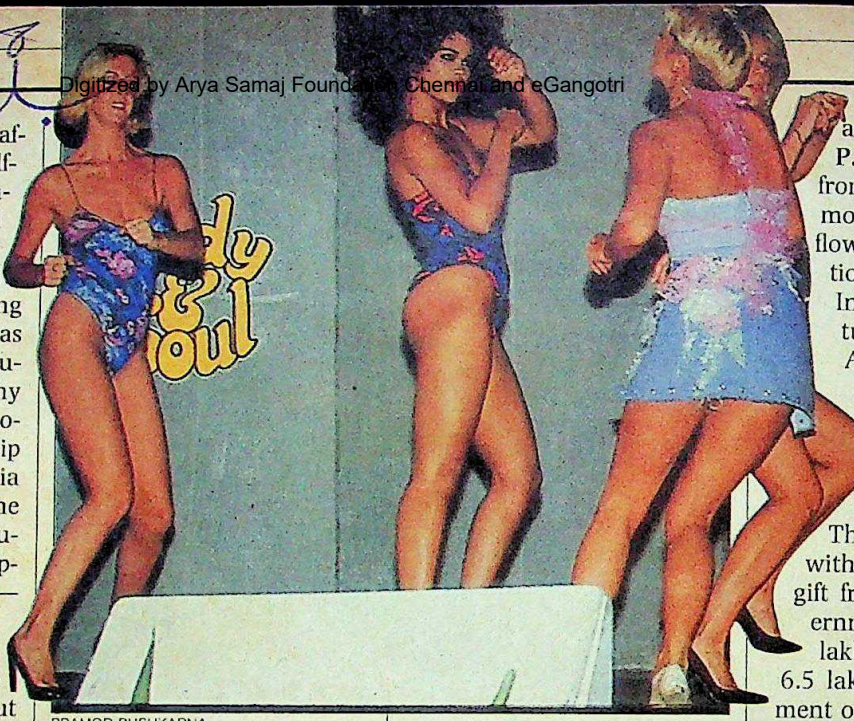
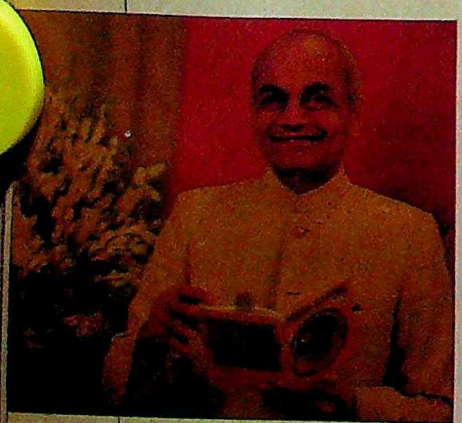


PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Body & Soul: bare cause

◆ For the hungry, the deaf-mute, the disabled and half-clothed children of Maharashtra, Manna descended from the heavens last fortnight in a swirl of petticoats and a swish of silks—bearing such *creme de fashion* labels as Dior and Cardin, Saint Laurent and Nina Ricci, Givenchy and a score others. Choreographed by Floid of Hot Gossip and produced by Natalia Maxim of England for the PRIDE of India—Planning Rural-urban Integrated Development through Education—**Body and Soul** swept through Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, Madras and Bangalore, baring lots of body but precious little soul. There were striped and sequined blondes with their slips showing, pigeon-chested males who handled them like rag dolls and brazen hussies wanting to walk the wild side. Explained PRIDE India Vice-President Sunil Dutt: "We want to draw the urban elite into rural growth. And this is the best way to do it." By baring the body and sparing the soul?

◆ The picture is cute: one prime minister on the back of another. And the foreword reads: "She was full of games and puzzles. She knew a great deal about history....and about trees and birds." So it goes on, with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi chatting up the readers: all strictly below 14. Released recently, *Indira Gandhi* is a book for kids by one who knew her: her information adviser—and now her son's—**H.Y. Sharada Prasad.** "I never really planned it," says the author. "The publishers, Ladybird, asked me and I did it." It isn't a biography, he says. "It's just a story for kids who don't really know her—as a little girl, as a mother and a leader." So after Chacha Nehru, it's Indira Aunty.



HARI OM GULATI

Sharada Prasad: kid stuff

NAMAS BHOJANI

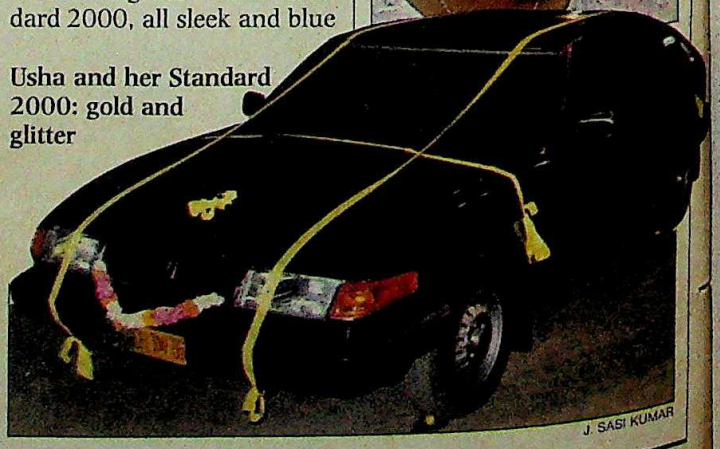
Aman: Zeenie's baby

◆ She was seen waddling around in a smock, knitting needles in hand, in that notorious *Irma la Douce* remake of the '70s, *Manoranjan*. After so many years, two marriages and a sagging career, **Zeenat Aman** finally delivered last fortnight. The bonnie little baby boy, all wrinkles and 6 lb 9 oz, burst into the world squealing at pa Mazhar Khan, who had held the mother's hand throughout. "It was a normal delivery. She was very cooperative and did not make a fuss," said the doctor at the private clinic. The nurses were thereafter kept on their toes, tending to the baby and keeping snoopy reporters at bay. Pestilence, however, paid off when through the mists of the very next morning, the lady could be seen taking a stroll on the lawns, cooing and humming to her baby boy. "It's a dream come true," whispered Zeenie baby in a trance, and quickly walked back indoors, taking her *baba* away from the prying paparazzi.

◆ No wings for the 'Flying Fairy'. No wands either. No sir, nothing less than a Standard 2000, all sleek and blue and gift-wrapped. For **P.T. Usha**, October will from now on mean the month of bubbly and flowers. And congratulations and cars. When India's golden girl returned from the Seoul Asiad with four golds around her neck and hundreds of Korean hearts in her pocket, it was to a heroine's welcome. The first bouquet came with a Standard 2000, a gift from the Kerala Government, along with Rs 3 lakh in cash, besides Rs 6.5 lakh from the Government of India. And the laurels kept streaming in: a lakh rupees here and ten lakh there, a three-tier promotion from the Railways, and roses roses all the way. "All thanks to Lord Guruvayurappan," beamed India's ray of hope, as she went round Guruvayur lighting oil lamps and offering her weight in sugar. Success, of course, has no other taste but sweet.

—Compiled by MOHAMMED ASLAM

HARI OM GULATI



Usha and her Standard 2000: gold and glitter

J. SASI KUMAR

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ASI KUMAR

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The Second Honeymoon

The Indian Government pulled out all stops for last week's highly publicised visit by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. The timing was significant. Events concerning regional security in recent weeks have given India added impetus to reaffirm its ties with the USSR.

COVER STORY 90

On a Slippery Slope

Last fortnight when the Congress(I) lost its fifth consecutive by-election in Orissa, it left Chief Minister J.B. Patnaik weaker than ever before. Already under attack from half his legislators, many ministers and MP's, Patnaik has battles on many fronts ahead.

CURRENT EVENTS 24

Suspended Animation

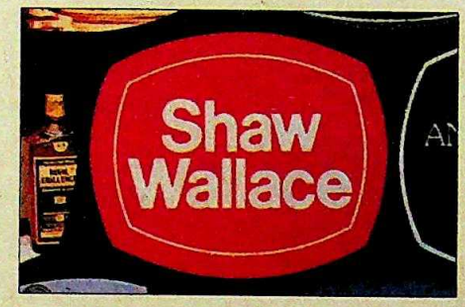
South Block finds the brokering of a settlement in Sri Lanka's crisis increasingly intricate. It cannot persuade the militants to accept Colombo's offers and dare not take further action against them because of the sympathy they enjoy in Tamil Nadu.

SPECIAL REPORT 79

Enigmatic First Lady

For the first time since Independence, the country has a visible First Lady in Sonia Gandhi. And of late, curiosity about her role in Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's life is growing. What status does she enjoy? Does she advise and influence her husband's politics?

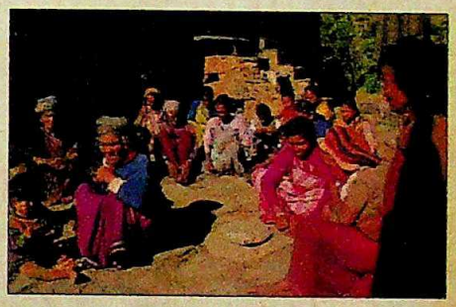
SPECIAL FEATURE 82



Institutional Muscle

The crucial meeting of shareholders in Shaw Wallace turned out sensational results. While the adversaries were company boss S.P.Acharya and the Chhabrias, who were attempting a take-over, it was the Government's financial institutions that won the day.

BUSINESS 135



The Male Migration

Perhaps no other part of India has seen migration on a larger scale than the hills of Kumaon and Garhwal in Uttar Pradesh. So dramatic is this phenomenon, spurred by unemployment, that, in village after village, there are few able-bodied men to be found.

LIVING 160

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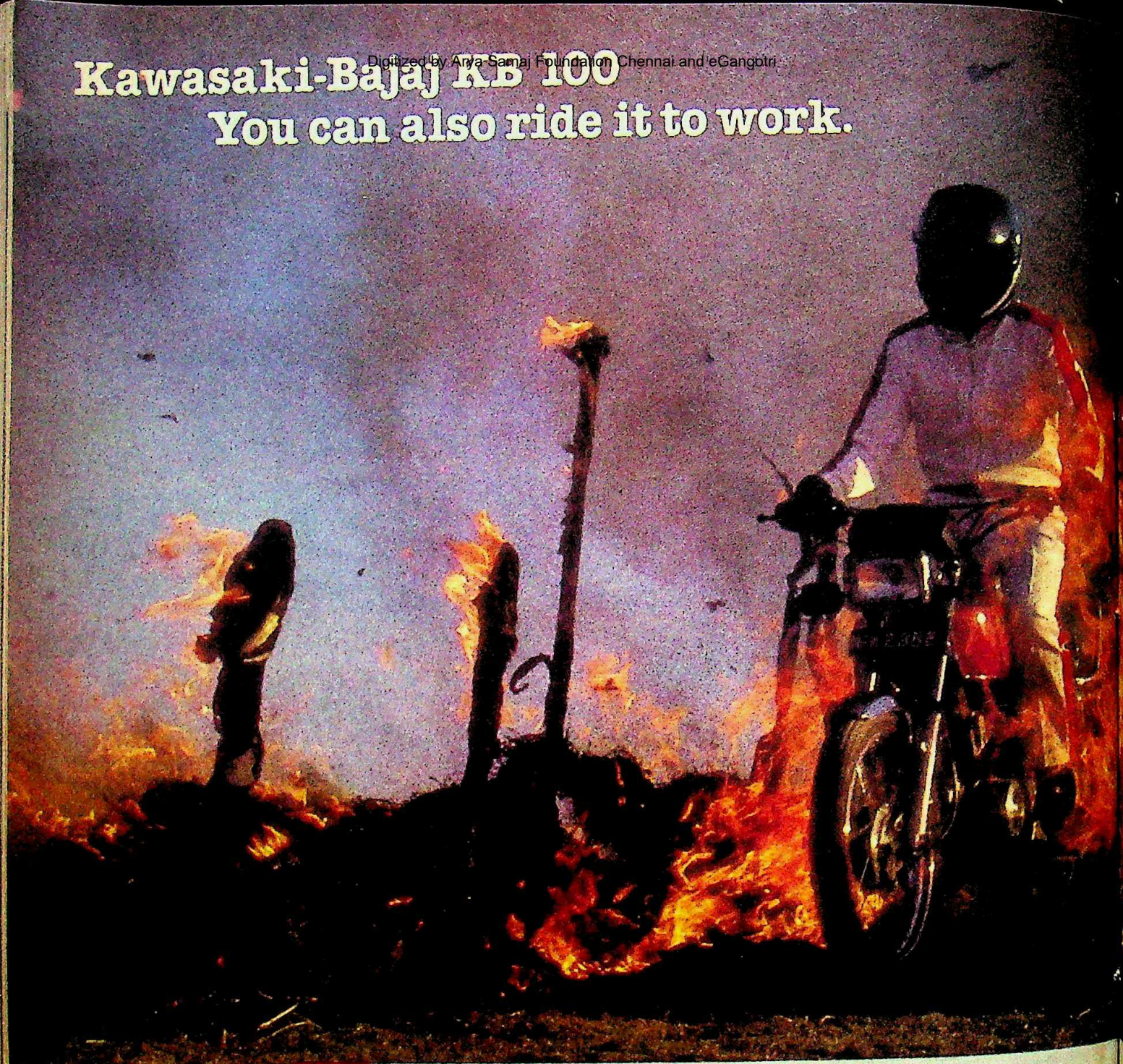
Kawasaki-Bajaj KB 100
You can also ride it to work.



Kawasaki-Bajaj KB 100.

The toughest, raciest, safest motorcycle of them all. Japanese technology, effectively adapted for Indian roads.

The longest wheel base, widest tyre size and its sturdy frame double cradling the 100 cc engine ensure perfect stability.

Telescopic front forks with the longest travel and rear shock absorbers adjustable to suit individual preference make the ride royally smooth.

An extra large brake drum makes stopping more efficient and ensures safe handling.

The high ground clearance and a fully enclosed carburettor combat bad roads, monsoon conditions and dust infiltration.

Among the other features exclusive to the KB 100 is a rotary disc valve for better pick-up and thrust from a standing start. A tachometer to help select the right gear for maximum fuel economy. The brightest lighting equipment — a powerful 35W headlight and 21W direction indicators and tail stop lights —

LINTAS BAJ 43 2741

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bajaj group

bajaj auto

Value for money, for years

enable you to see and be seen on the darkest night. And a special parking light.

The KB 100 is brought to you by Bajaj, India's premier two and three-wheeler company, and Kawasaki, the Japanese high technology giant. Kawasaki has nailed factory to its door by making the fastest motorcycle in the world.

The KB 100 comes with the celebrated advantage of Bajaj's countrywide network of sales, service and spare parts dealers. At each centre, mechanics specially trained at the factory ensure that your motorcycle is maintained in prime condition.

Ride the Kawasaki-Bajaj KB 100 and you'll appreciate why you just can't beat a Bajaj.

Engineered to take more than you can give it.

Kawasaki-Bajaj

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From Garware Paints Here's Garcoat Petals.

Nature's expression of elegance, captured in an exquisite wall finish.

Petal soft smoothness, the quiet feel of flowers in bloom, the beauty of Mother Nature's most elegant expression. Captured in a paint so luxurious, so distinctive.

In colours that express themselves in quiet shades of flowers and petals. Of sunlight and nature.

Garcoat Petals. The first of a new range from Garware Paints.

You have good taste. Let it show.

GARCOAT PETALS

GARWARE गरवारे

Garware Paints Ltd.

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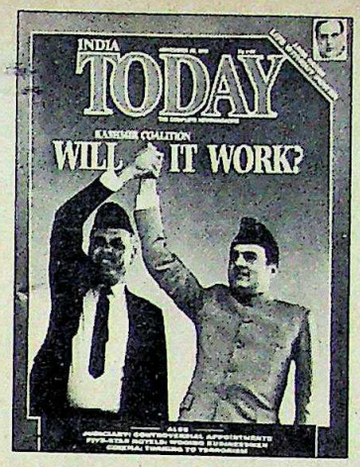

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Your report on Jammu and Kashmir ("Coalition Government: Will it Work?", November 30) was both informative and forceful. It seems that the Congress(I) and the National Conference(Farooq) alliance is going to be another fiasco, notwithstanding the present euphoria of their new friendship and their audacious proclamations of unity, fraternity and goodwill.

Deogarh — **M. KANTI**

■ Politics is a strange game. It turns arch rivals into chums overnight, backbiters into sycophants, and people of dubious integrity into great nationalists. This is at least evident from the deal struck between Rajiv and Farooq. However it is doubtful how far the (noble) intentions of the two leaders will help in restoring stability to the state.

Lucknow — **NARENDRA M. PANT**

■ If anything, it is the yearning for power which has tempted Farooq Abdullah to come to terms with the Congress(I), which was previously responsible for toppling the democratically elected government of the former in 1984. The contention of the two parties that it was the spurt of anti-national and secessionist forces which has forced them to come to terms is flimsy and specious, as it was their political skullduggery and dithering which had caused instability in the state.

Ahmedabad — **M.V. RAVINDRAN**

■ The joining of forces between Rajiv Gandhi and Farooq Abdullah has come as a whiff of fresh air. Though the accord doesn't guarantee the much required political stability in the state, it will definitely suffuse the air in Kashmir with hope and infallibility.

Bangalore — **K. CHIDANAND KUMAR**

TRUE GRIT

If Arun Nehru ("Arun Nehru: Life Without Power", November 30) had to be relieved of his portfolio because he could not see eye to eye with the prime minister and many others in his coterie, he deserves admiration for the courage he displayed in sticking to his guns. In a country where politics is simply the game of being a yes-man to the prime minister, Nehru's "hardline approach" and unwavering stance on political issues is a welcome change.

Delhi — **RITU SAHAI MATHUR**

FINDING FAULT

It is a pity that such an important religious leader like Shankaracharya ("Shankaracharya: "Rajiv is a Good Raja", November 30) holds such narrow views on religion. He should have accepted the fact that the Hindu religion has many drawbacks and talked more about their eradication instead of finding faults in other religions.

Ludhiana — **PRABHIJEET SINGH**

SOFT POLITICIAN

I agree with your contention ("Comment: Pining for Mrs Gandhi", November 30) that Indira was a good politician but not a good statesman. I also agree that nobody can be perfect. Yet Rajiv Gandhi should acknowledge some of the mistakes that his mother made and make efforts not to repeat them.

Delhi — **PRABHAKAR S. HARSOLE**

■ It is true that Rajiv Gandhi is a soft politician. However, the general mood in the country is that one can do anything and get away with it, given either power or money. Rajiv must understand that soft options to the myriad problems facing the country do not in the long run have a lasting value.

Delhi — **MANOJ KUMAR GUPTA**

CULTURAL MELA

Your article ("Apna Utsav: Mixed Success", November 30) gives only a fleeting view of the variety of programmes that were going on in different parts of Delhi. Viewing the programmes on TV, one feels that in the effort to bridge the gap between the performers and the audience there was hardly any attempt to plan out the programmes in an orderly fashion.

Bangalore — **T.S. SHANKARAN**

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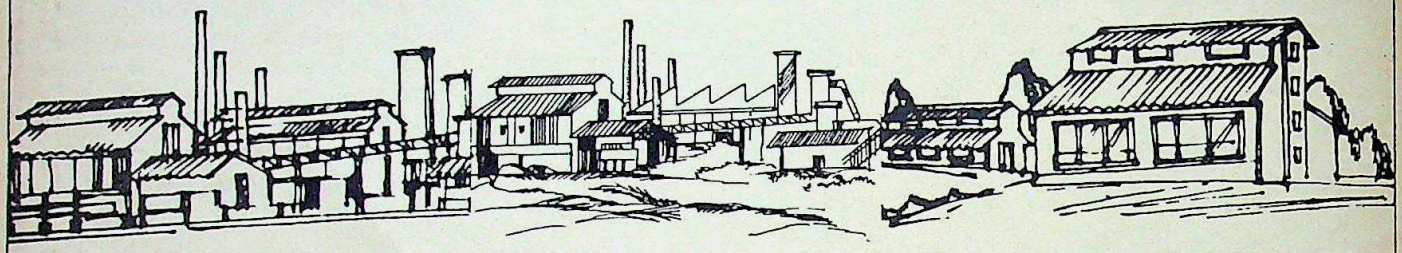

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■ In spite of its numerous detractors, Apna Utsav provided an opportunity for the dancers and other performers from different parts of the country to interact and understand each other.

Jamshedpur — B.N BOSE

■ Apna Utsav has been the greatest cultural event of the century. What little could be seen on Doordarshan has left a lasting impression on the viewers: a veritable feast of song, dance, and music. The mela should be a permanent event in the cultural calendar of the country.

Pune — D.B.N. MURTHY

SORRY VERDICT

Your report on the judiciary ("Controversial Appointments", November 30) was commendable. If merit or meritocracy becomes the first casualty in political manipulations we have come to a sorry state. But the article might act as a corrective and stop the spread of the rot that is setting in.

Chandigarh — MANGU RAM GUPTA

■ The disclosures are very revealing and show that when the chief ministers, chief justices, prime minister and the chief justice of the Supreme Court view each candidate's appointment from different angles, the result is the present state of affairs. Judges' chairs remain vacant for years together.

Basantnagar — S. RAGHOTHAMA RAO

■ It is shocking that political considerations decide appointments of judges. How will these judges be expected to uphold the traditions of their position after having manipulated themselves into the post.

Patna — ASHUTOSH GUPTA

UNIQUE GAUGE

Opinions Today ("Clear Preferences", November 30) was a unique experience. For the first time we had an opportunity to gauge where we stood in relation to the opinions of the thinking majority with reference to policies and issues of vital importance.

Delhi — IQBAL AHMAD

REAL THREAT

Pakistan's proposed acquisition of AWACS and M 1 tanks ("Danger in the Skies", November 30) from the US does cause much concern, but neither are invincible. The AWACS can also be countered by acquiring either the AEW Nimrod or the TU-126 Moss. But Pakistan's nuclear programme is more disturbing. If they are 'two screwdriver turns' away from making a nuclear bomb, India should reconsider its nuclear options.

Bombay — SANJEEV S. MEHTA

PLOTTING POLITICIANS

Referring to the article on Ahmedabad ("A Wounded City", November 30) it is plotting politicians who do their bit to heighten feelings of communalism. Underneath all the madness, a feeling of oneness and brotherhood continues to exist between Hindus and Muslims in this city.

Ahmedabad — KETAN YAGNIK

LOVING TEACHER

In your article ("Teaching in Tihar", November 15) you have left out the names of some of the donors. I am so deeply grateful to all of them that unless I correct the error, I would feel very bad. Those left out are listed: chief of the army staff, chief of the navy staff, Convent of Jesus and Mary, and retired air marshal M. Barker.

Tihar Jail, New Delhi — K.H. LARKINS

■ The story of Tihar classes is good. Classes are good games. We love Uncle Kenneth. He loves us. Uncle Frank is also very good. He distributes milk in the morning. He distributes egg, butter and bread. He takes sick boys to hospital. He gets medicines. He is loved by all boys.

Tihar Jail — SARBJIT SINGH BAJAJ

HEARTY NEWS

Your special feature on heart disease ("Hitting the Young", November 15) was informative. It is heartening to know that more sophisticated treatment facilities are becoming available in India.

Illinois, USA — DEEPA CHATURVEDI

■ Congratulations on a very informative article on heart disease. Though a complex subject, it was very lucidly presented, bringing out the causes and the non-availability of medical aid. However, I do wish the article had mentioned the harmful effects of saturated fats and the beneficial effects of relatively unsaturated fats like sunflower, corn and soyabean oil. The other causes are avoidable.

Faizabad — Dr A.N. MEHROTRA

VISA HASSLES

Your article ("Passport to Peril", November 15) was excellent and balanced, showing clearly the state of affairs in this country. The harassment and humiliation of Asians at Heathrow, was played up on British television and newspapers gave the issue front page coverage. The media projection unfortunately gave the average person living here the impression that England was being invaded by undesirable Asians. It is ironic that though South Africans can enter the United Kingdom without a visa, Indians are humiliated.

Bedford, UK — Dr SATISH BALI

SIGNIFICANT SHUFFLE

Your cover story ("Cabinet Reshuffle—Shock Treatment", November 15) was well timed. Arun Nehru's exit apart, the reshuffle was significant more for the demotions and dismissals than the promotions. As for Arjun Singh, he has prospered in the past two years despite several changes in his assignments. Nobody should now be in a hurry to write him off.

Sidhi, Madhya Pradesh — B.N.S. TIWARI

■ If anything, the cabinet reshuffle will come as an eye-opener to the wheeler-dealer members of the Congress(I) that they cannot take the prime minister for granted. The shock treatment meted out to Arun Nehru and the adroit paring of Arjun Singh to size proves that Rajiv Gandhi can play his cards well in the political arena. Every move made has been well thought out and executed.

Ahmedabad — M.V. RAVINDRAN

LIVE AID

In response to your photo feature ("Unwed Mothers", November 15) we can grant total credit to the International Mission of Hope for the service they offer to unwed mothers. Yet it is probably this service which is able to keep their adoption programme alive. I feel that welfare agencies who are gearing themselves to work with unwed mothers need to alter their orientation to include the preventive and educative aspects of this social problem. Their areas of work should extend to sex and family education, instead of working only as reception centres for unwanted children.

Madras — NANDITA VERMA

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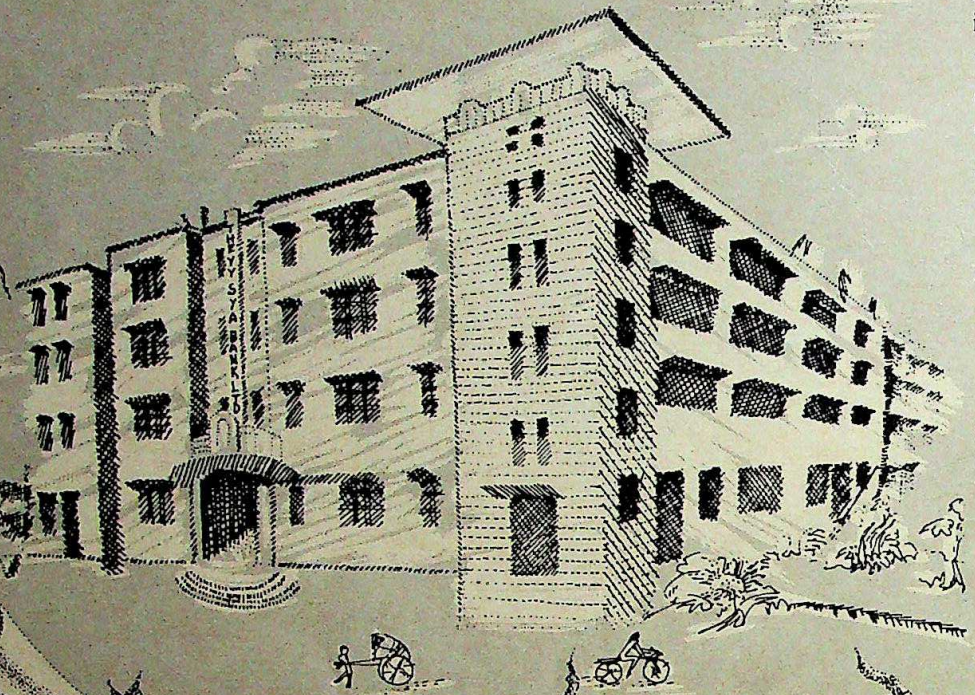

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A Question of Culture

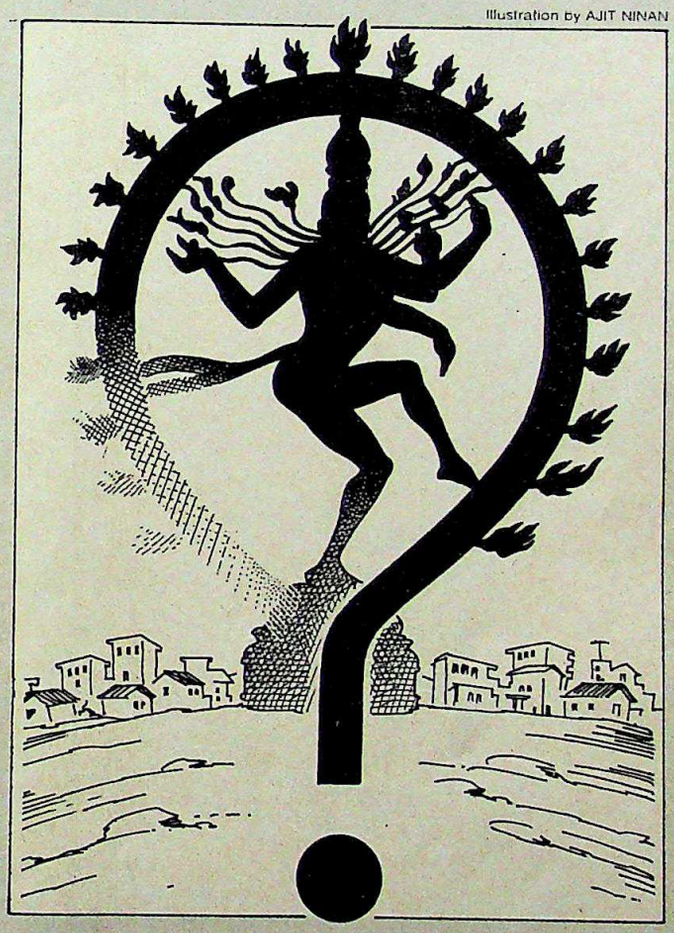
SUDDENLY, culture is important. And it's everywhere: in *Apna Utsav*, on the TV screen, in the prime minister's rhetoric. And basic questions are being asked: how important a role can culture play in cementing a fractious country together? Should culture come with a Rs 5-crore bill, as it did in *Apna Utsav*. Can a government shove culture down the people's throats, like another official programme? How do you take culture out of musty museums and involve the people? How do you make a people in transition conscious of their roots? How important are those roots?

Man, of course, does not live by bread alone. There ought to be more to life than *roti, kapda aur makaan*. But in the afterglow of Independence, culture was put on a backseat as Nehru gave shape to his dreams of modern temples at Bhakra, Bhilai and Tarapur. But industrialisation, urbanisation, commercialism and other elements of the national transition have been at a price. The plastic sandal has replaced the embroidered shoe. The alienation of man from his roots and the end to the certainty of inherited values has resulted in the culturally dispossessed. The Hindi film fills the vacuum.

But any civilisation in control of the process of change preserves its past and uses it to give meaning to the present, even to shape its future. Japan has done it: respect for elders survives with super-computers, for instance. Even in India, over the years, the effort has increased to preserve old monuments, protect art treasures, foster the crafts. And as the mental hang-over of colonialism fades, classical music and dance find infinitely wider acceptance.

But none of this is enough, as anyone familiar with the coarsening of India must realise. There is something radically wrong if a mud-hut in a village is cleaner, more aesthetic and more psychically harmonious than what the housing bureaucracy calls an MIG (middle income group) flat that costs a hundred times as much. The transition from 'underdeveloped' to 'developing' brings other unwelcome changes: there is a new violence in the air, ordinary civilities become rarities, people who rigidly observed caste barriers in the villages don't seem to recognise traffic barriers in the cities, and as society goes into a churning, greeds come to the surface. What has been left behind was whole; what we now have are broken parts of something new.

Illustration by AJIT NINAN



When a government realises this, what results is a cultural blitzkrieg fired by a certain desperation. The organisers of *Apna Utsav* have painted dark scenarios of a disintegrating India unless culture is used as some kind of glue to hold it together: if flowers can stop tanks, such manifestations can paper over dissensions, they say. To an extent, that is true. But culture, after all, is not a tray of hors-d'oeuvres to be passed around. Nor is it something that looks seemly when adopted by the Government, even though the state must in some respects be the natural successor to the maharajahs of yore as patron of the arts.

Nehru and Mrs Gandhi tried it. There were the akademis that quickly became fossilised, politicised bureaucracies that failed to achieve their objective. Committee after committee came and went. And perhaps inevitably, the whole effort became export-oriented: even the ethnic culturewallahs like a foreign junket. So what if the price is an injured *yakshi*?

After all that, *Apna Utsav* is—for all its faults—a change for the better. It was hastily tacked together, was predictably Delhi-centric and bordered on being patronising to the suddenly important lumpen. But at least such a festival recognises that the bureaucracy has its limitations, that the akademis and bhawans cannot be repositories of any living culture, and that if culture is to breathe, the people are unavoidable. Indeed, the repositories of India's living heritage, the continuity of our civilisation are the socially and economically deprived. The Bhagalpur silk or the embroidered shoes and woven shawls—all that constitute the uniforms of the ethnic chic today—would disappear had it not been for them.

So the best part of the cultural awakening, of course, is that a great deal of it has been quite autonomous of the Government. If it is fashionable to sit all night and listen to Mallikarjun Mansur, the akademis become irrelevant. If this process is taken further up the road, the Government too can stop organising *Apna Utsavs*. Private trusts and organisations can take that over, like the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage and also generate fresh debate on alternative coordinates for building new cultural bridges that link the past with the present, the heritage of an ancient civilisation with the pulse of a young nation. Without this, even sufficient *roti, kapda aur makaan* will not be enough.

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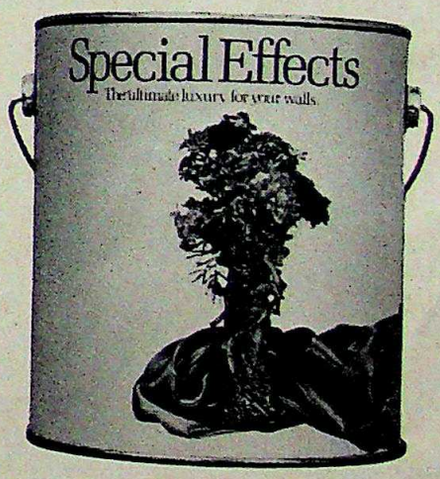

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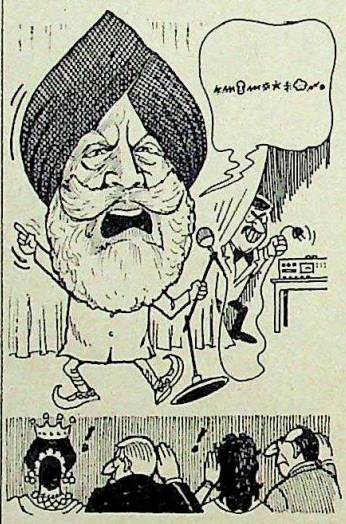
Image Making

● A high-level search is on once again for a powerful public relations outfit to lobby within the US for India's trade and diplomatic causes. During the last few weeks several meetings have taken place within the Prime Minister's Secretariat in order to assess how effectively India has been able to sell its case in Washington. The preliminary conclusion is: very badly. Whether it's a question of textile quotas, trade preferences, soft loans from the World Bank, or arms to Pakistan, India always seems to come out on the losing side. A New York public relations firm, which was hired last year to publicise India's image, was assessed to have performed only marginally well. South Block is now believed to be seriously considering the possibility of looking for a powerful industrial group with top level connections for the job. It is not uncommon in the US for large corporations which make heavy campaign donations

and command solid influence on Capitol Hill to assign senior executives to lobby the cause of foreign countries—for a price, of course. And it's all above board. A giant multinational, for example, effectively champions the interests of the Arab state of Morocco. And the nation, notwithstanding opposition from the US's "Jewish lobby" gets pretty much what it wants. The review in South Block is still not complete but the powers that be seem to favour a change in the style of operations abroad.

Speechless Act

● The gap between Sikhs and Hindus appears to be widening everywhere. And New Delhi is no exception. It reared its head last fortnight at a



Cartoons by AJIT NINAN

meeting of the International Women's Club. Several foreign bigwigs were also in attendance. One of the key speakers was author-designer Patwant Singh, whose crisp churidar outfit won the admiration of those present, including the former maharani of Jasdhan state. But that is where the admiration stopped. When Singh took the dais he began to deliver a speech about communal relations in which he was ruthlessly candid in a description about the 1984 riots in Delhi. And the screaming started. A group of Hindu members, incensed that Singh was politicising the meeting, demanded that Singh stop his peroration. When the author remained adamant the group walked out of the room threatening to complain to the Home Ministry. Singh refused to budge. Several members then dragged in a hotel manager and demanded that he evict Singh from the speaker's platform. Unwilling to take such drastic action the manager devised an alternative strategy. He pulled the plug on the microphone and Singh's intonation was quickly silenced. Singh described this demonstration as "barbaric".

Files Pile

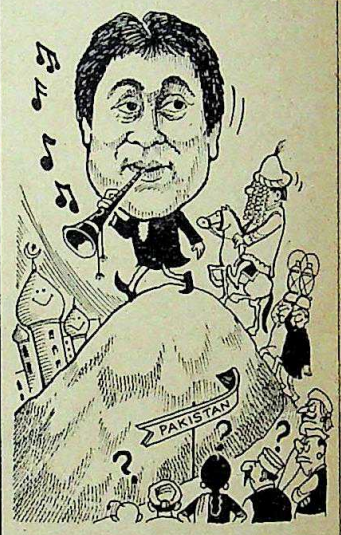
● This is a tale from the corridors of the Government that works faster. It was almost a year ago that the prime minister decided to split the Ministry of Social Welfare by putting the subjects of women's and children's welfare under one ministry and welfare for scheduled castes and tribes and social defence under another. The result was a free for all in which bureaucrats were left wondering about their responsibilities. There also ensued a complete mix-up of files, and several officials in Shastri Bhawan spent months sifting through them.

The sorting is now done, but it will need some effort to transfer hundreds of files

meant for the scheduled castes and tribes welfare department. The dusty, overstuffed files are now lying in gunny bags in the corridors. At the moment there seem to be no takers for the challenge and the files lie there, stacked up to the ceiling. And bureaucrats wending their way in and out of their offices in the building have to play hop-skip-and-jump over the overstacked *boris* of paperwork.

Vicious Whispers

● Among several young rising stars in the Congress(I) firmament is Salim Sherwani, 35, a "fresh face" member of Parliament from Badaun. His family of industrialists hails from Allahabad and has old ties with the Nehru family. But



his detractors have started a vicious whispering campaign claiming that his career could take an unfavourable turn because of an upcoming family tie. Salim's younger brother Saeed who is himself active in his brother's politics and has managed his campaign in the past is shortly to have an arranged marriage—in Pakistan. The *baraat* is expected to travel to Lahore for the nuptials. Sherwani's supporters are inclined to brush the issue aside as yet another example of political foes trying to erect a mountain out of a molehill.

Tailpiece

● Suddenly prime ministerial aide Mani Shanker Aiyar was all over television—looming large from the screen and behind it nearly as often as the prime minister. So much so that the joke doing the rounds of Doordarshan last fortnight was: "At least in Doordarshan you get your Mani's worth."

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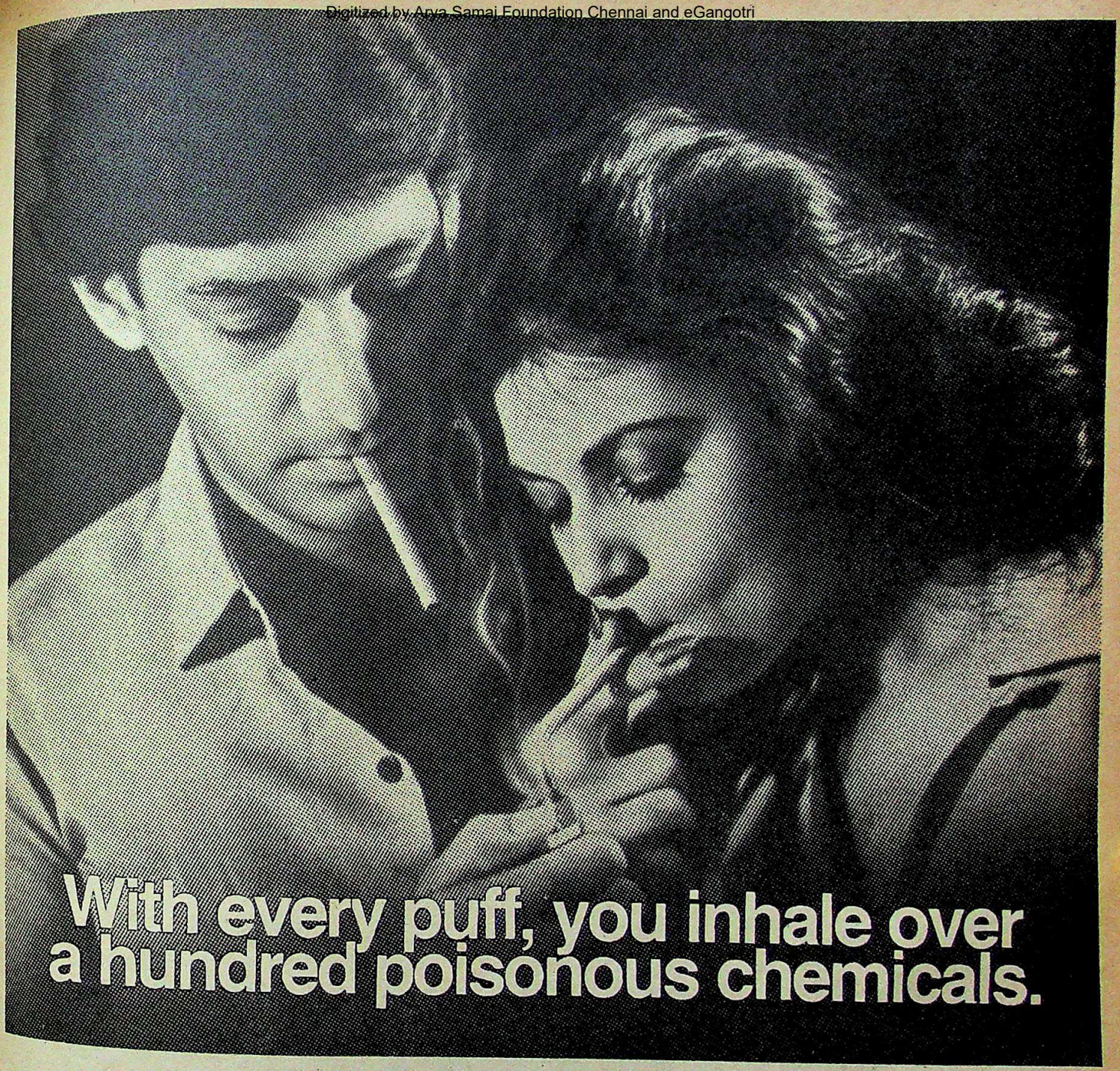

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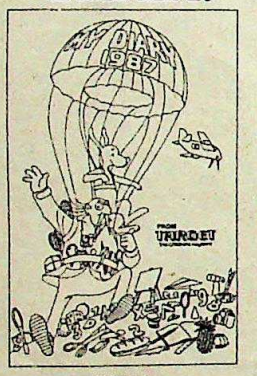

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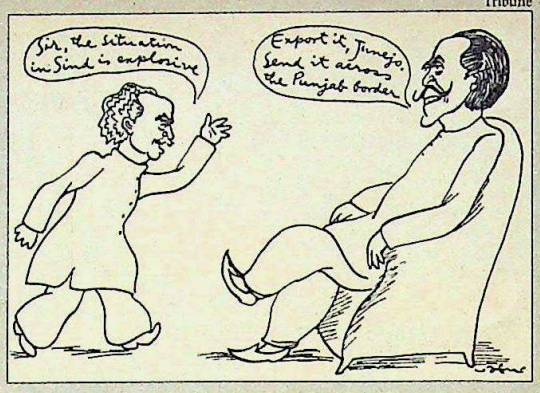

● *The comment that the* SAARC *summit was upstaged by the India-Pakistan meetings misses the point. The crucial Rajiv-Jayewardene and Rajiv-Junejo encounters should be seen as the strength of* SAARC *rather than the weakness of the Bangalore summit.*
■ Comment in the *Indian Express*

● *I think it is one of the major faults of Rajiv Gandhi's functioning that he has surrounded himself with* yaars *from Doon School. He is insecure. If Indians agree to be ruled in this fashion... they deserve the treatment they get.*
■ ROMESH THAPAR in *Probe India*

● *He (Rajiv) relishes people saying what they feel like. But nobody should take this as an opportunity to lampoon the leadership or to try to make a public show of it.... Unquestioning loyalty to the leader is, I think, a prerequisite for the Congress Party.*
■ ARJUN SINGH in *The Sunday Observer*

● *What has put us off is the way* DGP *Mohan Das was congratulated at having overpowered us. Think of what would have happened if we had retaliated. The Indian Army would have had to be called.*
■ ANTON BALASINGHAM, Tamil Tigers, leader, in *The Sunday Observer*

● *If you can maintain the buoyancy of taxes, I shall maintain the buoyancy of reform.*
■ V.P. SINGH quoted in *Bombay*

● *It is obvious that the Government is not entirely comfortable with a press over which it has no control—the Government likes to conceal, the press likes to reveal.*
■ Editorial in the *Indian Express*

● *I have seen men appointed to positions of power after their horoscopes were examined. I have seen a minister's portfolio taken away in 1981 only because his stars said that he stood a good chance of being a prime minister one day.*
■ MANEKA GANDHI, columnist in *Probe India*

● *The desire to educate the world is not restricted to Indians. Our Pakistani brethren share the same enthusiasm.... We are convinced that while we tell the truth, the other disseminates false propaganda.*
■ KHUSHWANT SINGH in his weekly column in *Sunday*

● *The Government is not God. It is made up of human beings who can make mistakes... If it is a government of the people, by the people and for the people, then their first and foremost duty is to provide relief to the people.*
■ SUNIL DUTT, MP, commenting on the Government's reaction to the recent film industry strike in *Sunday Mail*

● *I think that whole sex symbol thing is an anachronism. I've bared neither entire breast nor buttock to the public eye in any of my films. My career has never been fuelled by scandal.*
■ SRIDEVI in *Onlooker*

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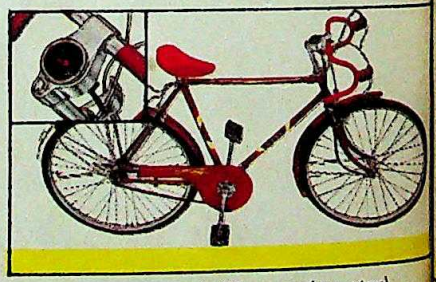

Hero Ergo (with speedometer)

Hero Hi Speed (Gents) – 3 Speed Freewhe

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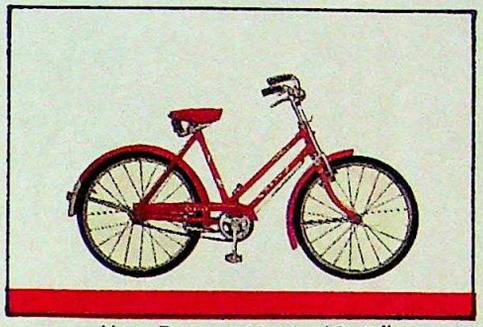
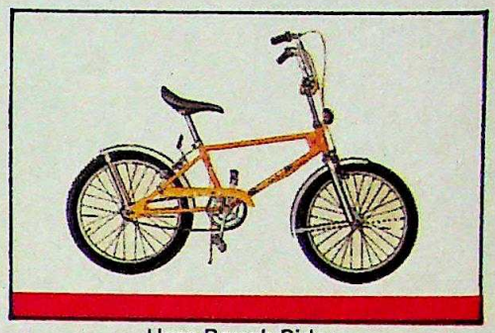
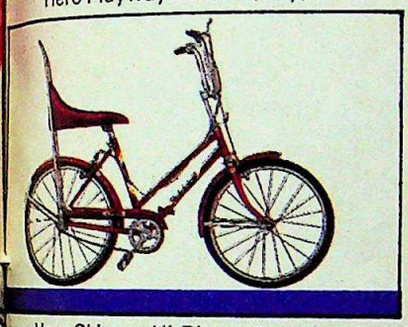
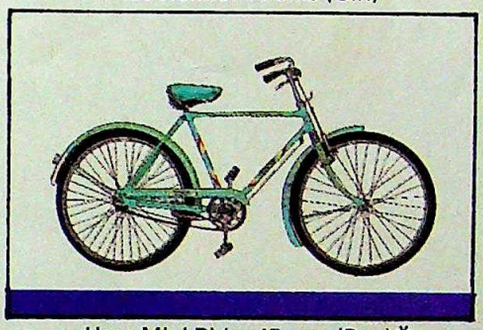
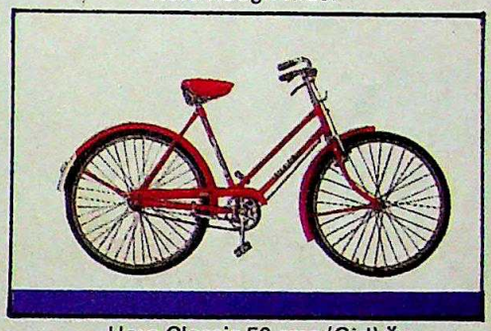
Hero Playway 35 cms (Boy) *


Hero Runner 40 cms (Girl) *

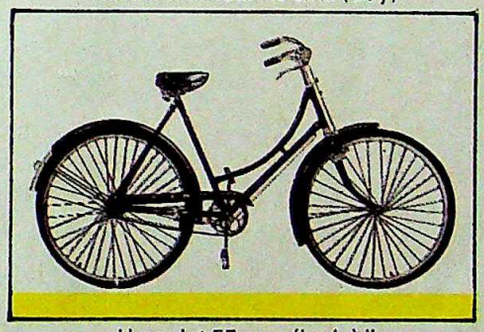

Hero Rough Rider

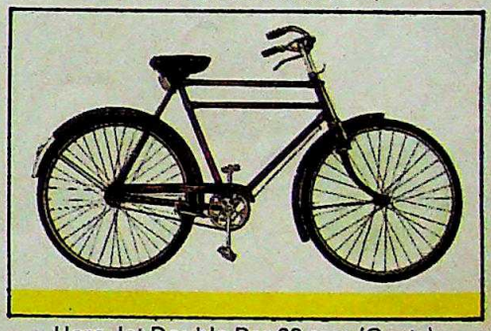

Hero Skipper Hi-Riser 40 cms


Hero Mini Rider 45 cms (Boy) *


Hero Classic 50 cms (Girl) *

Hero Jet 60 cms (Gents) *


Hero Jet 55 cms (Lady) *


Hero Jet Double Bar 60 cms (Gents)

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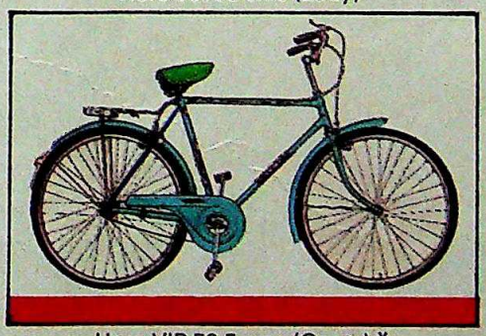
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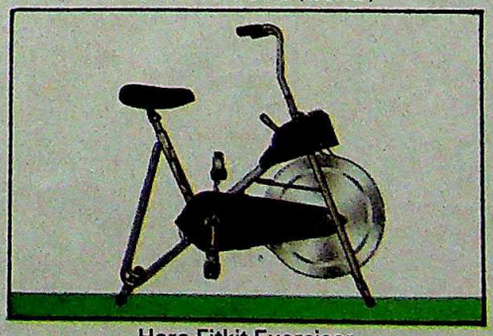
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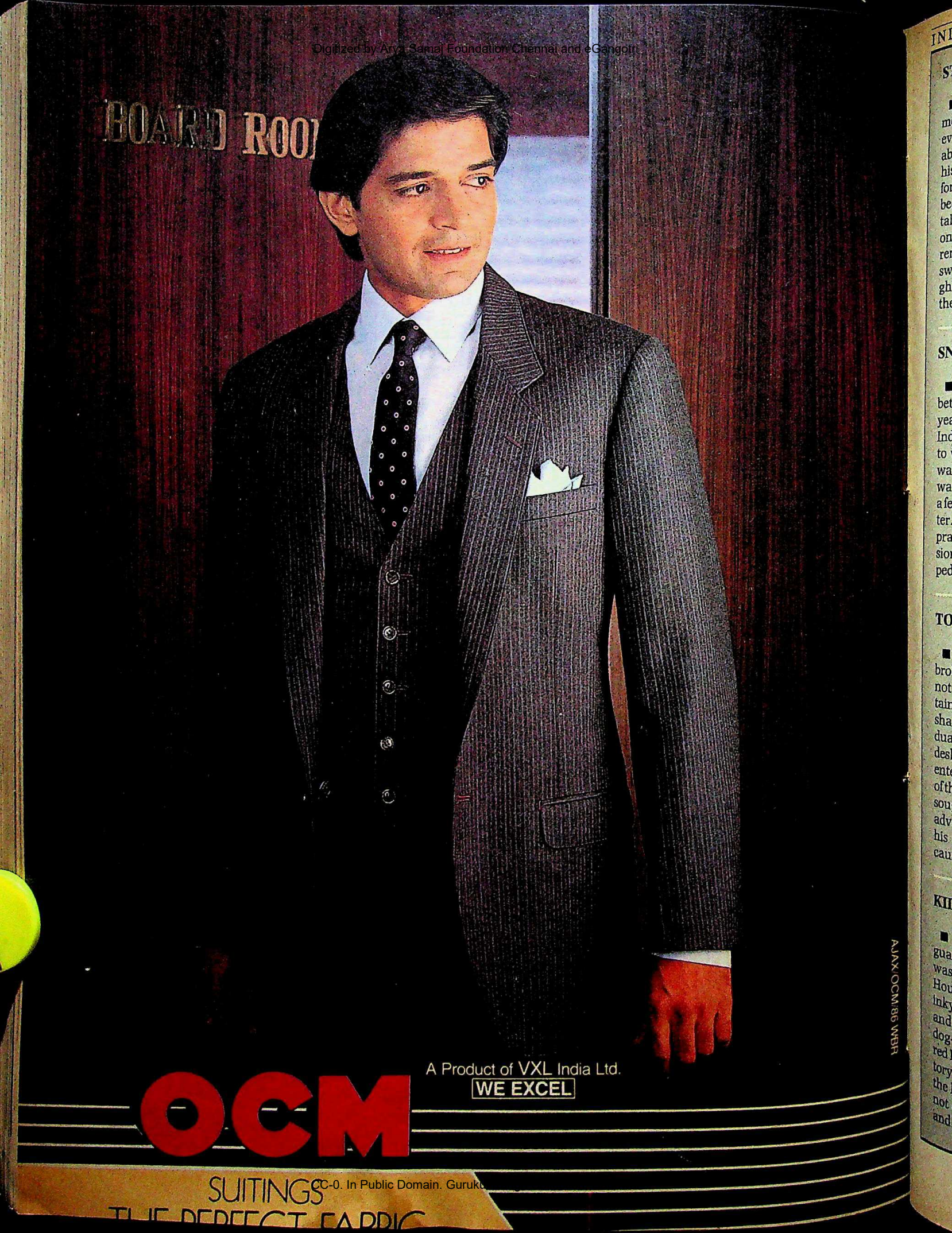

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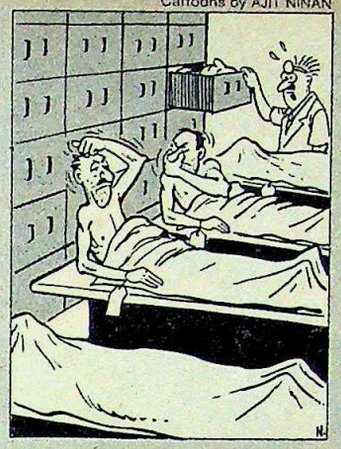
STAYING ALIVE



■ A conscientious resident medical officer (RMO) on his evening rounds at a Hyderabad hospital stopped dead in his tracks—the three still forms on three regulation beds told their own tragic tale. Not one to waste his time on formalities, the worthy peremptorily ordered two sweepers, looking on with ghoulish interest, to dump the corpses in the mortuary compound.

And there the matter would have ended but for medicos from the Forensic Department who arrived to do the post-mortem the next afternoon. In a scene harking back to blood-curdling tales of Edgar Allen Poe, two of the 'dead' began to stir and show signs of interest in their surroundings. It was as though the zombies had arrived. Both patients, it turned out, though quite sick were alive enough and were promptly shifted back to the hospital ward.

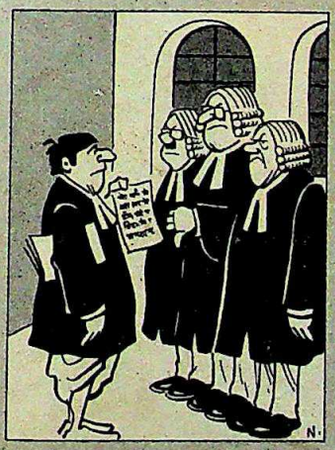
Hackles rose and voices were raised against the callousness of the RMO and cries of criminal negligence rent the air. What still remains a mystery is why the three were dumped in the mortuary compound instead—as is the rule—of being handed over to the mortuary duty officer where the "bodies" would have received the requisite certification.

SNAIL'S PACE

■ It was truly a case of better late than never. In the year of grace 1971, when Mrs Indira Gandhi led the nation to victory in the Bangladesh war, a Rajkot industrialist was sufficiently moved to pen a few lines to the prime minister. In fulsome terms did he praise her leadership, her vision, her humanity and popped the envelope into the letter-box down the lane. Alack and alas, in vain did he wait for a reply. It arrived, finally in October 1986—15 years later. It was a gracious handwritten thank you note from Mrs Gandhi—for his lavish praise—and he treasures it as a posthumous memory to a great prime minister.

And recently there was a repeat performance of this postal misdeed. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, in his capacity as chancellor of Visva Bharati University, wrote to the vice-chancellor on October 12 regarding plans for the expansion of the university. The honourable gentleman had the singular good fortune of receiving it—25 days later. A tribute—depending on the way you look at it—to the impartiality of the Postal Department even where the prime minister is involved, or its utter inefficiency.

TONGUE TROUBLE



■ Rules are made to be broken goes the saying but not for advocates and certainly not for the Rashtrabhasha. An earnest young graduate in law from Uttar Pradesh—the Hindi heartland—entered the august precincts of the Bar Council of Delhi and sought to be enrolled as an advocate. The members ruled his entry unacceptable because the young man in question had refused to pass a preliminary examination in English, which in good schoolboy tradition, included precis, essay and translation—one hundred marks!

Indignant and upset, he pointed out that it made little sense to have studied law in Hindi if he had to appear for a test in English. And what, he argued, did this imply for the status of the national language. But the council showed little interest in the finer points of the case and upheld their ruling.

With visions of his career coming to a blighted end, the distraught young man then fired off letters to the prime minister and other ministers. But to little effect. With his cry for justice unheard, the young man has resolved—in time-honoured Gandhian tradition—to go on hunger strike outside the prime minister's residence till death or justice does him apart.

KID STUFF

■ Boys will be boys and guards will be guards—that was the theme at Parliament House recently. A gaggle of inky schoolboys, ties askew and dirty fingers clutching dog-eared notebooks, entered Parliament for the obligatory part of a civics lesson. But the holy cow of security does not exempt even schoolboys and a moustachioed guard brusquely ordered them to empty their pockets to the whine of a metal detector.

But there was this little boy who, far from being excited by the goings-on, looked rather worried, even anxious. Stowed deep in his pockets were a handful of toffees and since little boys' tastes run the same, he had reason enough to keep them where they were. But the guard was not prepared to lower his guard and so offered a word of cheer. Take them he would but safe they would remain in the padlocked security of his counter.

When the lesson in practical politics was over and the kid went back to the counter the guard appeared to be missing. But, nay, there he was at the doorway—moustache and all, toffees in hand and smile to match.

—Compiled by SURYA GANGADHARAN

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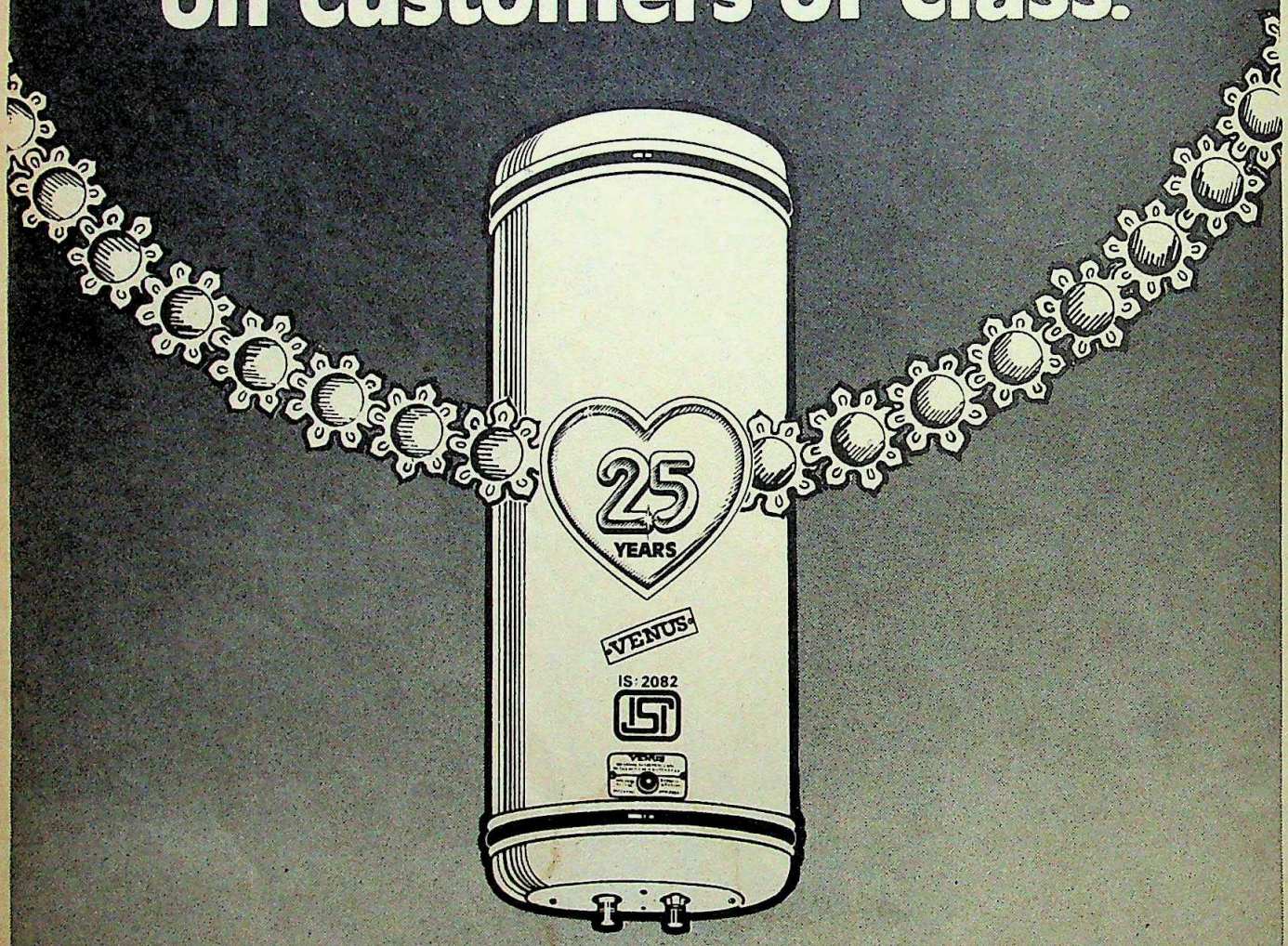

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BY-ELECTIONS

Ultimately a Draw

THERE were enough reasons for the Congress(I) leaders to heave a sigh of relief last fortnight. For the first time since the 1984 Lok Sabha elections the party had done reasonably well in the by-elections held for 14 Assembly and two Lok Sabha seats in six states. As the verdict of the voters became clear, it was obvious that they still had faith in Rajiv Gandhi's charisma and that the Congress(I)'s hold over the Hindi heartland was intact. Of the 14 Assembly seats, the party won six (a net loss of just one seat) and retained both the Lok Sabha seats of Raichur in Karnataka and Banka in Bihar.

The Janata romped home with four, while the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) got two seats, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Lok Dal won one each. Boasted Nawal Kishore Sharma, one of the six general secretaries of the All India Congress(I) Committee (AICC-I): "The prophets of doom have been belied. It is a clear vote in favour of the policies of the Congress(I) and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi."

The party had reason to be content. The AICC(I) had been receiving reports of possible reverses in Bihar, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. And they did return a poor score in Karnataka and suffer a reverse in Bihar. But it did very well in Madhya Pradesh, and even bested the combined forces of the Opposition in the Banka parliamentary constituency where, for the first time since 1984, the Janata, Lok Dal and BJP unitedly opposed the Congress(I). Their common candidate was none other than Janata Party General Secretary George Fernandes.

After the campaign picked up it became increasingly evident that Fernandes was not able to make a dent in the Thakur-dominated constituency carefully nursed by the late chief minister, Chandrashekhar Singh, whose death caused the by-election. His wife Manorama finally won the seat with a comfortable majority of over 32,000 votes, leaving Fernandes to ponder over his third successive electoral defeat in less than three years. But the Janata Party attributed Fernandes' defeat to rigging by the ruling party.

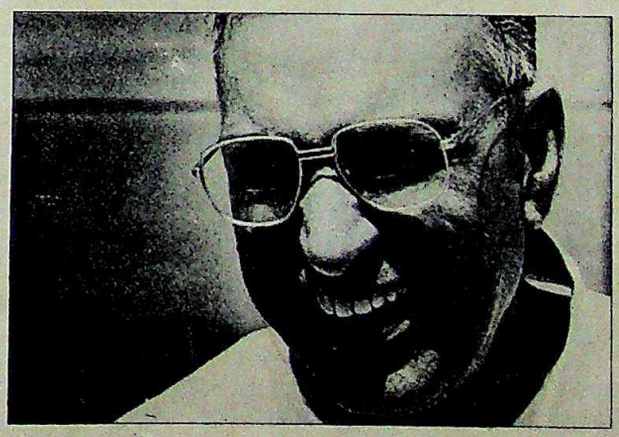
While the Congress(I) was able to humble its mighty foe in Banka, it also worsted the Lok Dal in its stronghold of Konch, where Irrigation Minister Ramashray Singh wrested the Lok Dal seat by a margin of over 45,000 votes. But as if to maintain political balance, the voters forced the Congress(I) to concede the Banka Assembly seat to the BJP, whose nominee Janardhan Yadav won by a razor-thin margin of 262 votes.

The poll results were particularly reassuring for a shaky Chief Minister Bindeshwari Dubey. In the wake of growing dissidence, reverses at the hustings would have spelt doom for him. Now he can claim that he has been able to reverse the swing against the ruling party, and justify continuation in office.

Motilal Vora, Madhya Pradesh's low-profile chief minister, also survived the attack from the BJP. He was being painted as a non-performing chief minister by his adversaries, who were waiting in the wings to pull him down. Though all the four Congress(I) candidates in the state were nominees of Union Communications Minister Arjun Singh, it was left to Vora to ensure their victory. And as things turned out, the suspension of P.C. Sethi had little effect on the Congress(I)'s fortunes in the state. Despite heavy odds they took the Bhopal seat from the BJP. In 1985, Hasnath Siddiqui had won as the BJP candidate. Later he had resigned from the party and now retains the seat on a Congress(I) ticket. The other Congress(I) candidates, Jaswant Singh and Kamala Chaure, also sailed through with comfortable margins in Bareli and Suansar assembly seats. But the BJP pulled off a surprise when its Murlidhar Maheshwari scored a decisive victory in Pipariya, a Congress(I) stronghold.

The most spectacular result of all the elections was in Haryana's Tosham constituency, where Chief Minister Bansi Lal swept the polls with a record margin of over 80,000 votes without visiting the constituency even once. This was helped by the fact that the opposition parties had boycotted the election in protest against polls not being held simultaneously for

ASSEMBLY ELECTION SCOREBOARD	TOTAL	CONG.(I)	BJP	LOK DAL	JANATA	CPI(M)
MADHYA PRADESH	4	3	1	—	—	—
BIHAR	3	1	1	1	—	—
ORISSA	1	—	—	—	1	—
KARNATAKA	3	—	—	—	3	—
TRIPURA	2	1	—	—	—	1
HARYANA	1	1	—	—	—	—
	14	6	2	1	4	1



Winner Bansi Lal and (right) loser George Fernandes

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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other vacant state assembly seats (the Election Commission organised the Tosham poll solely to help Bansi Lal become an MLA and fulfil the constitutional requirement for him to continue as chief minister). Nevertheless, Lal's victory means that the Devi Lal-led Opposition will find it difficult to humble the Congress(I) in the Assembly elections, due next year.

But in sharp contrast to Dubey, Vora and Bansi Lal, another Congress(I) chief minister, Janaki Ballav Patnaik, was in an uncomfortable situation after the election results were known for the only Assembly by-election in Orissa. The defeat of his personal nominee, Rashebati Majhi, from the Rairangpur Assembly constituency was the fifth successive by-election defeat for the Congress(I) in Orissa, and could well spell serious trouble for an already beleaguered Patnaik *(see page 24)*. Said a dissident Congress(I) MLA: "If the party high command still supports the chief minister, Orissa will be lost for the party soon."

In Karnataka, the results of the three Assembly by-elections showed that the Janata had won all three seats, though it suffered a slight decline in its popularity. The victory margin dropped from 16,000 to 7,000 in the Chamaraja constituency. There was a smaller drop of 1,000 votes in the victory margin at Srirangapatna, and none at all in Kallambella. But this was solely because Gundu Rao's candidate S. Lingaiah drew away 11,000 votes that might have gone to the Congress(I). Hegde gave a stronger fight to the Congress(I) in the Lok Sabha election, with the Janata candidate R.A. Naik losing to H.Y. Ghorpade by barely 5,000 votes.

Said M. Raghupati, who was in charge of the Janata campaign in Raipur: "We have not only retained all the seats, which is a difficult task for a ruling party in by-elections, we have also given a tough challenge to the Congress(I). The people of Karnataka have reposed their faith in the leadership of Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde." But Veerappa Moily, former finance minister in the state, retorted: "If Hegde was so popular he should have won with bigger margins."

If all 16 by-election results are taken together, they suggest that this round of the battle between the ruling party and the Opposition has ended in a draw. The country's mood is quiescent. For the Congress(I), that is reason enough to celebrate.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

MAIL CENSORSHIP

Licence to Pry

LAST fortnight the Central Government, going back on a public promise, legally arrogated to itself the draconian privilege of intercepting and opening the mail of private citizens and disposing of it in any way it sees fit, without the sender or addressee being any the wiser. That a Congress Government should have legitimised, through legislation, the bureaucracy's power to invade the privacy of the citizens in this fashion was sadly ironical in view of the fact that in the British Raj the country's leading lights had fought a relentless but unsuccessful battle to prevent the empire from doing the same.

"I fail to understand the apprehension in the minds of many members of the Opposition that the Government is going to intercept their mail."

SANTOSH MOHAN DEV
Union minister of state for communications

The legislative surprise was as sudden as it was surreptitious. The Union Minister of State for Communications Santosh Mohan Dev moved a bill in the Lok Sabha seeking to amend the 98-year-old Indian Post Office Act. Its ostensible purpose was to empower the Government to regulate the fledgling courier service business. But the real purpose was to consolidate the Government's hold on the nation's communications system.

Section 16 of the new act which replaces Section 26 of the earlier act says: "The Central Government or the state Government or any officer specially authorised in this behalf by the Central or the state Government may, if satisfied that it is necessary or expedient so to do in the interest of public safety or tranquillity, the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any offence or on the occurrence of any public emergency by order in writing, direct that any postal article or class or description of postal articles in the course of transmission by post, shall be intercepted or detained or shall be disposed of in such manner as the authority issuing the order may direct."

There is really little difference between the original law and the amended one, except for some sentences which referred to "dominions" and "territories". The real rub is that the newly-enacted law betrays a promise made by the Government that the act would be changed and its scope limited so as to prevent its abuse. The previous law gave the Government the power to intercept mail passing only through the Government postal system. The Home Ministry suggested the amendment on the basis of information that the courier services were being used by anti-national elements to communicate with each other. Under the guise of regulating these private services, the Government put its own stamp on the existing British law. The new law not only consolidates the power of the police over private communications but also fails to restrict the Government's power in this area. And in violation of its 1982 promise that action would be taken to curb police power in this area, the Government has refused to make any categorical statement that it will not censor the mail of political parties or their elected representatives.

Even though the wording of the amendment is unambiguous in the sweeping powers it gives the Government, Dev insisted, despite hostility to the bill from opposition parties, that the Government had no intention of tampering with the genuine democratic activities of political parties or citizens. Said Dev: "We have just replaced a few words from the original law. I fail to understand why there is apprehension in the minds of many mem-

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bers of the Opposition that the Government is going to intercept their mail. I do not think that they are involving themselves in any activity which is contrary to the national security and integrity of the country. Why are they so afraid of it?"

Retorted L.K. Advani, the Bharatiya Janata Party chief: "We have reasons to doubt the intentions of the Government. They have shamelessly used this power against their opponents in the past. And what is the guarantee that the Government is not doing it now?" Added Syed Shahabuddin, while opposing the bill in the Lok Sabha: "I know that it (mail interception) is happening all over the country. Even in times of peace, the police officer goes to the sorting places, stops the sorting work and takes away whatever he likes. Now you are going to regularise it. I am afraid this power is going to be misused. It is going to be another step towards an authoritarian regime which I see creeping up on our land."

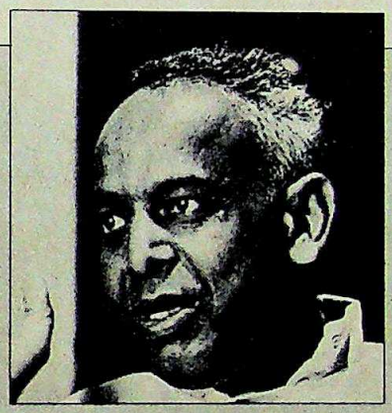
Both Advani and Shahabuddin have good reason for attacking the Government. Both the Central and state governments have regularly tampered with and censored mail without any specific guidelines. In the absence of any set rules, it has invariably been left to the local police to prepare the list of people whose mail is to be pried open. In states like Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, the ruling party has often used this power to intimidate opponents. The practice has been for the police superintendent to post a senior policeman in a post office whose job is to collect the mail addressed to the "listed people" and study its contents. Several chief ministers have used intelligence agencies for collecting information about the activities of not only opposition parties but also of their own party activists and even journalists. According to police sources, the mail of over a 1,000 politicians is being intercepted all over the country. Punjab, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Orissa, Kerala and Delhi top the list. In Delhi alone over 200 people, including those associated with the Akali Dal, Shiv Sena, Anand Marg and the All-India Sikh Students Federation fall into this category. In Tamil Nadu, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) leaders, all the Tamil Tiger groups, their followers and sympathisers are on the censorship list. An analysis of the lists indicates that various governments have been using this power not for ensuring communal harmony or protecting the country from national security risks but for protecting their political flanks from the activity of party dissidents. According to Home Ministry sources, mail censorship in the past has contributed significantly in finalising the political strategy of the party in power.

Even though mail censorship has been applied for more than 100 years in this country, it assumed menacing proportions just before the Emergency when the Central Government ordered the inclusion of political bigwigs like Jayaprakash Narayan, Morarji Desai, and even senior judges of courts. In Delhi alone, over 1,500 people including trade union leaders, senior civil servants and opposition MP's were put on the censorship list. When the Janata Party returned to power, it pared the list drastically and retained the names of only economic offenders and suspected foreign agents.

But the list expanded with the return of the Congress Party at the Centre (INDIA TODAY September 30, 1981). Said DMK's Rajya Sabha member V. Gopalasamy: "Despite the massive majority both in the states and at the Centre, the ruling party leaders have always felt insecure and have been using the power to spy on its members and on the Opposition. This colonial rule was used by the British against freedom fighters. But now it is being used to stave off any democratic threat to the ruling party."

"The Government has shamelessly used this power against its opponents in the past."

L.K. ADVANI
Bharatiya Janata Party chief



"It is another step towards an authoritarian regime creeping up on our land."

SYED SHAHABUDDIN
Janata Party MP

"It is now being used to stave off any democratic threat to the ruling party."

V. GOPALASAMY
DMK, member Rajya Sabha

Mail interception has been used for several purposes. The Tamil Nadu Government ordered interception of the mail of a DMK Rajya Sabha member only because he was sympathetic to Sri Lankan Tamils. When Gundu Rao was chief minister, the intelligence network intercepted the mail of both Congress and opposition MP's. And now Congress(I) leaders in Karnataka have accused the Hegde Government of tampering with their mail.

The new law does not specify the parameters under which a citizen will be put on a censorship list. Nor does it define what level of government official will be authorised to issue interception orders. Opposition leaders are apprehensive that the new rule will lead to large-scale censorship of both their mail and that of some ruling party leaders. If history is any guide, their fears are amply justified.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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J.B. PATNAIK

On a Slippery Slope

ORISSA'S durable Chief Minister Janaki Ballav Patnaik has never had a fight on his hands on so many fronts. About half the members of his 115-strong legislative party openly say that they want him to go; eight of his 23 ministers want a change in leadership; and several of Orissa's 29 Congress(I) MP'S *are actively and vociferously campaigning against him. The illusion of invincibility around him has finally disappeared. Principal Correspondents* SREEKANT KHANDEKAR *and* FARZAND AHMED *recently visited Orissa to find out why the tide is relentlessly turning against Patnaik. Their report:*

A single assembly by-election does not normally make or break governments. And certainly, for a man who has ruled his state for six-and-a-half years—more than any chief minister in recent times—and steered his party to massive victories in two parliamentary and two assembly elections, a by-election should be a routine affair.

Yet, last month Orissa Chief Minister J. B. Patnaik, 59, campaigned at Rairangpur, 350 km from the state capital Bhubaneswar, as if his life depended on it. In a manner of speaking, perhaps it did. From early morning till late at night, for more than 10 days, Patnaik moved tirelessly from one hamlet to another. But it was all in vain and the Congress(I) lost yet again. His party has now conceded defeat in every single by-election—one parliamentary and four assembly seats—in the 20 months of his second term.

Sitting in the Rairangpur rest house, Patnaik admits to dissidence when he says that "perhaps there are some frustrated people who think that after having had me as chief minister for more than six years, there is no hope for them." But he tries to minimise its gravity by adding: "In a democracy it takes some time for these things to sort themselves out."

But his number two in the Cabinet, Finance and Law Minister Gangadhar Mahapatra, disagrees. A prominent rebel leader, Mahapatra demands: "In view of the increasing number of dissidents, the party high command should immediately make a realistic assessment of the situation to see whether they have a valid case or not."

Until April this year, only 11 legislators had come out openly against Patnaik. But the number has risen steadily since. In August, 40 of them went to New Delhi to submit a detailed memorandum to party bosses. Since then, Mahapatra, Harijan and Tribal Welfare Minister Bhanjaman Behera, Agriculture Minister Rasa Behari Behera (all cabinet rank) and Minister of State for Health Hemananda Biswal have jointly met Rajiv and demanded change.

In New Delhi itself, many MP's have been working actively against the chief minister, the most prominent being state party President Nityanand Mishra, who has already addressed a letter to Rajiv Gandhi criticising the Patnaik administration. Significantly, the letter was signed by a dozen parliamentarians.

So aggressive is the mood that last month more than 50 MLA's sent a missive to New Delhi demanding a showdown. They asked for a legislative party meet so that they could express lack of confidence in Patnaik's leadership.

Recent political changes have also given the dissidents hope. Though the death of T. Anjiah, the party general secretary in charge of Orissa, robbed them of a man who at least gave them a sympathetic hearing, other events have been more to their liking. Thus, the dropping of Arun Nehru and the demotion of Arjun Singh, both of whom the dissidents believe backed Patnaik, have been greeted with delight. And the induction of Chintamani Panigrahi, 64, as minister of state for home, is also being read as a factor that will help them.

The dissension within his Cabinet was also exposed in another way. The chief minister had initiated a move for government agencies to offer sal seed, a vital commodity in the state's economy, to local units at prices five per cent lower than what ruled in the market. The quotas of various units were decided and the new policy declared in the state government gazette, in anticipation of cabinet approval. But Patnaik's cabinet colleagues refused to fall in line, opposed this step, and brought about an extraordinary situation when the earlier notification had to be nullified.

The allegations about the chief minister's sex life in a prominent English weekly have also hurt him: it has shattered what remained of the halo around Patnaik. Indeed, in the last assembly session, members of the Opposition—whose strength is pitiable—refused to let proceedings con-

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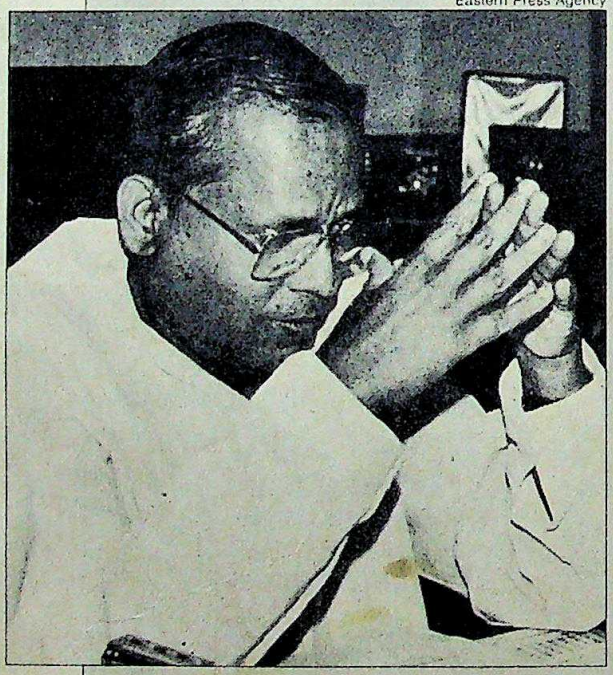

If today Patnaik is in serious trouble, it has a lot to do with his style of operating over the years. Working through a coterie, he centralised all real power. The rest of the ministers got crumbs. But resentment accumulated gradually and now looks to be getting out of the chief minister's hands.

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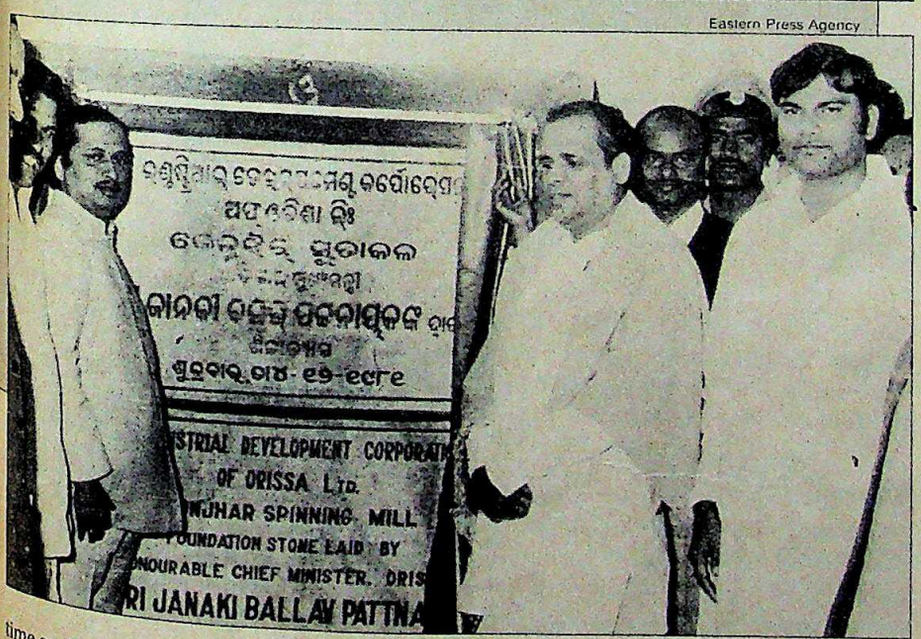
tinue for three full days because they said he had lost the moral right to continue. Although his party MLA's could have easily outshouted the Opposition, they chose to remain amused spectators.

It is somewhat ironical that the political mood has swung against him so sharply in just 20 months of his being sworn in as chief minister for the second time on March 10, 1985. After all, most of the 115 Congress(I) legislators elected, in a House of 147, were handpicked Patnaik men. The trouble-makers had been thrown out of the party or denied tickets. There was no leader left in Orissa who could challenge him. And yet, today he is a beleaguered man.

When Patnaik came to power for the first time in June 1980, it had been a commendable rise because he came from a lower middle class family. He started as a journalist, editing the now-defunct *Eastern Times* and the popular *Prajatantra* for 15 years, and used his profession to develop a wide range of contacts. Besides, he was a first-rate orator.

Patnaik and Biswal (right): friends who are now foes

Eastern Press Agency



Niranjan (left) with Patnaik: right hand man

Patnaik's first venture into elections in 1967 as an independent—he lost his deposit—failed. But Nandini Satpathy, later to become chief minister, got him a party ticket for the 1971 parliamentary elections, which he won, and by 1973 he was Union deputy minister for defence. His rise to minister of state status and the fact that he caught Sanjay Gandhi's eye during the Emergency, upset Satpathy. But the tide was turning against her.

When the Congress(I) was demolished in 1977, Patnaik, as Orissa unit president, toured the state relentlessly, rebuilt the party apparatus almost single-handed, and established his personal base. So when he became an MP again in 1980, it surprised no one that the Gandhis, mother and younger son, wanted him as cabinet minister for tourism, civil aviation and labour. Six months later and logically enough, he was sworn in as Orissa chief minister. Even his adversary, Biju Patnaik then in the Lok Dal, had grudgingly admitted: "Janaki Ballav is the best of a bad bargain."

There was hope in the air in the Orissa of 1980. The chief minister enjoyed considerable personal popularity: he was not only seen as scholarly, urbane and devoutly religious; he was also perceived as a man in a hurry. "A thousand industries with an investment of Rs 1,000 crore in 1,000 days," he promised.

But by 1983, the image of the Government had dimmed considerably. Ministers were involved in cases ranging from theft to rape. And graft charges against his colleagues became common. A mustard oil procurement deal raised such a stink about Patnaik's own involvement that the chief minister went the full way to prevent the Assembly's Public Undertakings Committee from tabling its report. (INDIA TODAY, May 15, 1983). "All the same," says a minister now opposed to Patnaik, "in the early years there was a feeling that the Government was ushering in progress. That is absent now."

Nevertheless, many of his problems today have to do with the kind of style Patnaik chose to adopt right at the outset when he took over as chief minister in 1980. Because of either insecurity or the desire to hold all real power, he operated through a tight coterie. His failure to truly decentralise over the years is a major fuel for his detractors' resentment today.

But most important, Patnaik's style of working through a closed group brought to the fore two men who profoundly affected, and still do, Patnaik's career. One was a relative, Niranjan Patnaik, brother of the chief minister's son-in-law, Soumya Ranjan, who now edits the Oriya daily *Sambad*. The other was Basant Kumar Biswal, Congress treasurer for the state unit since 1979, but otherwise a contractor and a non-entity until Patnaik took the chair. Both entered the Assembly for the first time in 1980, both were already controversial, and yet the troika, in effect,

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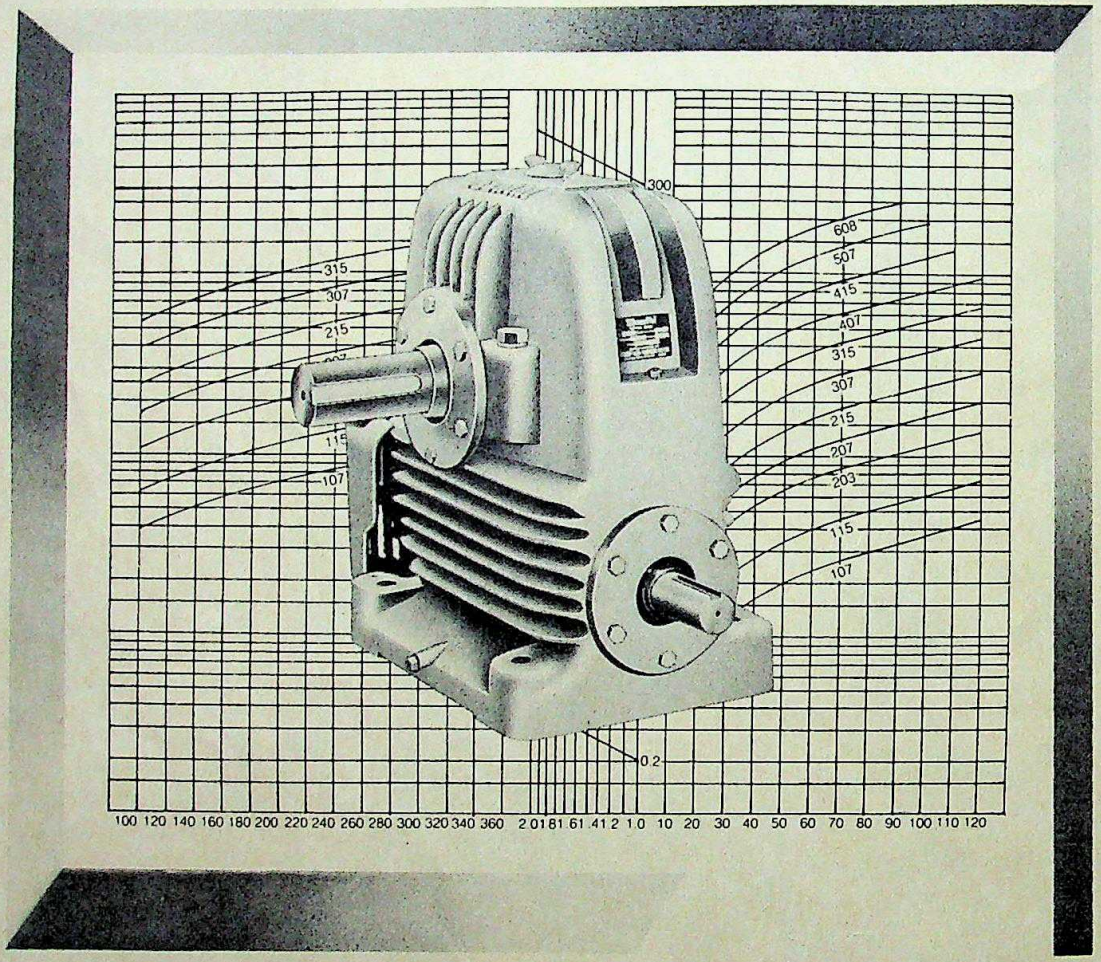
Productivity curves every engineer ought to study



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ruled the state. Jayanti, the chief minister's wife and an MP, was also in the inner circle.

If today the tide of resentment among legislators looks dangerous, it is because for the full first term, nearly all the big money departments were in the grip of this troika. Patnaik held industries, irrigation, power, home, and general administration, among others. Niranjan was minister of state under him looking after irrigation and power. Biswal, also minister of state, had public works, housing, mining and urban development, and later got public health engineering. Most of the remaining 14 ministers got crumbs, and they knew it. But such was Patnaik's power and influence that there was little they could do. Dissidents never numbered more than a dozen.

NIRANJAN and Biswal constantly tussled to play Patnaik's right hand. "Jealous co-wives", says a partyman disdainfully. While Niranjan was subtle in his manoeuvres to build support, Biswal had no time for niceties. He could do as he pleased and he let everyone know it. Although only a minister of state, he regularly attended cabinet meetings. It wasn't for nothing that he was called Super Chief Minister, a label that has stuck.

Seated today in his home, adjacent to the chief minister's, Biswal says of Patnaik, a friend of more than 30 years and a man he has now sworn to destroy: "I supported him till 1984 because he worked efficiently. But after that his family members and relatives started misleading him." But says Soumya Ranjan of his chief minister father-in-law: "Not getting rid of Biswal in time was the worst mistake he has made in his tenure."

Although Biswal is no longer even an MLA, he continues to be a weighty factor. Patnaik had entrusted him with the role of extending patronage to keep stray legislators in line. Gradually, as more and more leaders depended on him, Biswal's strength grew. Today many of them are beholden to him and he is using this to get his former boss. Patnaik still has to find a dependable man to replace him—and this has become his major weakness. Nirajnan, somehow, is unable to fulfill that function. And there is no one else Patnaik trusts enough.

Biswal's decline began when he was first denied a ticket in the last assembly elections. His rival Niranjan was not only elected but was made cabinet minister in Patnaik's second term. Finally, Biswal was given a party ticket for the Kendrapara parliamentary constituency, but he lost. Through this period, he had begun to suspect Patnaik of trying to cut loose. Biswal had a brief reprieve when Niranjan had to resign last year following strictures against him in a graft case, but in mid-1986 the Supreme Court erased them, paving the way for Niranjan's return in a cabinet reshuffle on July 21. That marked the final break between the chief minister and Biswal.

"The party high command should immediately make a realistic assessment of the situation."

GANGADHAR MAHAPATRA
finance and law minister

"Not getting rid of Biswal in time was his (Patnaik's) worst political mistake."

SOUMYA RANJAN PATNAIK
chief minister's son-in-law and editor Sambad

Matters have finally come to a boil now because of excessive centralisation. Says Soumya Ranjan—formerly a lecturer in political science—of his father-in-law: "Congress politics is interest-group-based politics. He has the ability to mediate, which is essential in his position." It would seem that Patnaik is losing touch in that department too.

Meanwhile, if several legislators have began to doubt their leader's methods, they are not entirely to blame. Patnaik has over the last year-and-a-half made every attempt possible to prevent his adversaries from contacting the prime minister. For many months, their memorandums never got to Rajiv because they were intercepted by a functionary in the party office who sent them back to Patnaik. When more than 80 MLA's signed a statement that Oriya sentiment had been hurt by the magazine report on Patnaik's sex life, the chief minister used it in Delhi to establish the support he enjoyed. This the MLA's came to know only later.

Inevitably, uncertainty now reigns in Bhubaneswar, and bureaucrats have returned to practising their old art of keeping an eye on the door while dealing with files. Laughs a senior official: "The bureaucracy and the legislature are so closely interlinked that you can't expect us to remain unaffected." Now a considerably weakened Patnaik gives in readily to recommendations of transfers, to mollify partymen. Indeed, at a departmental review recently, a minister told Patnaik that he could not meet targets if senior officials were constantly shuffled.

The dissidents seem to believe that their quarry's strength is failing and they are willing to use whatever ammunition is available—even Biswal, the very man they had attacked not so long ago. Biswal's ability as a fixer goes to their advantage though how many MLA's he has personally recruited in the campaign is a matter of dispute. There are many among them who distrust him and his involvement is already creating some differences among them. Says a minister: "We know that if we associate with him, we lose credibility. But we need all the help we can get."

Politicians agree that this state of flux is harming Orissa and are surprised over no signals of any kind from New Delhi. Says an MP supporter of Patnaik's: "I think it is high time the prime minister indicated what he wants. The dissidents are turning more vociferous because they have begun to believe that they can get away with anything. Yes or no, at least there should be some decision."

It is Orissa's tragedy that it had to see 10 changes in chief ministership in the 20 years before Patnaik's advent brought stability. But now the movement has gathered such momentum that total calm is unlikely to prevail even if Patnaik manages to continue.

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MADHYA PRADESH

Paper Power

AT 54, Govind Lal Vora, the chubby-faced younger brother of Chief Minister Motilal Vora, has emerged as one of the most influential—and controversial—personalities in the state. At his Raipur house and newspaper office, government officials, businessmen and politicians queue up from early morning to seek favours.

The controversy stems mainly from allegations made by his detractors that he has used his brother's high office to promote the interest of their family newspaper, *Amrit Sandesh*, a charge both brothers deny vehemently. Critics point out that the Amrit Sandesh group has prospered like no newspaper in the state. Not only has it acquired a plot of prime land for a song, but has also been receiving more than its due share of government advertisements.

Apart from his brother, sister-in-law and nephew, Motilal Vora's son is a shareholder and director in the company that publishes *Amrit Sandesh*. A Raipur daily, *Agradoot*, has launched a campaign against the chief minister on this issue. The chief minister's supporters, however, detect a sinister political hand behind *Agradoot*'s campaign, which is often scurrilous, poking fun at Vora's humble past. Last fortnight, *Agradoot* dramatised the issue by complaining that it had been getting calls threatening to blow up its offices if it continued to write against Vora.

Amrit Sandesh has indeed received preferential treatment. Like other newspapers in the state it has received government land at a concessional rate but what places it in a special class, along with the National Herald group, is an extraordinary clause in the sale-deed, showering benefits worth crores of rupees. While other newspapers have been forbidden land-use diversion there is no such condition in the case of these two favourite newspapers. According to reports *Amrit Sandesh*, which has got a 15,580 sq ft plot in the heart of Raipur's commercial sector, is planning to build a multi-storied shopping complex there.

The plot, considered to be among the most expensive pieces of real estate in the town, was allotted to the newspaper under curious circumstances. The land belonged to the Janapad Sabha, which had resisted all attempts to allot it to anyone else. But when Vora applied for the plot the Janapad Sabha discovered all of a sudden that it did not require the land after all and issued a no-objection certificate. The land was initially allotted to the newspaper on April 5, 1984, at a cost of Rs 149,908 with an annual ground rent of Rs 11,243. But later, on June 22, 1985—after Vora became chief minister in March that year—the state Government issued an order, reducing the price of the land to Rs 35,835 and its annual ground rent to Rs 2,687. The collector of Raipur was asked to refund the excess payment made by the newspaper. The market value of the land is at least Rs 35 lakh.

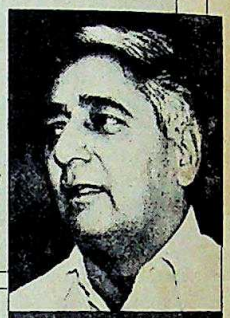
On September 24 this year, the newspaper applied for an additional plot of 34,500 sq ft adjacent to its office for "expansion". All the concerned departments issued no-objection certificates the same day! Says Motilal Vora: "Is there any provision which debars any citizen from applying for land?" The orders for the initial land allotment as well as price reduction, he pointed out, were made by his predecessor, Arjun Singh. "I've only carried out his orders," he told INDIA TODAY. Vora, who is himself in charge of the Information and Publicity Department, said he had not "spoken to anyone" for giving special treatment to his family newspaper.

This two-year-old newspaper is already getting more government advertisements than its two well-established rivals at Raipur having almost twice its circulation. *Amrit Sandesh*, with a claimed circulation of 25,000 copies, is getting on an average 4,000 column-centimetres of Madhya Pradesh Government advertisements compared to 3,000 column-centimetres given to *Deshbandhu* and *Navbharat*, both with certified ABC circulation of over 40,000 copies each. Recalls Rekhchand Lunia, the Voras' erstwhile partner in the newspaper who sold all his shares to them under mysterious circumstances four months ago: "Business did start picking up after Motilal Vora became the chief minister." For instance, compared to its total advertisement revenue of Rs 726,138 during December 1984-March 1985—just before Vora became the chief minister—the newspaper earned advertisements worth Rs 12,55,517 during the same period next year. Contacted at his Raipur home, Govind Lal Vora refused to talk on the issue. "I don't want to be drawn into the controversy," he said. But he is already neck-deep in it.

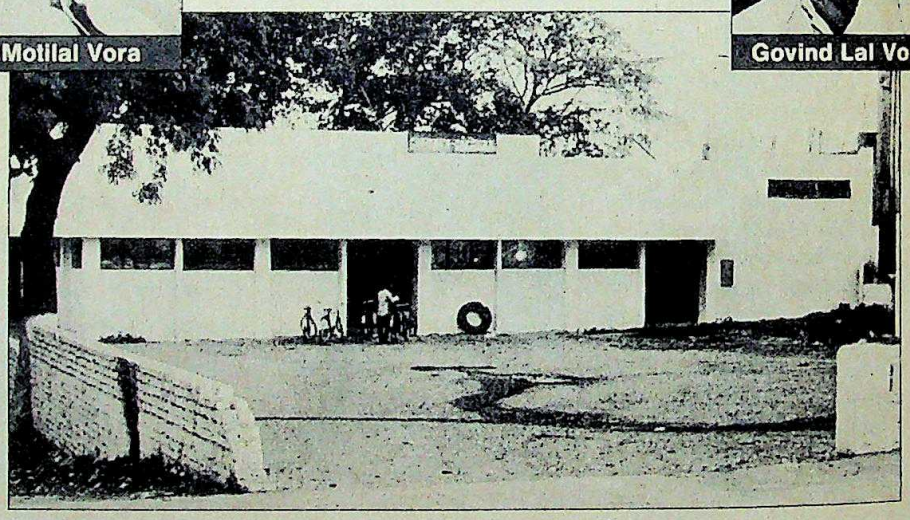
—N.K. SINGH in Raipur

Motilal Vora

Chief Minister Vora's brother's paper *Amrit Sandesh* has prospered like no other. The preferential treatment given to it has raised a new controversy.



Govind Lal Vora



Amrit Sandesh office on disputed plot in Raipur: windfall

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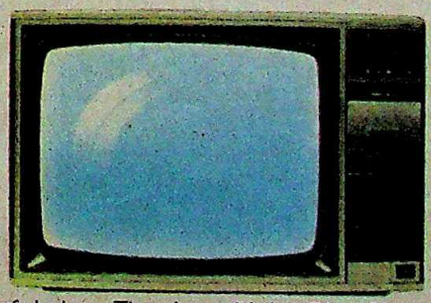

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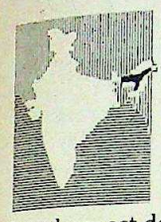
ASSAM

Challenging their Own



THE deluge, ironically, came after the floods. Barely had Chief Minister Prafulla Mahanta and his cabinet of political debutants begun to settle down after tackling the most destructive Brahmaputra flood in a decade when breaches began to show where it hurt most. The ruling Asom Gana Parishad's power base among the state's rebellious student community abruptly began weakening.

Suddenly, Mahanta's was a besieged government. Badgered by volatile ethnic backers for not doing enough to implement the 15-month-old accord with the Centre, harried by an entirely new bunch of separatist terrorists who kill political rivals and loot banks with impunity and, worst of all, under pressure to perform from the All Assam Students Union (AASU)—the vehicle on which Mahanta rode to power last December—the AGP Government can hardly look forward to its first anniversary on December 24 with much comfort. Doomsayers have already begun talking in terms of a Barnala-AISSF kind of situation emerging in Assam.

Last fortnight, AASU "revived" the agitation on the foreign nationals issue in protest against the "non-implementation" of the Assam accord which promised the sealing of Assam-Bangladesh border against infiltration, deportation of foreign settlers and economic and ethnic safeguards for Assam. AASU leaders sat in dharna on the Boat Club lawns in New Delhi and threatened to follow it up with a hunger strike. "At this rate we will have no choice but to take to the streets again," said Dr Arun Sarma, the influential party adviser. Kartick Hazarika, the president added: "We have gone slow as we don't want our students missing classes yet again. But we are left with no option."

The party has certainly chosen to return to the centre-stage of Assam politics even if that means challenging the authority of its own state government. The students made this clear with a day's bandh on November 6 in protest against "police atrocities on innocent people".

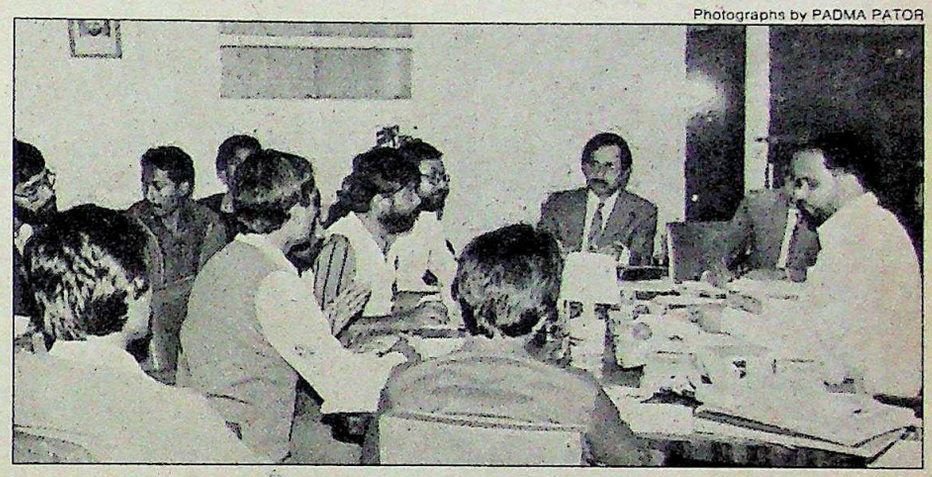
Even at the height of the agitation, no bandh had paralysed a government so completely. Till afternoon on that day, when they formally gained clearance from the AASU, Mahanta and his ministers were unable to visit their offices in the Janata Bhawan at Dispur. Home Minister Bhrigu Phukan tried to beat the picketeers by going in at 5.30 a.m., but he was pulled out by workers. As a final mark of victory, the picketeers shut the gates of Janata Bhawan and put up their own flag. "AASU gave birth to the AGP. It is impossible for a one-year-old child to fight its mother," said Ataur Rehman, AGP MP, somewhat defensively.

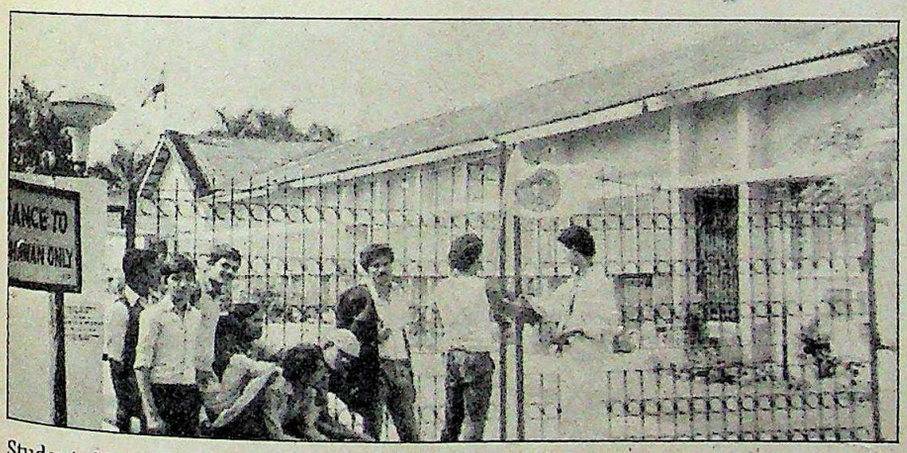
The situation was precipitated by unforeseen problems. For several months now, the Government has found itself faced with the problem of the resurgence of terrorism. The terrorists, claiming to belong to a new organisation called the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), have killed at least nine political rivals (mainly representing the Congress(I) or the minorities) and have looted several banks. In each of the killings they have used Chinese-made Tuchaarev M-20 machine-pistols, standard issue of neighbouring Nagaland's National Socialist Council. "There is a nexus between the two organisations and the banks are being looted to finance a bigger assault later," said B.C. Sarma, director-general of Assam police.

In the first week of November, the Intelligence Bureau informed Guwahati of a possible ULFA attempt to loot another bank at Nalbari, 50 km west of the capital. In the subsequent "encounter", the police killed Parikshit Burman, a Guwahati student who plays for the state volleyball team. AASU immediately demanded the heads of the police officers involved, and even though the Government bent over backwards to appease them, by suspending the superintendent and his deputy and arresting two constables, the bandh call was given.

Privately, even though ruling party leaders regret this, they plead helplessness in the face of popular pressure. "It is not easy to say that Parikshit Burman was innocent," asserts Phukan. But he avoids mentioning what this kind of

Photographs by PADMA PATOR





AASU leaders (above) discussing demands with Mahanta and (left) deserted secretariat after bandh: tense situation

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surrender to street pressure could mean for his administration, particularly when each case of murder or dacoity is followed up by a letter from the Union Home Ministry expressing condescending concern. "They show great interest in anything that happens here while forgetting all that is happening in Punjab and Delhi," complained Phukan, who is also smarting under attacks at home. The All Guwahati Students Union, the most powerful unit of AASU, has been demanding his resignation. "He must pay for his police's total failure on the law and order front," said Rupjyoti Baroloi, general secretary of the Guwahati unit.

This sudden onset of hostility has led to some mediatory efforts, but the relief is at best temporary. AASU insists on returning to the forefront of state politics and that can only mean a revival of the agitation. The ruling party's best hope is some good news on the accord implementation from Delhi, failing which it too might have no choice but to add voice to AASU protests. Said Phukan: "We came to power to implement this accord. If that does not happen we will have to go back to the people."

But tied down as it is by Punjab and other problems, the Centre has for the moment put Assam on the back-burner. Last fortnight, even the survey work for the construction of a road and fence along the Assam-Bangladesh border was suspended as a Bangladesh Rifles patrol threatened the survey workers near Dhuburi in western Assam. With the Centre in no mood to oblige and AASU unrelenting, the coming weeks could escalate tensions. This is not exactly the kind of mood Mahanta and Phukan would have anticipated when they timed their marriages within the next month, to coincide with their government's first anniversary bash.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA in Guwahati

BUREAUCRACY

Under Attack

IN Assam, they are playing cops and officers. And the officer on the run in this case ranks no lower than the director-general of police. Last month the Assam Government placed under suspension Gnananda Sarma Pathak, an IPS officer of 1953 vintage, on suspicion of "links" with the terrorist organisation United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). The main accusation against him is that he has been writing threatening letters on behalf of ULFA to several ministers, politicians and journalists to spread disaffection against the AGP Government, a charge he denies with outrage.

The story began some time in September when over a thousand such letters appeared in the mailboxes of influential people all over the state. Most contained charges of corruption against Home Minister Bhrigu Phukan and said that he was using the ULFA to wipe out political detractors. "We thought it was an inside job and the special branch was asked to investigate," said Phukan. He added that the forensic laboratory has "very clearly stated that the handwriting is his." He pointed out that on "five occasions in the past" the officer has faced similar charges of writing unsolicited letters.

But whether or not he did all that writing as a bitter prank—he had been removed as the head of police to be chairman of the Police Housing Corporation after the AGP came to power—Sarma Pathak is an unlikely suspect as far as the extremist link goes. He is retiring only next month and both he and his wife are seriously ill. "All I wanted in such a situation was to retire peacefully and go to Sai Baba's ashram. I arrested ULFA people and now they could come to kill me, particularly when the Government has withdrawn all my guards and cut my telephone," complains Pathak. After the rejection of his appeal against the suspension by the administrative tribunal, he has now sought the Centre's intervention.

Sarma Pathak has been accused of writing threatening letters on behalf of ULFA, the terrorist organisation.

Both the Centre and the administrative tribunal, however, have their hands full as far as Assam is concerned. Last month the Government faced a piquant situation as the tribunal set aside the suspension of K.K. Baruah, a senior IAS officer who was considered close to Saikia, on charges of corruption. The tribunal called the suspension order "naked and knave, almost despotic". But the state Government was not to be subdued. As Baruah reported for work the following day, the Government put a heavy padlock on his office and issued fresh suspension orders. Baruah too has approached the Centre now.

"The bureaucracy is just not changing with the times," complained Forest Minister Bharat Narah. Lamented a senior bureaucrat: "It is impossible to function with a set of ministers which is guided by the advice of clerks and cyclostyling machine operators belonging to the karmachari parishad which was in the vanguard of the Assam movement."

With such mutual hostility, a flight of bureaucrats is inevitable. The last three months have seen the departure of nearly a dozen senior officers to Delhi. "We are certainly short of people and are seeking the return of our officers from Delhi," confessed Jyoti Rajkhowa, the secretary in charge of the Personnel Department. But with the distrust continuing, it is unlikely that anyone who has the right kind of backing in Delhi will be keen to return.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA

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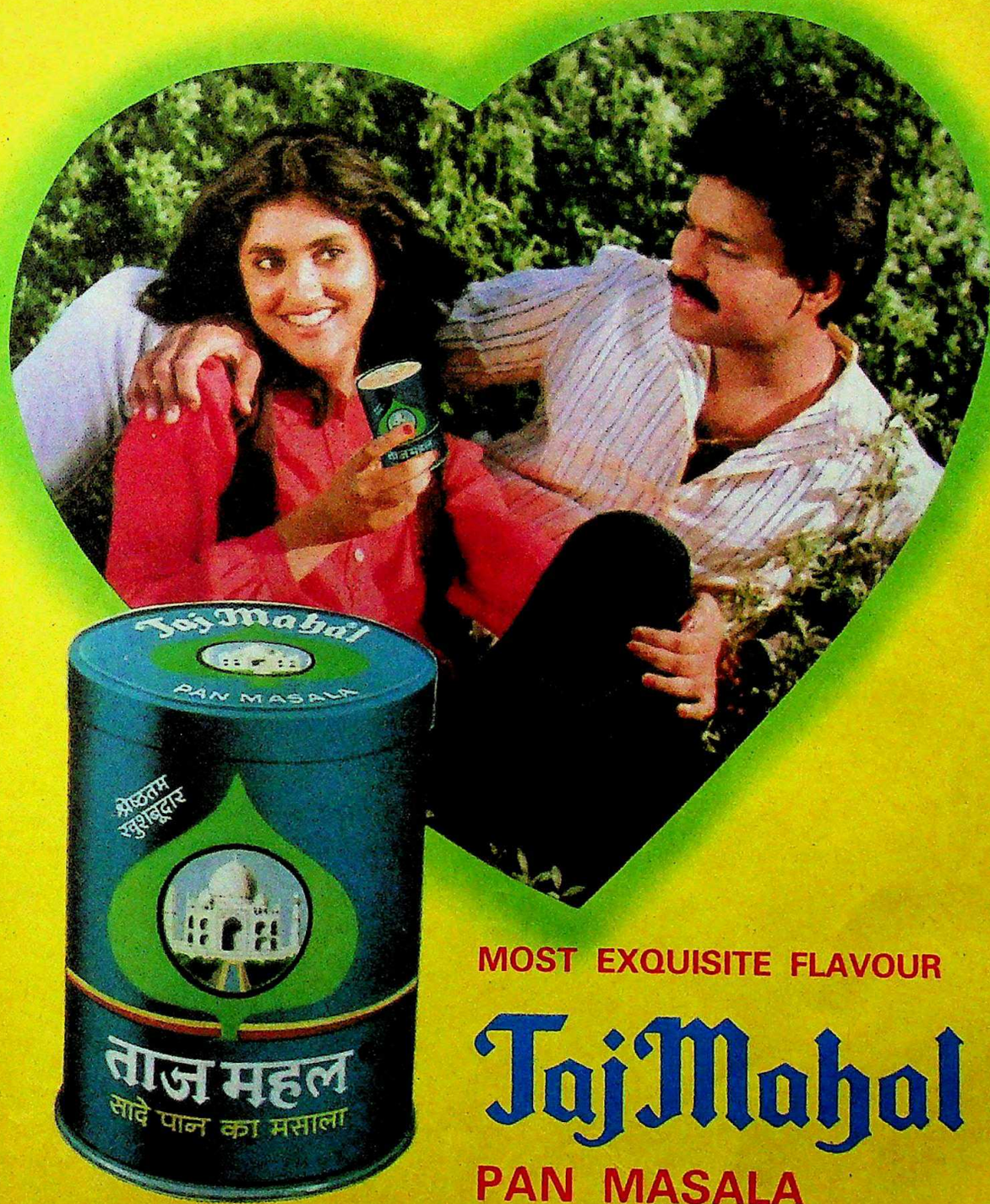

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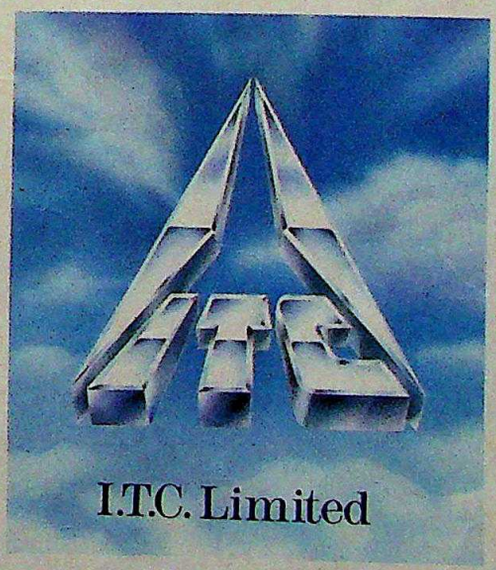

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AMITABH BACHCHAN

Star Crossed

FEW politicians have been blessed with such advantages. A charismatic superstar with a phenomenal fan-following, a close friend of the prime minister and an MP from Allahabad, the nursery of India's political giants. Yet, the star's political stars are no longer in perfect configuration. Slowly but surely, Amitabh Bachchan is losing his most important fan-following—his fellow Congressmen in Uttar Pradesh.

The growing resentment against the former superstar—mainly on the part of old-time Allahabad Congressmen disgruntled by Bachchan, a political tyro, leap-frogging over them—has now become the hottest topic in the political corridors of Allahabad. In recent weeks, the two powerful Allahabad lobbies—one owing allegiance to Union Finance Minister V.P. Singh and the other to Union Minister of State for Welfare Rajendra Kumari Bajpai—have accelerated the anti-Amitabh campaign.

Already fuelled by the influence Bachchan wields in local issues and the VVIP treatment afforded him during his periodic visits—last fortnight when Rajiv visited Allahabad, Bachchan not only played host, he even left for Delhi along with him, a privilege rarely extended to even Union ministers—the anti-Amitabh camp has been given further reasons for disquiet. Examples:

▶ At a recent meeting of the District Congress(I) Committee, a former state minister pointed out that Bachchan had taken the credit for sanctioning Rs 2 crore for the reorganisation of the Compulsory Deposit Fund Pension Office though the real ground-work had been done by local leaders. Another example was when Bachchan led a delegation of Allahabad citizens to the finance minister's office in Delhi demanding that the Accountant-General's office not be bifurcated, something that V.P. Singh himself had said all along.

▶ Congress(I) leaders allege bungling by some office-bearers of the Amitabh Bachchan Fans' Association, which raised Rs 23 lakh for the Nirman Social and Charitable Trust through premieres of Bachchan's films in Allahabad and Lucknow and an Amitabh Bachchan Nite in Gujarat. According to a former minister, Bachchan has detected embezzlement to the tune of Rs 2 lakh and has decided not to involve the association in any such shows in future and leave the organisation to the Nirman trust.

Bachchan garlanding Rajiv: under fire

▶ The appointment of Shanti Swaroop Bhatnagar as the state's advocate-general, Bachchan's distant relative Jagdish Rajan as a Public Service Commission member in end-1984 and of Arun Kumar Srivastava (who is at loggerheads with Bajpai's son Ashok) as vice-president of the state Youth Congress(I), reportedly at the instance of Bachchan, have drawn a lot of flak.

▶ Bachchan's failure to make an appearance during the riots in the city last September. Though he was ostensibly abroad at the time, his detractors use it to show the star's indifference to his constituency.

Bachchan himself was unavailable for comment and his secretary for political affairs, K. Srinivasan refuses to comment. "All this is happening because he is a simple man with honest intentions," he says. Ramesh Dixit, another political adviser, says that the MP is only trying to develop dedicated young men capable of contributing positively to the Congress(I) and "there are many in the party who obviously do not like it."

Amitabh has kept his customary cool all along but, at a recent public meeting in Allahabad's Chowk, he lashed out at his critics in no uncertain terms. "Why is Amitabh Bachchan responsible for everything which has not been done in Allahabad till now?" he asked, and added: "You have two ministers from this place and both are better placed than me to solve your problems. Why don't you blame them?"

Besides Bachchan's charisma, his proximity to Rajiv is proving to be a double-edged weapon. His audience, as well as his critics, had a taste of it last fortnight at a public meeting during Rajiv's visit. Demanding construction of a bridge over the Yamuna in Naini, Bachchan turned to Rajiv and said: "When I go round my constituency, people ask me to get this done and I will use the same style in making this request to you." Then folding his hands, he pleaded in rustic Allahabadi: "*Hujur, Naini ma ek thai pulia banwaey de to bari kirpa hoey.*" (Your honour, we will be very grateful if you could have a bridge built in Naini.) The result: thunderous applause, an assurance from both Rajiv and Chief Minister Bir Bahadur Singh to get the bridge constructed—and another load of political buckshot for the growing arsenal of his critics.

—DILIP AWASTHI

CITIZENSHIP BILL

Tightening Act

"The mere fact of birth in India invests with it the right of citizenship in India...we have taken a cosmopolitan view and it is in accordance with the spirit of the times, with the temper and atmosphere which we wish to promote in the civilised world."

—GOVIND BALLABH PANT, home minister, while introducing the Citizenship Bill in Parliament on August 5, 1955.

"The time has come to tighten up our citizenship laws....We cannot be generous at the cost of our own people, at the cost of our own development."

—P. CHIDAMBARAM, Union minister of state for home affairs, while introducing the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha on November 10, 1986.

The Government carved deep into the basic legal fabric of the country last fortnight by digging its scalpel into the Citizenship Act of 1956 to change the criteria qualifying a person as a citizen of India.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill,

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1986, passed by both houses of Parliament last fortnight, stipulates that it is no longer adequate to be born in India to be granted Indian citizenship. At the time of birth either one of the parents has to be an Indian citizen for the person to become a citizen of India.

The bill also tightened the screws further on other provisions of the Citizenship Act by raising substantially, the qualifying periods of stay within India for grant of citizenship by registration, marriage, or naturalisation. It also changed the definition of 'Indian origin' by excluding from its purview those people whose grand-parents, but not parents, were born in India.

Expectedly the bill has stirred a hornet's nest, starting from the moment it was moved in the Lok Sabha. "This bill," retorted Syed Shahabuddin of the Janata, "is not only morally and socially obnoxious, it is constitutionally questionable, a legal absurdity, politically motivated and above all, administratively impracticable."

Added Somnath Chatterjee of the CPI(M): "This bill is another sickening instance of surrender to chauvinistic elements and forces of disruption and divisiveness." He said it completely violated Article 14 of the Constitution which states clearly that "the state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or equal protection of laws within the territory of India."

Human rights activists too were perturbed. "This goes against the whole ethos of the country," stressed Gobinda Mukhoty of the People's Union for Democratic Rights. But countering the deluge of criticism, Chidambaram stressed that the bill did not negate any human rights as it would only have prospective effect in its implementation.

He emphasised that it had become necessary to make citizenship laws more stringent as there had been a large influx of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka besides those from Pakistan and some African countries. To give an idea of the magnitude of this problem, he said, while the overall increase in population in West Bengal had been 22 per cent, that in the border districts ranged from 29 per cent to as high as 37 per cent—mainly due to the high rate of immigration into Bengal.

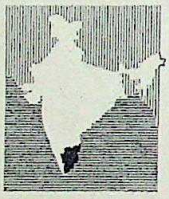
The Government's move has received the whole hearted support of the Asom Gana Parishad members of Parliament. Said Dinesh Goswami: "It took the people of Assam six long years to make the Government of India realise that a large number of people were clandestinely entering Assam, and also other neighbouring states from Bangladesh."

But now that it has come to realise the gravity of the problem, the solution is not foolproof. The Government has to strengthen its vigil along the border and spruce up its implementation machinery to make sure the new law does not remain a dead letter in the statute book.

—TANIA MIDHA

TAMIL NADU

Stunning Blows



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran has stumped his opponents again. He not only managed to nip the opposition Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's (DMK) ambitious month-long anti-Hindi agitation in the bud, but left them in a state of shock.

As part of the statewide protest, over 15,000 DMK volunteers were to burn copies of Para 17 of the Constitution, which specifies that the official language of the Indian Union would be Hindi. The DMK wanted to incorporate into the Constitution, Jawaharlal Nehru's assurance that English will continue as the associate official language as long as the non-Hindi speaking people desire it.

But on the eve of the agitation, the DMK's thunder was stolen when a government-sponsored resolution, moved in MGR's name, urged the Centre to make Nehru's assurance a part of the Constitution—precisely the demand the agitators were voicing. It left everyone confused about the ruling party's real stand on the language issue. The DMK, caught in a trap, was forced to vote for the resolution which was passed.

Then the agitators were hit the other way when, a few days later, assembly Speaker P.H. Pandian announced that he was disqualifying seven DMK MLA's, including General Secretary K. Anbazhagan, and party leader in the House, from membership of the Assembly for publicly burning the Constitution. While the DMK president bravely said later that "our agitation will go on", there is no doubt that his is a stunned party. After this ruling, their strength in the Assembly of 235 members has been reduced to a mere 15.

MGR's ally, the Congress(I), was also unhappy because it had to vote against the resolution about Nehru's assurance. Grumbled M.P. Subramaniam, former Tamil Nadu Congress(I) Committee (TNCC-I) chief: "It was unfair

The actions of the speaker and MGR between them, took all the wind out of the DMK's anti-Hindi agitation.

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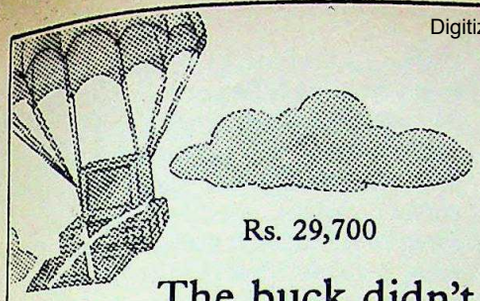

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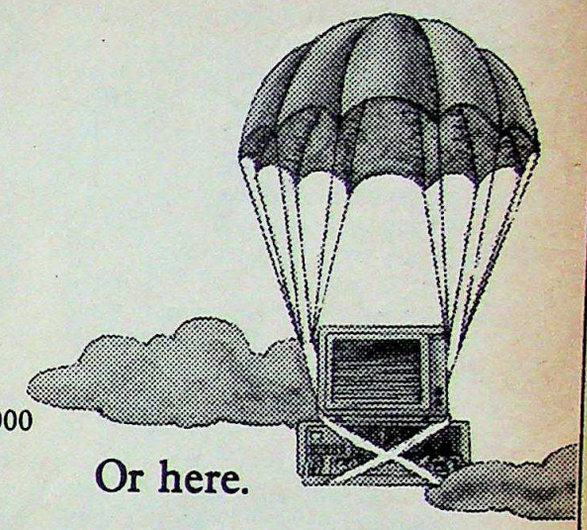

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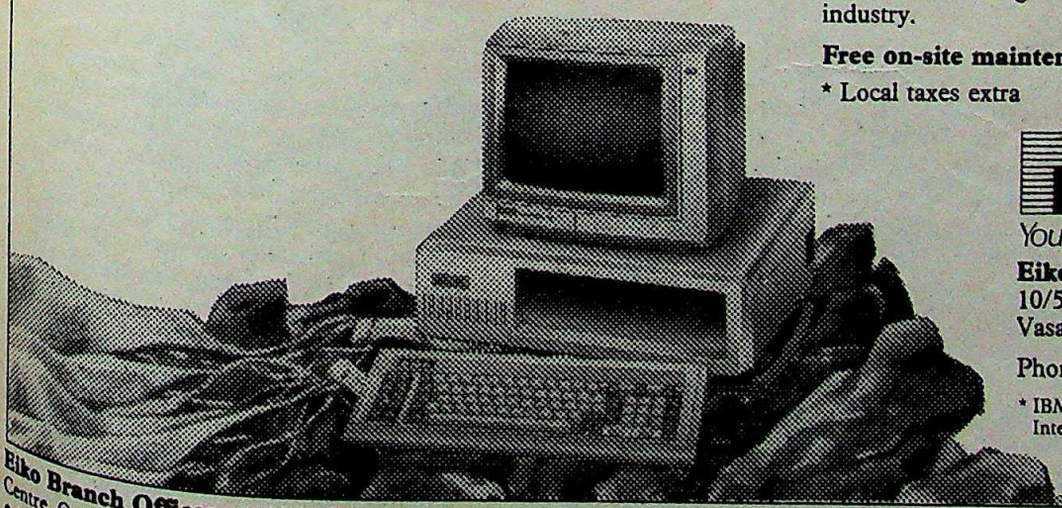

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on the part of the AIADMK to have brought in this resolution all of a sudden. In our party, we did not even have the time to consult our leader as to how to react to it." Fumed TNCC(I) Vice-President A.R. Marimuthu: "By passing such a resolution, the AIADMK is trying to severe itself from the mainstream. It is sacrificing national unity to make a temporary truce with the DMK."

The AIADMK, however, was clever enough to give solid reasons for its stand. Explained Education Minister C. Ponnaiyan: "The amended Official Languages Act of 1968 which gives a certain measure of legal protection to the non-Hindi speaking people was an Act passed by a simple majority in Parliament and therefore can be annulled by a similar majority. It is precisely because of this that we are forced to seek constitutional protection."

This was not all. Ponnaiyan made a categorical declaration in the Assembly last fortnight that the state Government would not allow the establishment of model schools in the state unless the medium of instruction was Tamil. This statement was seen as added proof of MGR's new anti-Centre stance. It did not matter that only a month ago, Finance Minister V.R. Nedunchezhiyan, the number two man in the state Cabinet, had on MGR's behalf appealed to the DMK to withdraw its anti-Hindi agitation because Rajiv Gandhi had assured the chief minister that the Centre would stand by Nehru's commitment to non-Hindi speaking people.

But MGR was still not through with his quota of surprises. He decided to re-induct into the Cabinet former food minister S.D. Somasundaram, one of the most vehement critics of AIADMK Propaganda Secretary Jayalalitha, and merge his Namathu Kazhagam into the AIADMK. Only a fortnight ago, MGR had dropped 10 ministers belonging to the anti-Jayalalitha camp of former information minister R.M. Veerappan. Speculation was rife that the real reason in the case of at least eight ministers was that they had raised anti-Hindi slogans. But Somasundaram's re-induction had everybody guessing about the exact game that MGR seemed to be playing. Remarked an AIADMK leader: "This is our leader's see-saw to balance the factions in the party.". But just how long MGR's balancing act could go on without a major mishap was just one of the many intriguing questions raised during last fortnight's political jugglery.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

TAMIL NADU

Current Satire

THERE was little doubt that he was courting trouble with the censors when criminal lawyer Palayamkottai Shanmugam from Tirunelveli commissioned the veteran satirist and playwright Cho S. Ramaswamy to not only do the story, screen-play, and dialogue, but also feature as the protagonist in a film he wanted to produce on political corruption. But last fortnight, Shanmugam was finally able to heave a sigh of relief when Censor Board Chairman Bikram Singh in Bombay cleared the film *Kani Nilam Vendum* (Wanted, a Piece of Land) after three long months of uncertainty. A revising committee recommended a "U" certificate for the film, provided 13 cuts were carried out.

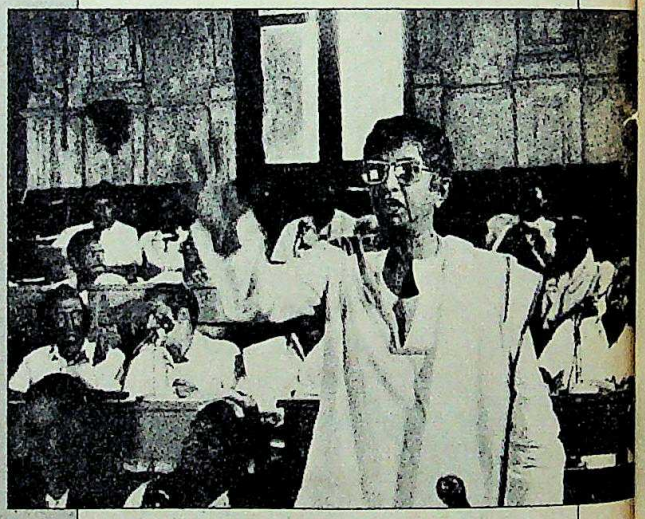
The film, a sizzling political commentary with references to identifiable Tamil politicians, was initially refused a certificate by the Censor Board for fear it would cause public disaffection.

Exulted Shanmugam: "I knew I would finally get the certificate. I was prepared to battle to any extent to obtain it. The grant of a certificate is a vindication of the right to free political expression." Shanmugam had, in fact, filed a writ petition in the Madras High Court requesting that the censors be directed to certify the film speedily—he was worried that the file on his film had got stuck with the censor board chairman, notwithstanding a favourable recommendation by the revising committee. Under censorship regulations, the chairman can reverse the ruling of this committee.

Earlier, the examining committee of the Central Board of Film Certification in Madras had refused to certify Shanmugam's film. According to board sources, the committee felt that the film, by showing that the cancer of political corruption had eaten deeply into the current system, would cause widespread disaffection towards the Government. It also felt that there were derogatory references in the film to many identifiable Tamil Nadu politicians.

However, the revising committee which viewed the film a couple of months ago, gave it a 'U' certificate with as many as 18 cuts. Its report remained buried in the office of the chairman of the Film Certification Board.

The film is suffused with native undertones of Tamil Nadu politics and delivers a sizzling political commentary. It is cast very much in Cho's mould of political satire. The irrepressible humorist makes his appearance in the film as a corrupt minister, reverentially referred to as Dr Arivarasan (who can miss the customary reference in Tamil to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran by his partymen as Dr Chief Minister Revolutionary Leader MGR?)



Cho as Arivarasan: present-day politics

Arivarasan's business partner in money-making and social crime in the film is the proverbial industrialist Marudappan exemplifying the nefarious nexus between dirty politics and profiteering business. Marudappan gets hundreds of peasants thrown off their land for his proposed five-star hotel project. But with shrewd Arivarasan's help he is able to present his scheme as a hospital project in the interests of the poor. The whole story is about the fight of these peasants to get their land back.

It is a theme of proletarian crusading. But a pronounced undercurrent of

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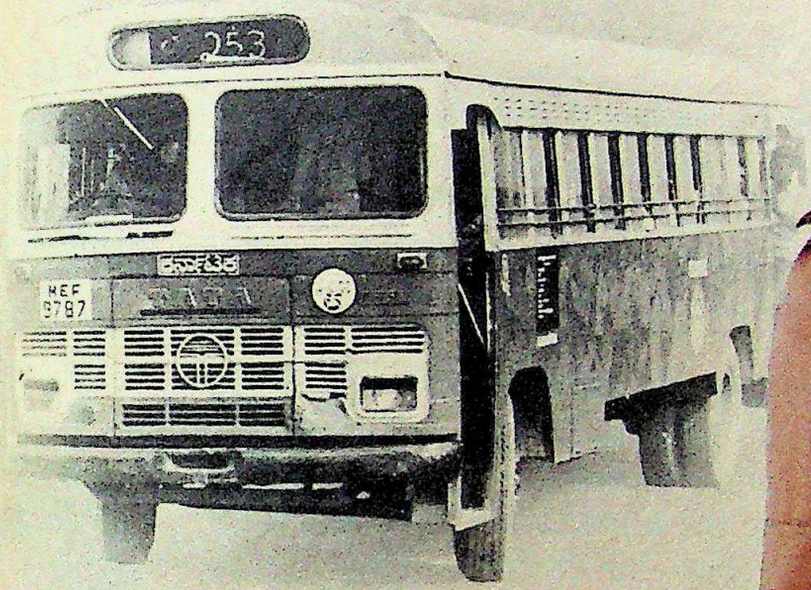

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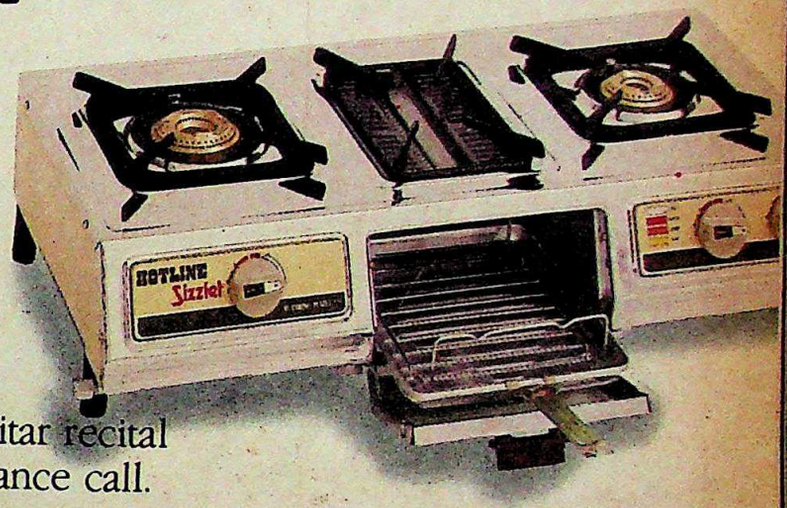

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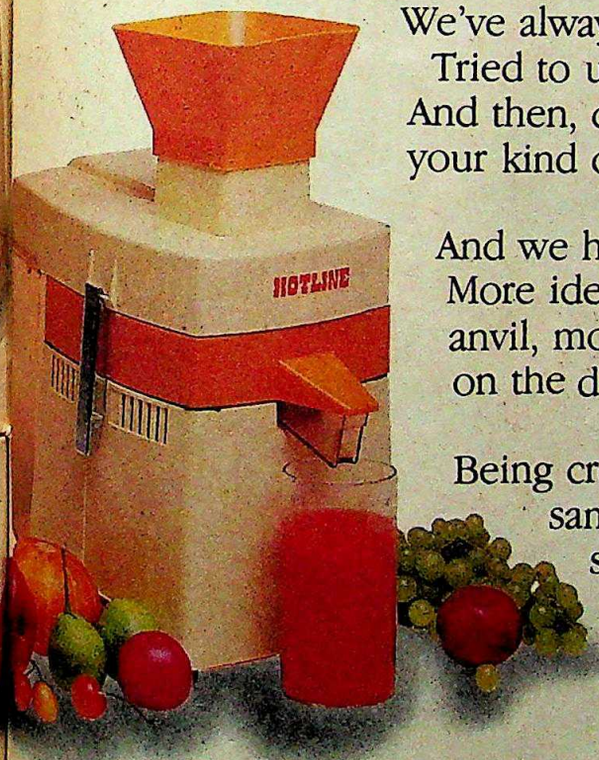

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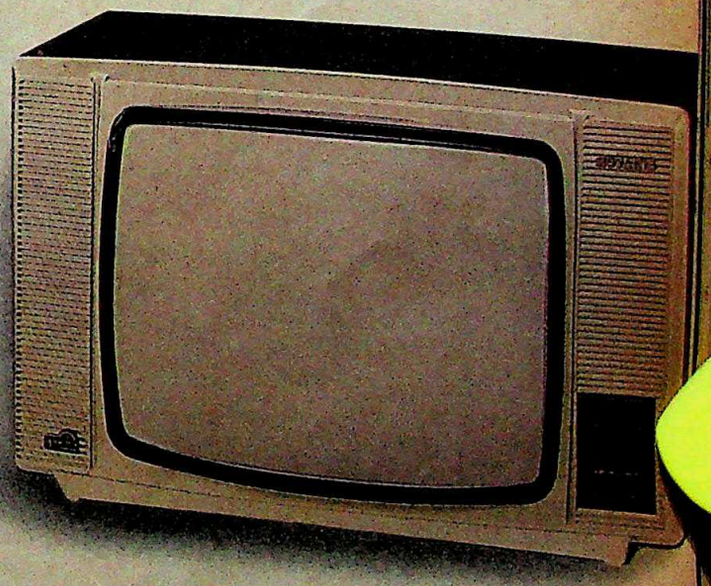
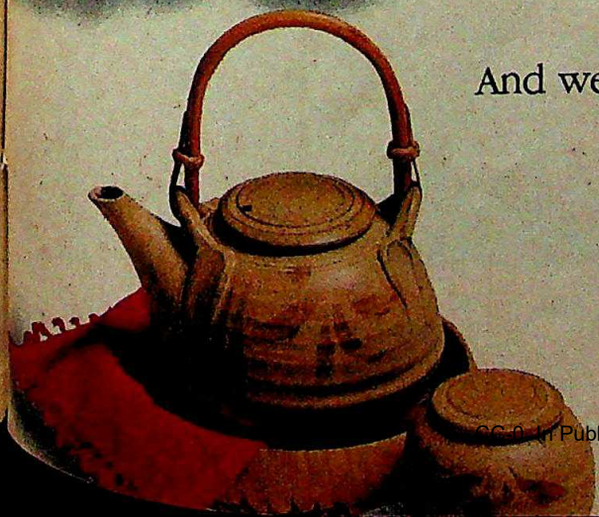


And we learnt it all from you.



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Indian Medical Gazette 118 223 (1984)

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contemporary Tamil Nadu politics runs throughout the film. To wit: a journalist probes Marudappan on his ministerial links and his hotel project. The businessman, like the typical wrongdoer, responds with an angry outburst. He later describes this encounter with the scribe to Arivarasan. The minister counsels Marudappan that it is not wise to show one's anger: "You see our chief minister; if he doesn't like you, he will embrace you at public functions." That piece of sage advice blatantly rings a bell: former matinee idol MGR is in the habit of publicly hugging his political adversaries.

The political gimmickry doesn't end there. To improve his political leverage with his own chief minister, Arivarasan even builds bridges with opposition leader Nagalingam. He later delivers a sermon in which he refers to democracy as a boxing bout: the boxers in the ring have to keep fighting for the collections to keep pouring in. If one knocks the other down that is the end of the show. Not only that: he tells Nagalingam that he will have to help in keeping the attention of the people diverted from the real issues. The moment the people start becoming restive, the two of them should kick up a shindig about the imposition of Hindi. The Government will name a district after *periappa* (elder uncle): the opposition leader should protest that it should be named after *chinnappa* (younger uncle). (DMK President M. Karunanidhi had demanded that Chingleput be renamed Anna district).

The visuals also brim with political comment. For instance Cho does election campaigning in the film, wearing dark glasses like MGR and Karunanidhi, and speaking with Karunanidhi's heavy Tamil accent. The bloody bandage on his head shows the violence by his opponents, but to the viewer it drives home the magic of MGR's fur cap.

But Cho insists that the film is not defamatory. "It does not vilify anybody. It only shows corruption at the political level seeping down to the grassroots." As for imitating Karunanidhi's accent: "There are any number of DMK politicians who speak like Karunanidhi." Contends the satirist: "The film is a general comment about the style of politics in Tamil Nadu today."

But the fact remains that *Kanni Nilam Vendum* is a bold political film rippling with Cho's satirical humour. In his characteristic style, Cho argues that if a politician feels defamed by the film, he must be *ipso facto* corrupt.

—S.H. VENKATRAMANI

LAST WORD/RAJINDER PURI

Private Moments

WE all know what happens when world leaders meet accompanied by their aides. They issue joint communiques which are splashed in the press. But what happens when they meet alone, without aides or interpreters? That's what the world really wants to know. Well, we managed to obtain the tapes of the Rajiv-Gorbachev private meeting held in New Delhi last week. Excerpts:

Gorbachev: Greetings Comrade! At last we meet alone! Long live the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty!

Rajiv: Hi Tovarich, nice to see you! I'm glad you brought up the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty. I wanted some clarifications about it.

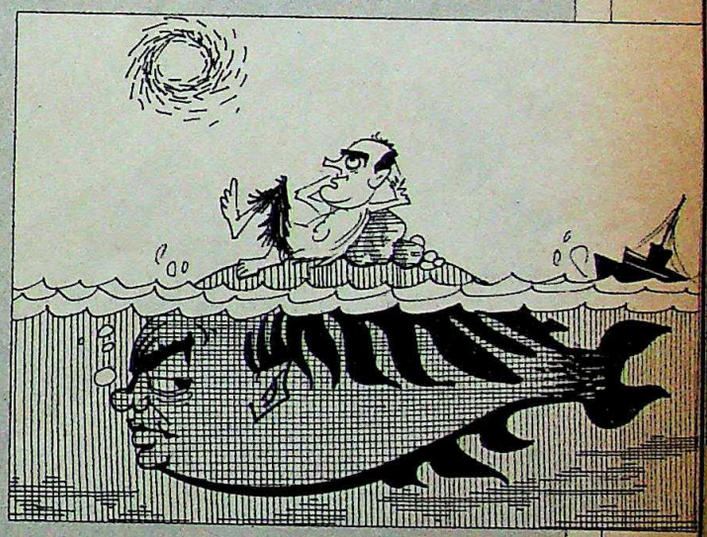
Gorbachev: What clarifications?

Rajiv: The Indo-Soviet treaty is 15 years old, yet our bonds of friendship continue to get stronger every day! Why is that so?

Gorbachev: Er.... I'm afraid I don't understand.....

Rajiv: You know I have signed several accords recently. After each accord relations have worsened rapidly, so what is the secret of the Indo-Soviet treaty? Why have our relations improved?

Gorbachev: Um.... ah.... well, I must think about it. Meanwhile comrade, there is one matter on which you can help me. We want to know Reagan's mind. Whenever you meet him please assess what he really wants and give us your report. Nobody in our party understands him. Our very future depends on understanding him!



Rajiv: Okay, but we want a quid pro quo. We also want to know somebody's mind. Whenever you meet him please assess what he really wants and give us your report. Nobody in our party understands him. Our very future depends on understanding him!

Gorbachev: Are you talking of Deng?

Rajiv: No, I am talking of Zail Singh. Please inform us if you ever succeed in learning what he really wants!

Gorbachev: Oh... er... ah... of course, of course! Another thing comrade, can't you be more forthright on Afghanistan?

Rajiv: You know how it is, Mikhail. Indians firmly believe that every country's future should be left to its own people, without outside interference.

Gorbachev: But my dear Rajiv, that's what we believe too! As we always say, let Russia be run by us Russians, let Poland be run by us Poles, let Afghanistan be run by us Afghans, let....

Rajiv (hastily): Yes, yes, I see what you mean, let me think about it.

Gorbachev: One last thing, Rajiv. People in Russia look up to you. We want you to be your own master. Please don't let anyone bully you!

Rajiv: I try Mikhail, believe me I try, but sometimes it's impossible to say no! The pressure is too great!

Gorbachev (grimly): You mean Reagan ....?

Rajiv: No, I mean Sonia. If I ever do take a firm stand Mikhail, can I count on your support?

Gorbachev (irritably): How can I commit right away, comrade? First I must ask Raisa....

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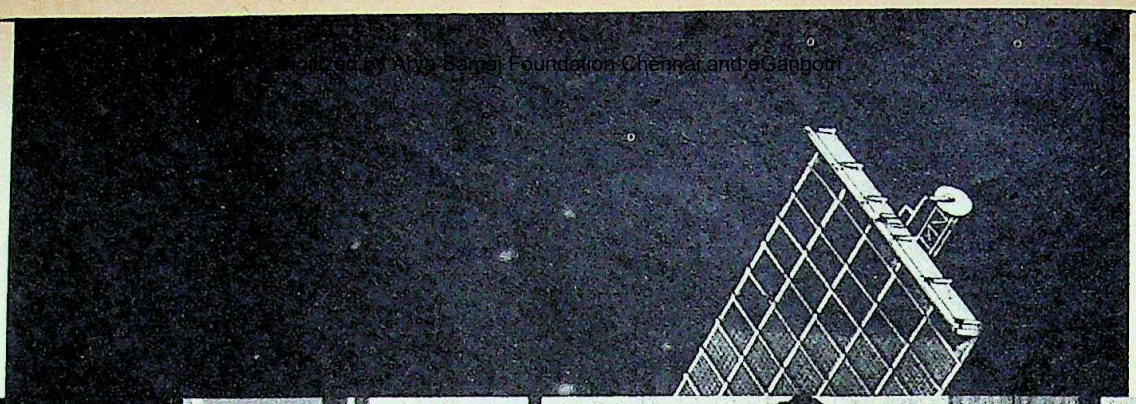

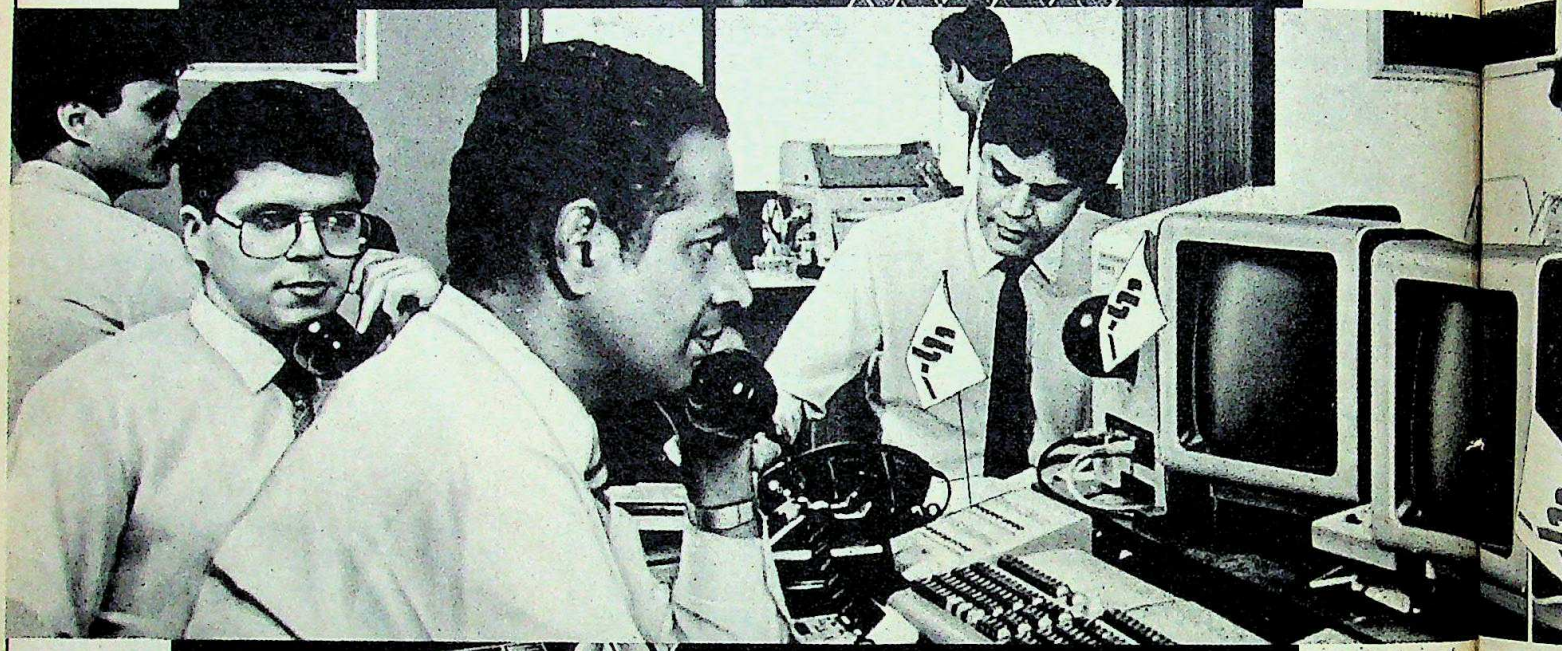

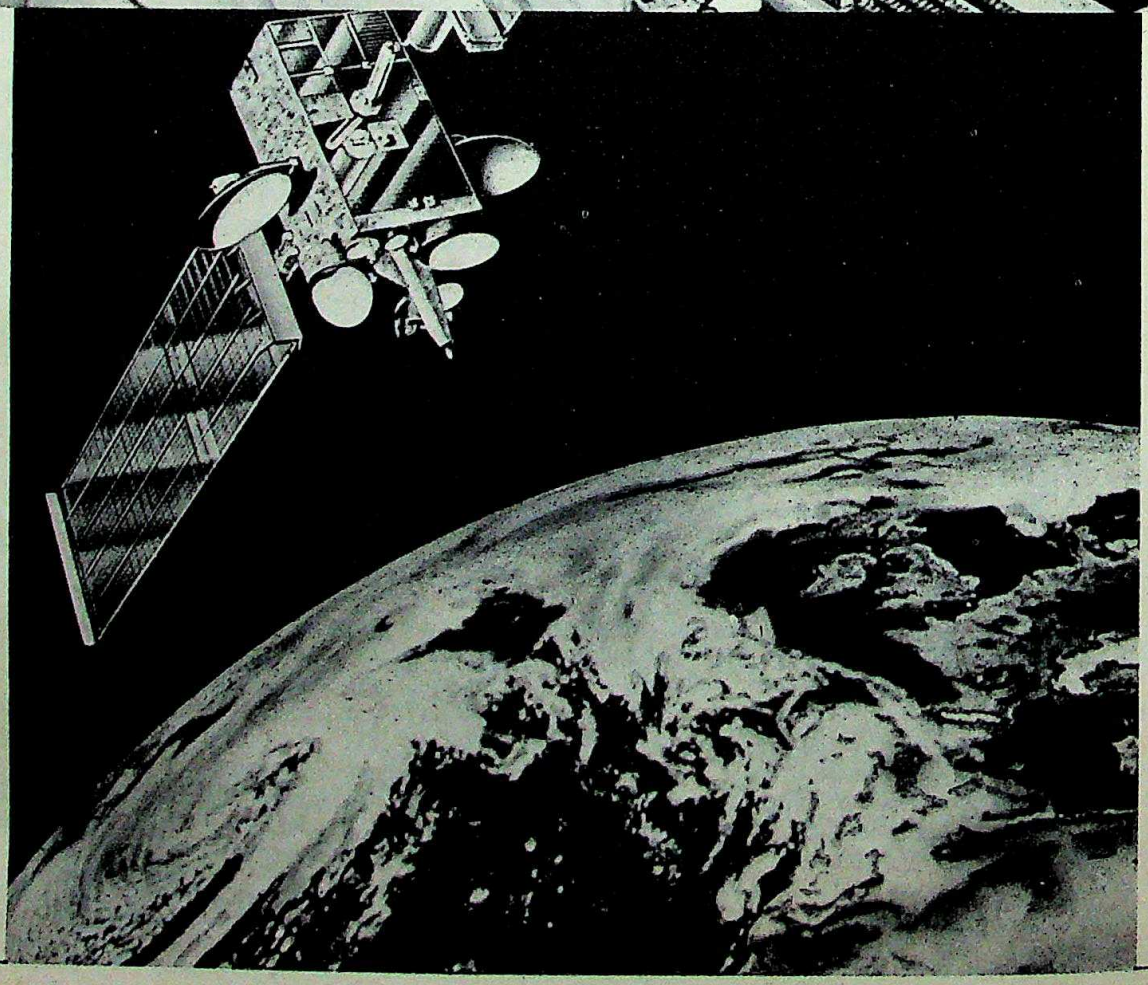

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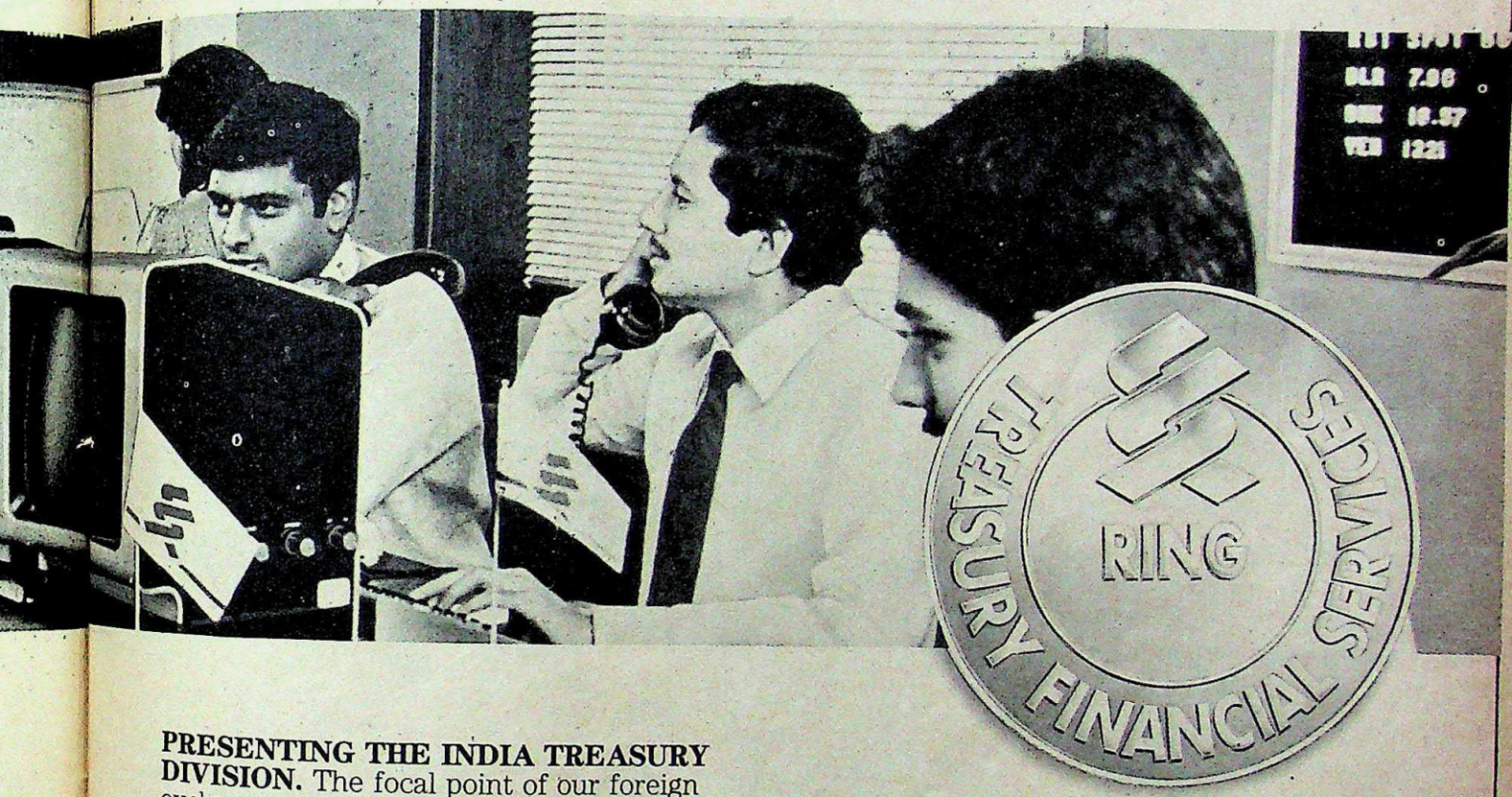

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UTTAR PRADESH

State of Paralysis

LAST month the state's employees achieved what the political bigwigs of Uttar Pradesh could not. For 19 days, before the strike was called off on November 29, they paralysed the entire state and succeeded in rattling Chief Minister Bir Bahadur Singh.

Under the agreement that was finally reached, the demand of 15 per cent interim relief—involving an annual burden of Rs 170 crore—has been accepted. A Wage Committee appointed by the state Government will also consider the strikers' main demand: parity of wages with Central Government employees—but "keeping in view the availability of resources". It will also go into the issue of fixing Rs 750 as the minimum wage. The Government was represented at the talks by Bir Bahadur Singh, Health Minister Lokpati Tripathi, among others. It was a last, sudden twist, for, just a day earlier, with the arrest of about a thousand employees and the alerting of the Army, the scenario had looked grim.

Never had the state seen a work stoppage of this magnitude. The last big strike—not nearly as well organised—occurred in 1966-67 and had caused the then chief minister Sucheta Kriplani's resignation. This time, it involved 15 lakh employees and by the time it was withdrawn, had caused a loss of well over Rs 1,000 crore to the exchequer.

Even though the state employees had been publicly threatening to launch a massive agitation in August, it was only on November 6 that the chief minister first invited employee leaders for a dialogue. As the talks progressed over the next few days, they rejected offers of interim relief. The stands of both sides hardened and employees stayed out of their offices on November 11. Then, the breakdown in negotiations on November 19 proved to be a serious reversal: doctors, engineers, finance and accounts officials, clerks and blue-collar workers in all departments walked off their jobs.

B.N. Singh, president of the Uttar Pradesh State Employees Joint Council which represents 168 associations, said the chief minister's attitude had been too rigid. Added J.P. Awasthi, president of the Uttar Pradesh Sachivalaya Mahasangh, which represents nine associations of Class I to Class IV employees: "No government can fight its own might."

Several politicians chose this chance to embarrass the Government. Lokpati Tripathi, a long-time contender for the chief minister's chair, also jumped into the fray. His intervention, in fact, only served to aggravate the situation.

The show of strength between the Government and the employees was largely in evidence on November 14, the day the chief minister was away in Allahabad to receive Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Over two lakh employees from various districts collected in Lucknow and started a march towards the secretariat, defying prohibitory orders. Police sympathy for the strikers was evident. They resorted to a mild lathi charge only after interminable prodding by their officers.

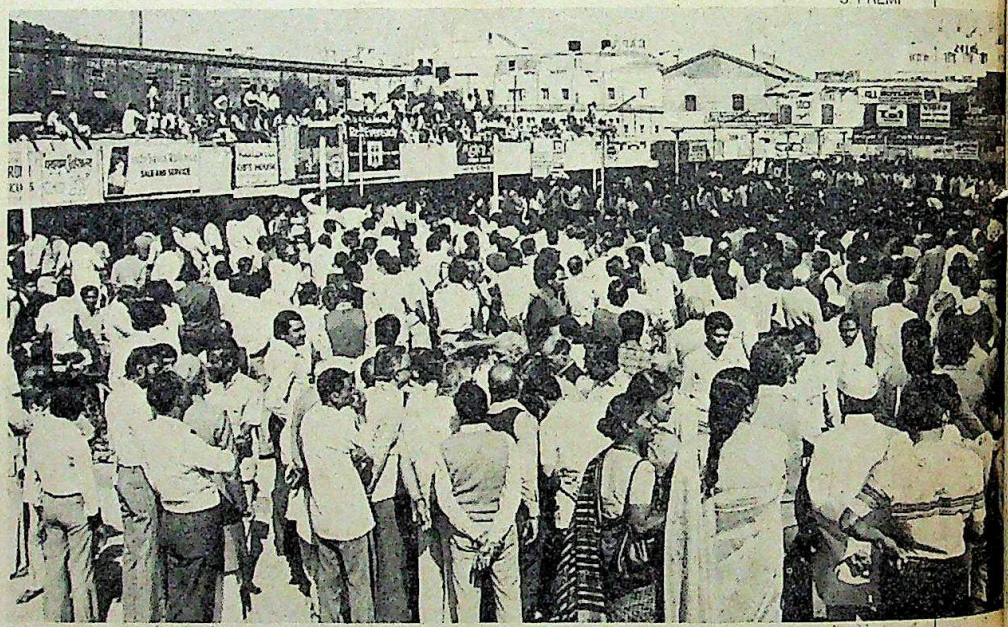
Bickering among senior ministers had made matters worse. During a cabinet meeting on November 19, while Tripathi suggested that the employees' demand for parity be conceded, Transport Minister Sanjay Singh pleaded for stern action against them. Most of the other ministers remained silent. In dealing with the crisis, the chief minister was hamstrung by the problem of not knowing which colleague to trust.

So complete was the strike that once the chief minister himself had to operate the lift in the secretariat annexe to reach his office. Another time, he had to wait outside his office for over five minutes as the newly-recruited homeguard fumbled with a bunch of keys to find the one that fit the lock on his door. On November 16, the chief minister used the police escort car to reach the airport because his official driver had joined the strikers.

Bir Bahadur Singh clearly had not expected everything to come to a grinding halt. Even as late as November 14, he told INDIA TODAY: "What do they think, they can fight the Government and win?

In dealing with the crisis, Bir Bahadur Singh was hamstrung by not knowing which colleague to trust.

S. PREMI



Employees at Lucknow rally

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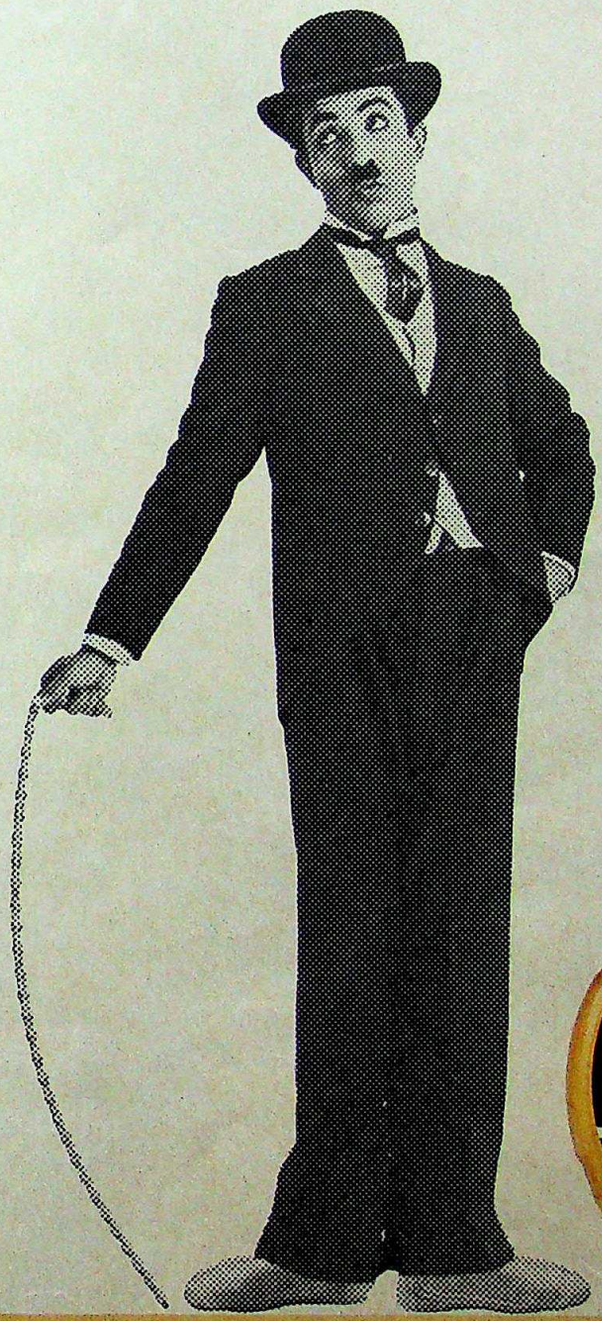
"In these Modern Times I'd love to be in your shoes!"



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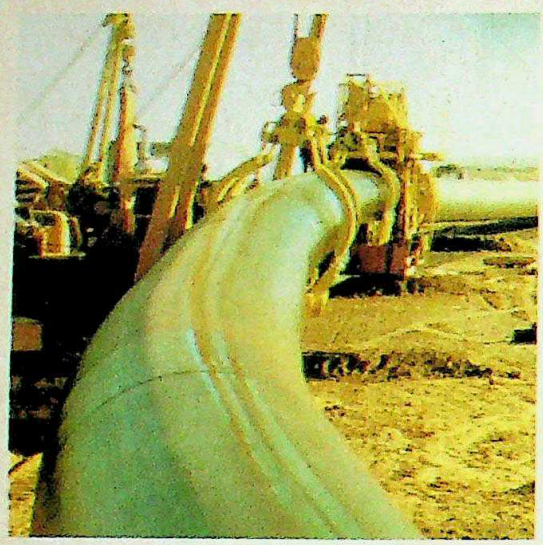

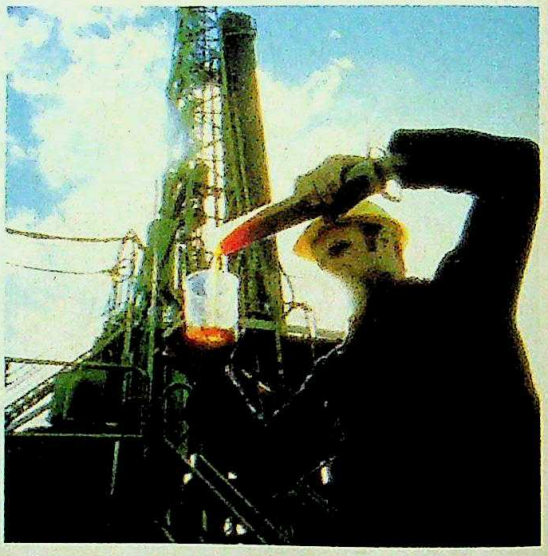

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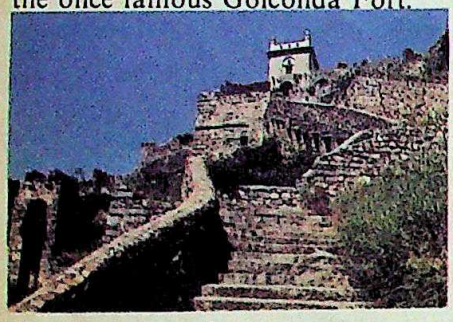

The sheer magnitude and meticulous planning of this fortress still inspires awe. So do the aesthetically designed Qutub Shahi monuments, which contain the mortal remains of the Qutub Shahi rulers.

Salar Jung Museum-perhaps the largest and most fascinating one man collection in the world. The Birla Planetarium which reveals the secrets of the sky. There are numerous picnic spots around Hyderabad. Vast man-made lakes like Himayat Sagar, Osman Sagar, and Hussain Sagar, are favourite recreation spots. Boating and water sports facilities are provided at the Hussain Sagar lake. Then there is the famous Mecca Masjid, the Venkateswara temple sculpted in marble, the Osmania University, Nehru Zoological Park. The list is endless.

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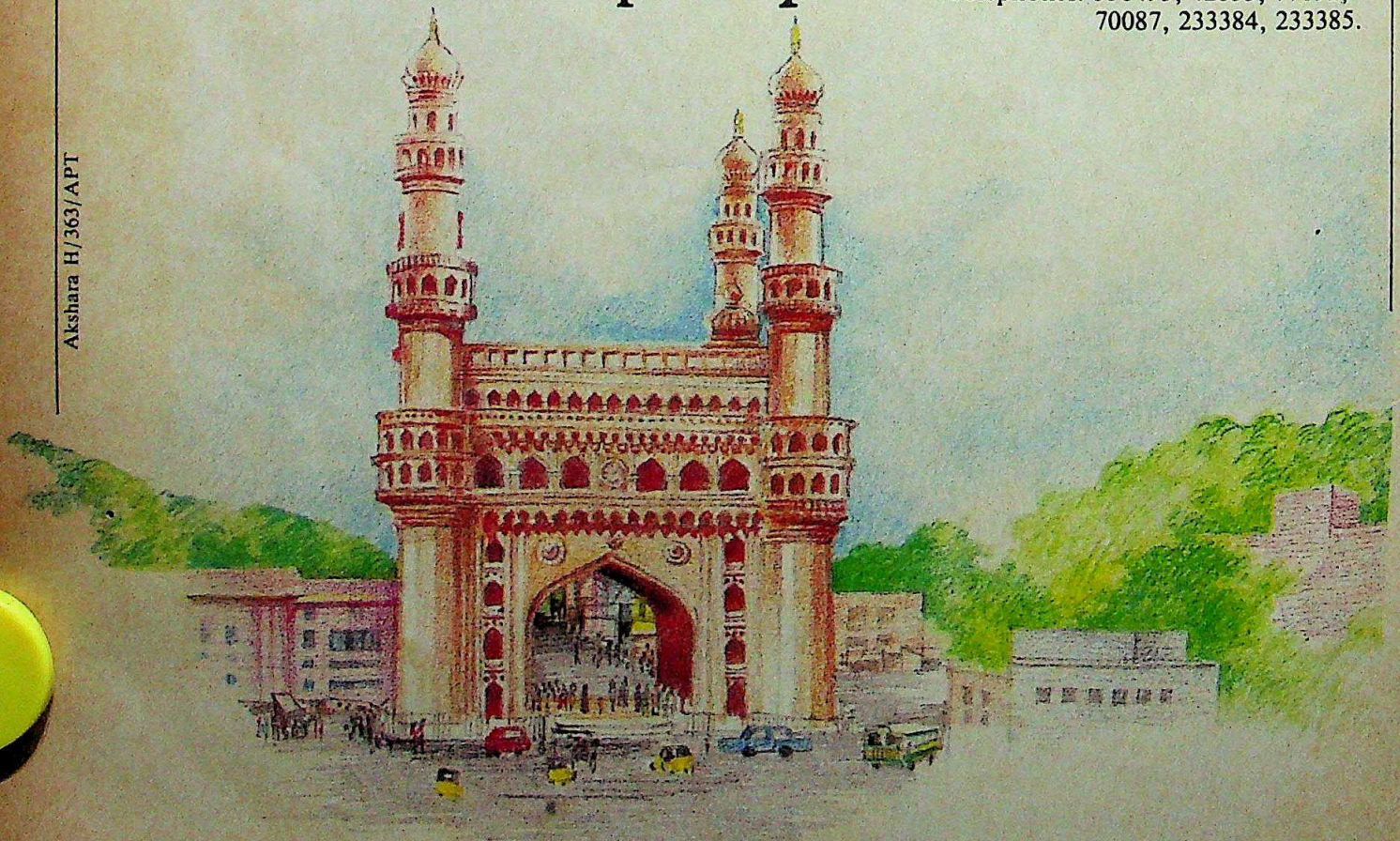

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We have offered to constitute a committee to consider the demands."

But later there was a change in his attitude. In the past, Singh had argued that the additional burden to the exchequer, if parity was granted, would be Rs 700 crore annually and would plunge the state, which already spends 45 per cent of its Rs 4,000-crore revenue on salaries, into a deficit. But on November 19, he altered his stance and announced an interim relief of 12.5 per cent with a minimum increase of Rs 65 and a maximum of Rs 250—involving an additional expenditure of Rs 135 crore. Employee leaders flatly turned down the offer. "A 15 per cent ad hoc increase in wages for the interim period is the only choice left with the Government now," B.N. Singh had warned.

The employees had valid reasons for being stubborn. The recent recommendations of the Central Pay Commission have created gaps ranging from 10 per cent to 88 per cent between the salaries drawn by Central and state employees. While the lowest grade at the Centre is Rs 750-940, in Uttar Pradesh it is Rs 305-390. Similarly, the highest grade at the Centre is Rs 9,000 while in Uttar Pradesh it is Rs 4,500. Though state employees get 84.6 per cent as dearness allowance, the salary gap is still wide.

According to striking senior Finance officials, fears of a deficit were unfounded. They argue that the state actually has a surplus revenue of Rs 578.97 crore for which it has not shown any expenditure. It has therefore denied itself the benefit of deficit financing under Article 275 whereby the Centre has to plug the complete deficit of the state. The

STATE EMPLOYEES

Cry for Parity

THE year 1986 will be remembered as the year in which government employees fought for—and got—more. Ever since the recommendations of the Fourth Pay Commission were accepted by the Union Government earlier this year, rumblings of discontent have been evident all over.

In the north, Rajasthanis had to suffer as state government employees walked out of their offices on November 10. Their demands: similar salaries, bonus and facilities as Central government employees. The strike was nearly total and the Harideo Joshi Government was left tottering under its impact.

On November 16 Joshi unilaterally announced concessions which involved an additional annual burden of about Rs 80 crore. But unconvinced, employees stayed away. The Government says it cannot afford more for, if the demands are conceded, staff expenses will amount to 60 per cent of revenue receipts.

Meanwhile, on November 5, the state staff in Andhra Pradesh, whose situation largely compares well to people at the Centre, went on strike too. The four lakh non-gazetted employees were protesting against the delay in implementing the recommendations of the state's sixth pay commission with retrospective effect from January 1, 1986. Plus they wanted a minimum pay of Rs 750.

Though Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao had accepted the commission's recommendations—whose implementation will mean a burden of Rs 133 crore annually—formal orders were issued only on November 20 when the strike was two weeks old. But if all the demands are met, the additional annual burden will be not Rs 133 crore but Rs 193 crore. This time—unlike 1983—there was little sympathy for the strikers. At the outset, Rama Rao announced concessions amounting to Rs 20 crore, but he went back on this soon after and offered minor sops totalling just Rs 2.6 crore.

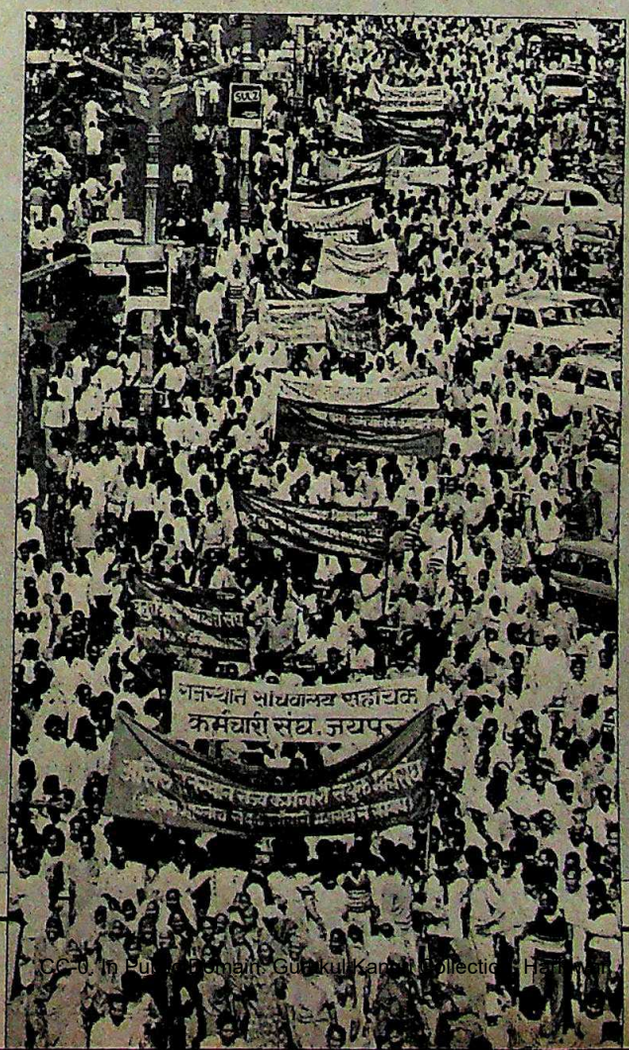
But the government employees in Gujarat were certainly the luckiest. A vocal—but small—section of employees had only begun grumbling at the state capital, Gandhinagar, when Chief Minister Amarsinh Chaudhary meekly gave in and announced pay parity with Central government staff. His surrender—cost: Rs 376 crore annually—surprised the employees themselves. After the hike, expenditure on employees will be Rs 1,150 crore—or more than half the state's annual budget allocation.

In Maharashtra, after a 54-day strike in 1977-78, the state Government had declared that it would follow Central Pay Commissions' recommendations in future. When, this year in August, the employees made clear their intention to go off work, in October a government announcement said that the recent Central Commission's standards would be implemented—but with a 25 per cent cut. The logic for this cut was that state employees already received that much more than at the Centre. But numerous points have not been clarified and another strike notice has now been served.

Indications are, the reverberations of the impact of the Central Pay Commission will be felt for a long time to come.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR
with bureau reports

Morcha by employees in Jaipur



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employees' leaders contended that a commitment to give parity to state Government employees would entail only Rs 326 crore—and not Rs 700 crore as stated by the chief minister—in additional expenditure and that the state would still be left with a surplus.

Employee leaders also noted that while MLAs recently received fat salary increases, they got nothing. From a net salary of Rs 200 per month in 1947, MLAs now take home Rs 3,500. They also argued that the Government was earning Rs 100 crore per year as interest on the money deposited by the state employees under the general provident fund, pension, insurance and other schemes. The accumulated sum of these funds is Rs 954 crore, on which the Government earns 18 per cent interest, while employees are paid 12 per cent.

That the employees' anger was widespread was also evident from the fact that, for the first time in the state's history, medical services virtually ground to a halt. Dr O.P. Singhal, president of the Provincial Medical Association, said that 80 per cent of the indoor patients in the state hospitals were discharged and new ones were not admitted during the strike's duration. Even emergency services were paralysed because Class IV employees and pharmacists in government hospitals joined the strike. Later, power engineers threatened to plunge the entire state into darkness and the Water-Works Department said it would cut off water supply, starting with the chief minister's residence. Primary and secondary school teachers struck work on the very first day. The roadways alone lost income of Rs 60 lakh per day, according to official figures.

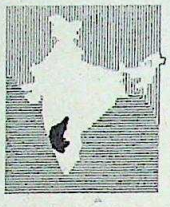
The state employees had planned their agitation thoroughly. They collected funds with contributions ranging from Rs 10 to Rs 50 in preparation for the "jail bharo" phase. The employees' rally on November 14 alone cost the association Rs 15 lakh.

In a test of strength and battle of nerves of this kind, public sympathy is a crucial factor for both sides. But this time round, neither won on this count at least. The general mood was neither with the politicians nor with the employees, because both groups are regarded as corrupt, venal and thoroughly inefficient. Who gained to what extent ultimately is bound to be argued in the coming weeks. But one thing is certain: the people of Uttar Pradesh lost.

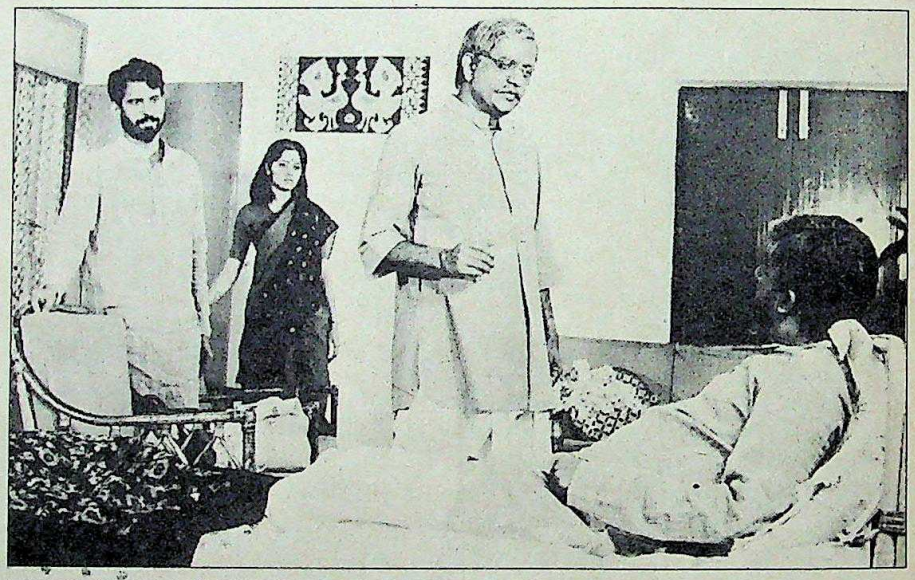
—DILIP AWASTHI

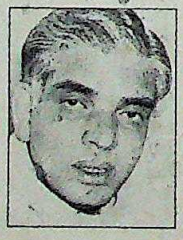
KARNATAKA

Screen Test



Karnataka Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde was aghast when J.H. Patel, large and medium-scale industries minister, stared him straight in the eye and said in the middle of a distinguished gathering last month: "He has no moral right to continue as the chief minister and I will not sleep till he is removed."





A still from *Avasthe*; and (from extreme left) Nazir Sab, Patel, Chandre Gowda

Another move to topple Hegde? No. Patel was only reciting his dialogue for a film he is acting in, as Hegde held the clapboard for the *muhurat* shot at a Bangalore hotel.

The *muhurat* ceremony turned out to be something like a Janata Party meeting with all notable partymen present. Their interest in the film, *Avasthe*, was not surprising: Besides Patel, Abdul Nazir Sab, Janata MLA and rural development minister, former agriculture minister M.P. Prakash; former speaker and Janata Rajya Sabha member D.B. Chandre Gowda too have roles to play in this political film. Director Krishna Masadi said he was even trying to get Rajavardhan, government chief whip in the state Assembly and Janata MLC B.K. Chandra Shekhar, to act in the film. Shekhar's wife is already doing a role. Said Masadi: "It is just apt that politicians should act in the film." And politicians apart, B.V. Karanth, who recently hit the headlines in an alleged murder case, will be the film's music director apart from doing a small role himself, but only if he is allowed to come to Bangalore by the Bhopal police, said Masadi.

The film *Avasthe* (phase), the shooting of which was in full swing last fortnight, is the brain-child of Director Masadi who conceived of it two years ago. He said the idea of involving politicians "was to give the film a natural effect. Patel was once a close associate of Gopala Gowda, the main character in the film, and so readily agreed to associate himself with the project." Other politicians soon followed. Based on a novel by noted Kannada writer U.R. Anantha Murthy, it chronicles the life of Gopala Gowda, a socialist leader of Shimoga district who played a considerable role in the state's politics in the '50s and '60s.

The story is about Gowda, who started as a small-time politician fired with idealistic enthusiasm but was later caught in the tangled web of political corruption and intrigue. As a small boy, he saw his father being murdered heartlessly by property-greedy uncles. But a roving tantrik Maheshwariah "discovered" the boy and offered to educate him. Gowda later became an MLA and found himself fighting corrupt temptations

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from greedy contractors and landlords. Later, dissident ministers plotted a conspiracy to oust the chief minister and put Gowda in the chair. But in the end Gowda's personal life—his shaky marriage to a bank employee—as well as his political career landslided to a tragic end.

"The story is a bit complicated and the making of the film a difficult proposition," admitted Bharati Gowda, a sub-editor with *The Times of India* and a member of the Regional Board for Film Certification, Bangalore, who designed the costumes for the film, her first such assignment. But Masadi—believed to be "obsessed" with *Avasthe*—who took to films after leaving a local Kannada weekly, is much more optimistic. As he put it: "I am trying to make an art film without the usual hangups." Added Archana, who is playing the girl Gowda falls in love with: "The way the film is going I am sure it will not be a bore and will carry the audience through." Like Masadi for whom *Avasthe* is the first independent directorial venture, journalism graduate Archana too has landed her first acting assignment.

While Anant Nag is busy poring over all available material including the politician's speeches, Masadi clarified: "The novel is not an exact biography of Gowda and so I am trying to be faithful to the novel but not to what Gowda actually said or did." Prakash, who had directed about a dozen plays and even acted in some till he became a transport minister and later agriculture minister in the Hegde ministry, is playing the role of Maheswariah, the enigmatic tantrik. Said he: "I think more than anything else the starcast might attract audiences."

Politicians are not known for promptness and punctuality—a fact which was evident during the film's production. It was originally planned that Nazir Sab should play Rehman, a dissident MLA, and Chandre Gowda the police officer Joshi investigating the hero's suspected Naxalite links. But since Sab was not available on the day his scene was to be shot, Masadi quickly interchanged the roles of the rural development minister and the Rajya Sabha member. Said an amused Sab: "I am not sure what role I will play finally." He said he had agreed to act because "friend Anant Nag insisted". But with the people's reaction to politicians appearing on television not being very flattering, it is to be seen how their appearance on the cinema screen will be taken.

—SRINIVASA PRASAD

PENSIONERS

Ray of Hope

THE long-awaited Fourth Pay Commission report on pensions is expected any day in the coming month. Having diligently gone through 500 memorandums, 200 replies to questionnaires, and heard representations of 100 groups and individuals, a much-depleted pay commission office was putting the "final dressings" on the report last fortnight. The pensions report, expected in the last week of October initially, has been considerably delayed due to the demise of the pay commission chairman, Justice P.N. Singhal last month. According to officials, the finalisation work that had already begun on the pensions report came to a virtual standstill during the three weeks that Justice Singhal was in hospital. The pay commission had earlier lost two of its five members, Dr Gopal Das Nag and J.P. Kacker. Despite the fact that the chairman's death has left only Professor M.V. Mathur and Member-Secretary A.K. Majumdar to deliberate over the pension matter, the Government has decided not to appoint another chairman, and has asked the two to complete the report on their own as soon as possible.

Despite the demise of the chairman, Justice Singhal, Majumdar and Mathur have been asked to complete the report on their own as soon as possible.

The work of the commission has been enhanced following the November 8, 1985 resolution of the Government by which the commission was asked to also consider the pension structure (including-death-cum-retirement benefits) of past pensioners besides deciding the packet due to future pensioners.

According to indications available, the commission has made efforts to simplify and rationalise the structure of pensions just as it had earlier revised the pay structure in its salaries report submitted in July. It is also expected to recommend means of removing difficulties presently faced by pensioners at all levels in the settlement of their pension claims and its withdrawal.

In all representations submitted before the pay commission, one common thread running through is that just as there is the principle of "equal pay for equal work" there must be "equal pension for equal quality of service" irrespective of the period during which the service has been rendered.

The Government had agreed to this principle following the historic Supreme Court decision that the Government could not discriminate between pensioners merely by virtue of their date of retirement. But the anomaly has arisen again following the drastic increase in the basic pay of Central Government employees, entailing higher pension packets for future pensioners. The pensioners have been stressing before the commission that the hike in salaries, does not really represent any increase in emoluments but only neutralises the increase in the cost of living. This increase, they emphasise, is equally applicable to pensioners, both past and future, and therefore, all pensions should be computed on this latest level of pay of equivalent rank.

The fact that pensioners were left out from the interim relief granted to serving employees in anticipation of the Fourth Pay Commission report has also generated a lot of misgivings. Pensioners have

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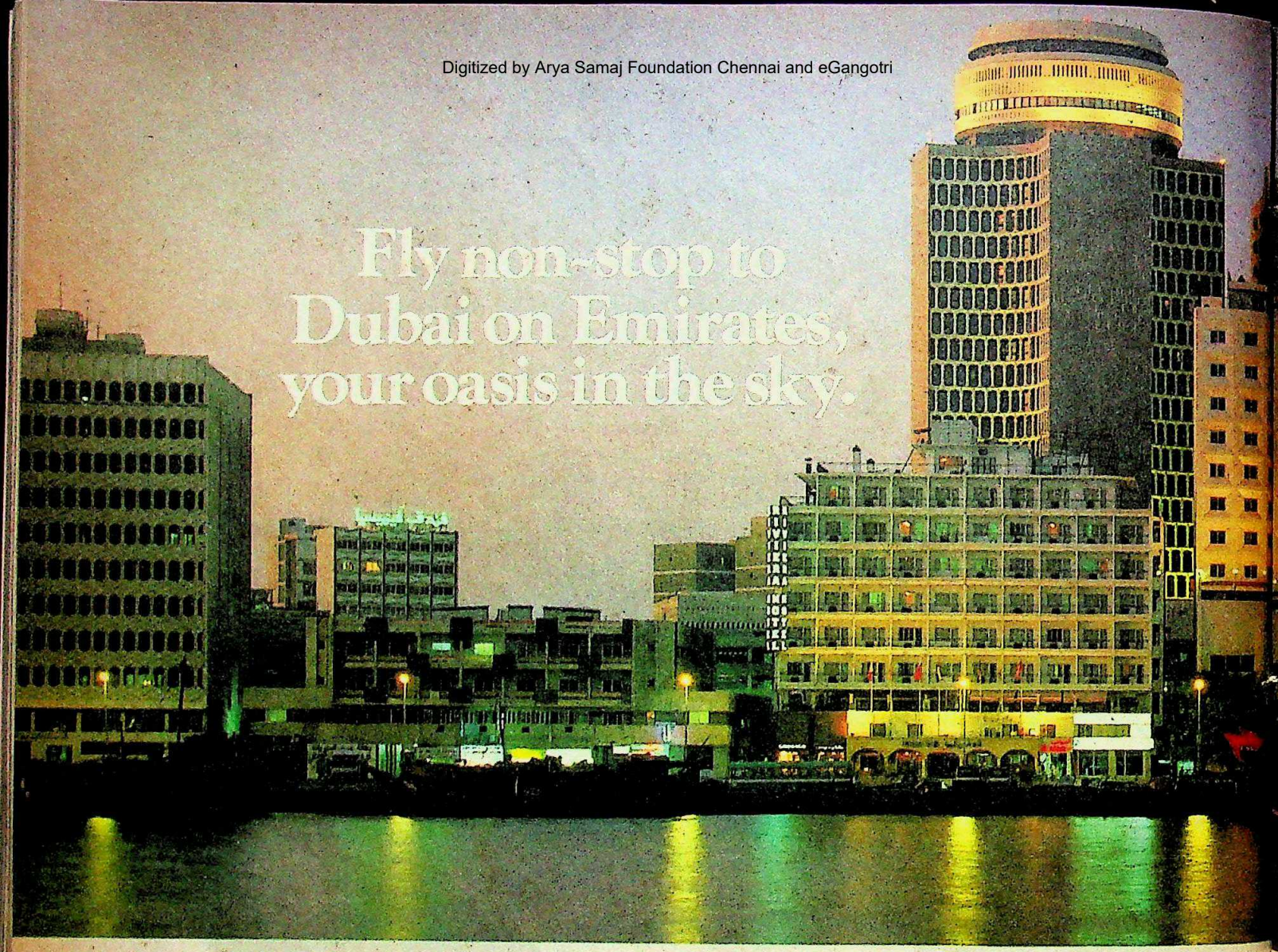

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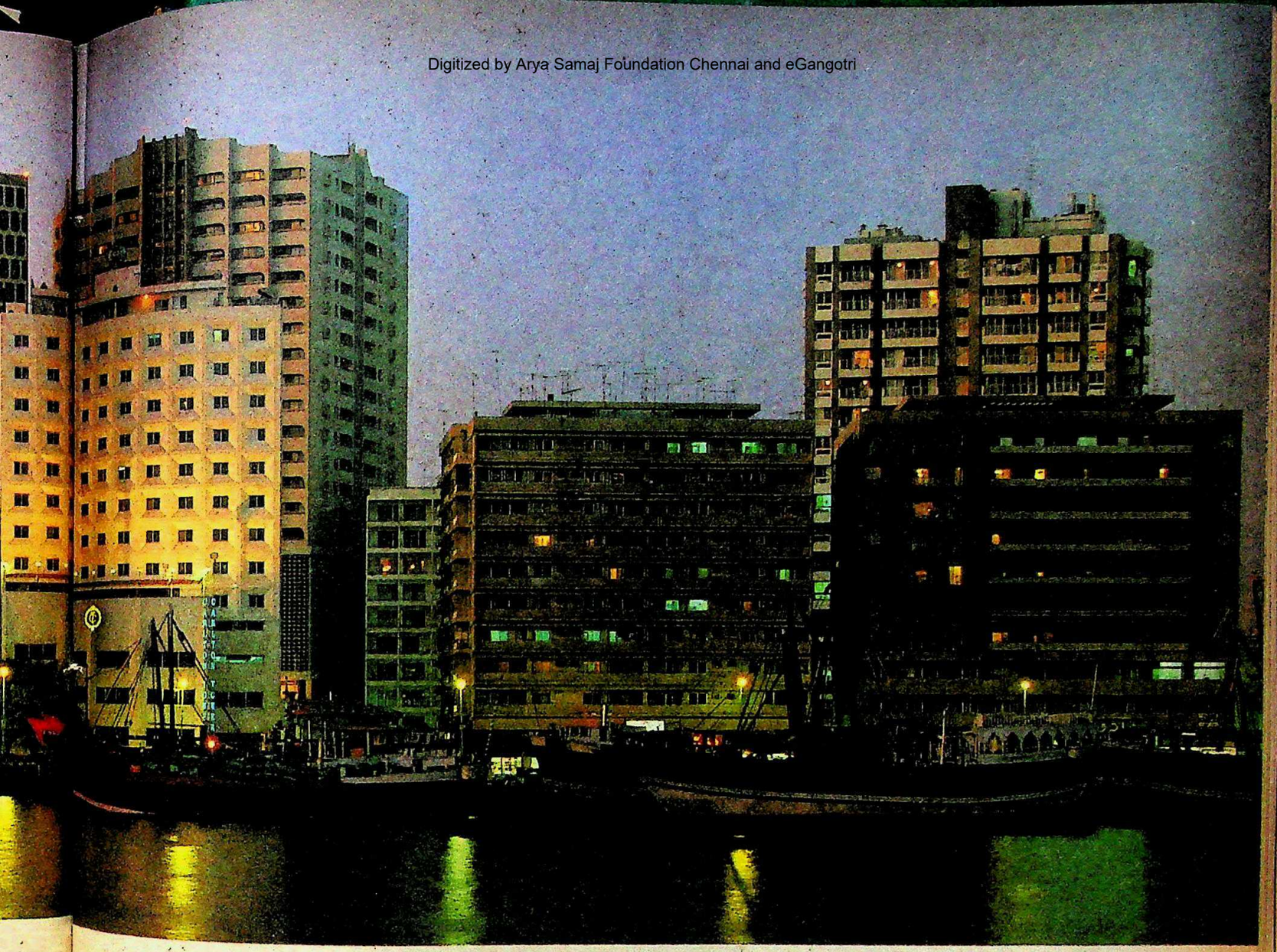

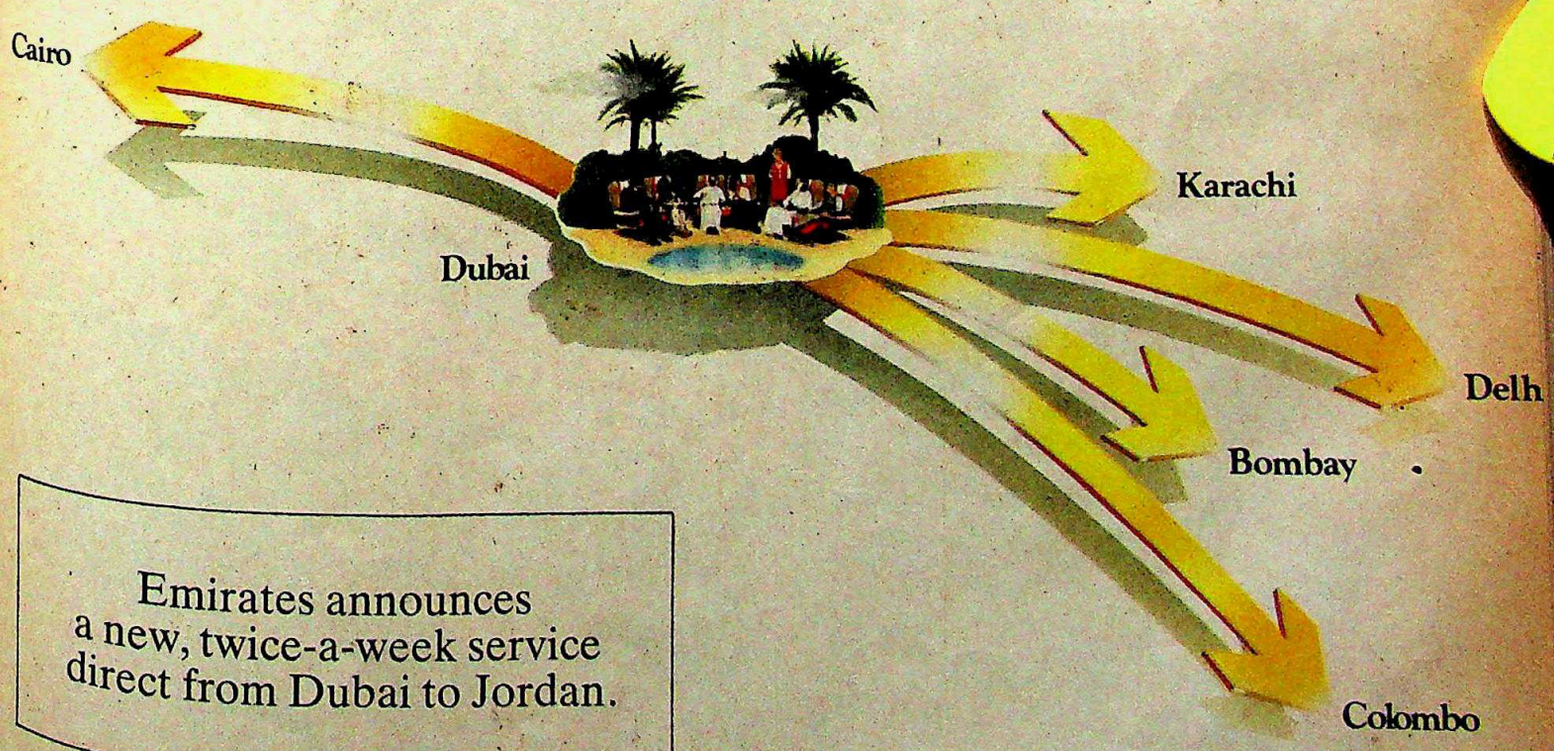

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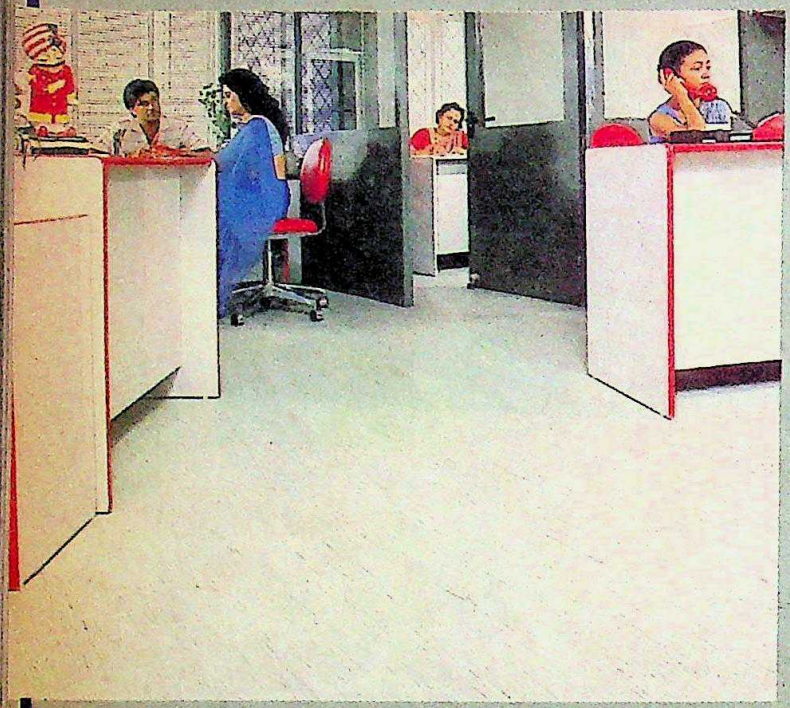

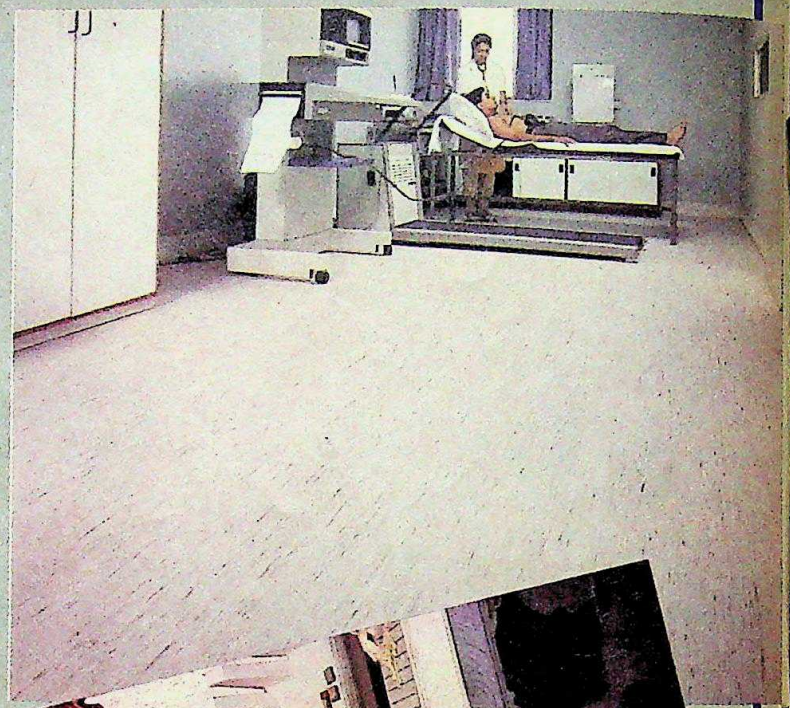

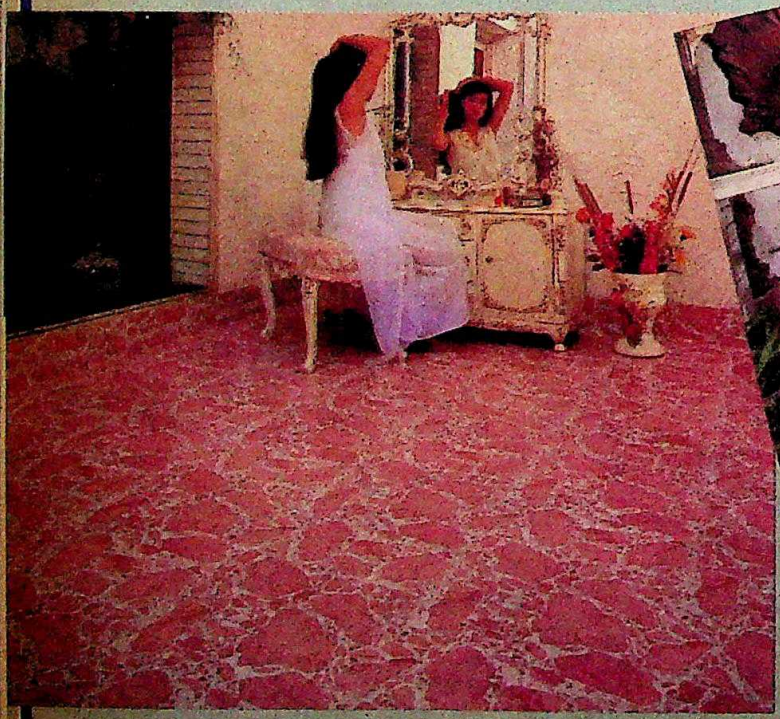

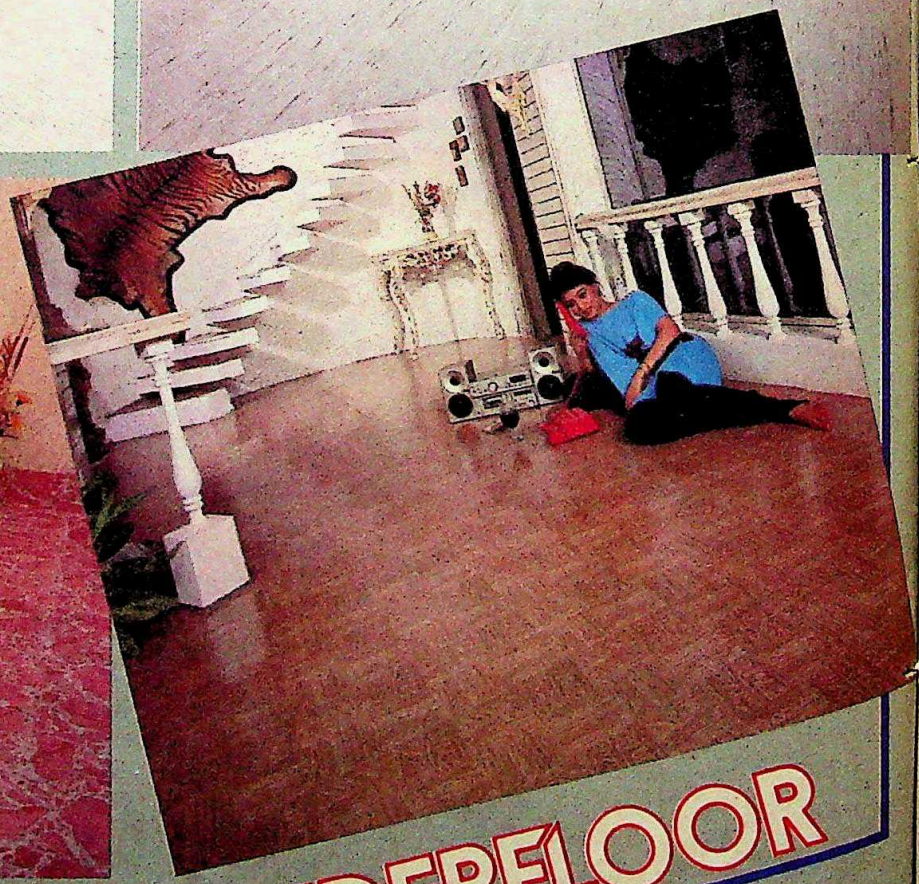

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pointed out that relief against price increase should be the same for all. At present even the level of dearness relief applicable to pensioners is far lower than that applicable to the serving employees.

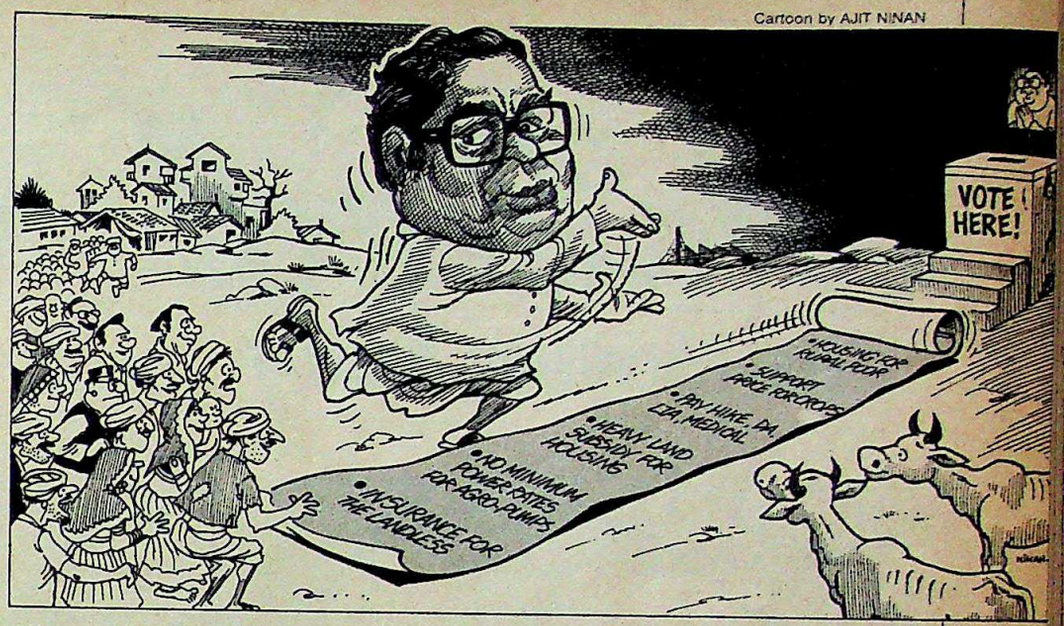
The recent Judges Salaries Act passed by Parliament allowing 50 per cent of the last salary drawn as pension for judges has also served as ammunition for pensioners. They assert indignantly that this principle should be agreed to as a general governing principle for all categories of pensioners. As of now, the pension is calculated as 50 per cent of the first Rs 1,000 of his last level of emoluments, 45 per cent of the next Rs 500 and 40 per cent of the balance.

The family pension due on the death of an employee is another disputed point since the maximum ceiling is fixed at a ridiculously low Rs 250. The pensioners demand that this should be at least 50 per cent of the pension due to the officer.

The pay commission is also expected to take up the issue of the restoration of pension commutation, a matter being fought in the Supreme Court for the past three years. Despite the fact that the verdict is yet to be announced, and the matter is considered sub judice, the commission is likely to "express a view". Until now employees upon retirement have been allowed to commute and take as a lumpsum one-third of the pension due to them for 10 years, with the balance two-thirds paid to them as monthly instalments. The point of dispute has been that if the pensioner lives beyond the period for which he had received commutation, even after that the amount paid to him is just two-thirds of his pension. The Government has recently agreed in principle in its case before the Supreme Court to restore the commuted value of the pension after 15 years of retirement or the attainment of 70 years "whichever is later". They also want the commuted value of pensions of those taking premature retirement to be restored after 12 years of retirement or at the attainment of 70 years "whichever is earlier" and are waiting for the pay commission's "advice", which going by precedent is generally accepted.

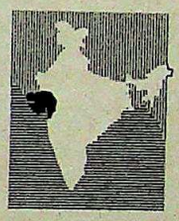
This being the first time the Government has asked a pay commission to take into its fold the allowances given to past pensioners, more than 70 lakh pensioners (including those from the state Governments and public sector undertakings who are indirectly affected) are waiting in the twilight of their lives for small rays of happiness from the pay commission office. —TANIA MIDHA

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



GUJARAT

Poll Presents



IN a fast changing political culture, some things hold constant. And distributing governmental largesse on the eve of the elections has now got the sanction of tradition. So there was hardly a murmur of protest even from the Opposition when the otherwise shaky and indecisive Gujarat Chief Minister Amarsinh Chaudhary confidently announced a plethora of schemes "to help the poor" last fortnight. The objective was only too obvious. Elections to the state panchayat and municipal corporations of Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, Rajkot, Bhavnagar and Jamnagar are to be held in January next year.

Ever since he came to power 16 months ago, Chaudhary has done little which gives him or the party a headstart in the elections, which is going to be his first major test. Obviously, he does not want to take chances and poll gifts seem to be the best bet.

True to his style of functioning, the details of how much these gifts will cost the state and how the money is to be found are delightfully vague. Chaudhary says he has not worked out the financial estimates but is sure that it would cost "crores of rupees".

The new schemes, which will be started with immediate effect, are:

► Insurance cover to over 2.8 million landless labourers. The Government would pay a premium of Rs 11 per labourer every year and the worker would have an insurance cover of at least Rs 1,000. This will cost more than Rs 3 crore a year.

► Around 5 lakh square metres of government land would be distributed to 2.7 lakh slum dwellers to construct houses with the help of a government subsidy. A 25 square metre plot would be given to each family at just 10 per cent of the market price.

► The Government would build 30,000 tenements in rural areas for the poor at a cost of Rs 6,000 each.

► Subsidised land would be given to cooperative housing societies set up by Harijans or backward communities for constructing houses in urban centres. For this also, plots of 25 square metres would be given at 10 per cent of the market price.

► The minimum electricity charge for 10 HP pumps used by farmers has been abolished. The revenue loss is at least Rs 5 crore.

► The Government would provide support prices to cotton, paddy, groundnut, tobacco and onions.

Chaudhary straightfacedly said that these concessions were decided on not because of the elections but because "this was the only way to pay a tribute to the late Mrs Indira Gandhi, who had tirelessly worked for the uplift of poor masses." He had cleverly timed the announcement to coincide with Mrs Gandhi's 69th birth anniversary on November 19. But the fact that he insisted that all these programmes should be implemented with immediate effect made his intentions clear. Charged Shankersinh Waghela, MP and general secretary of the state unit of the BJP: "The

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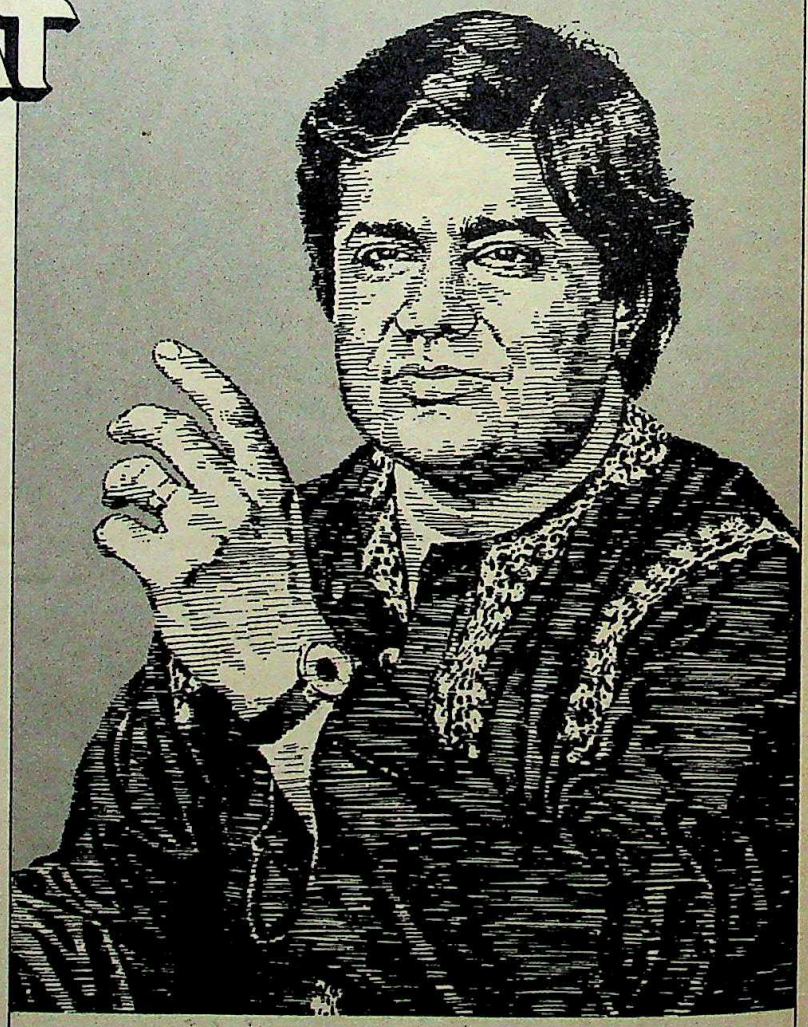

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newly-devised schemes are just a vote-catching gimmick."

Apart from election considerations, the concessions to farmers have been announced in a bid to mollify the farmers of Mehsana, Banaskantha, Sabarkantha and Gandhinagar who have launched a "no-tax" agitation demanding reduction of power rates.

Chaudhary, moreover, has come up with expensive poll gifts at a time when the state is reeling under an unprecedented financial crisis caused mainly by his quixotic decisions. Just last month, the chief minister played to the gallery by giving in to the demand from a vocal section of state government employees who demanded a pay hike. While most of the employees had not even given voice to the demand, Chaudhary quickly succumbed fearing another state-wide agitation. He announced a hike raising their salary to the level of Central government staff and some additional benefits like medical allowance, encashment of leave travel concessions, interim relief as also two instalments of dearness allowance. This has cost the exchequer Rs 376 crore.

The chief minister is now in for a tough time. The state has just sunk in Rs 400 crore to meet the severe drought early this year. His demand that the Centre should give grants of 80 per cent of this expenditure was shot down with only Rs 86 crore from New Delhi. Major development schemes in the state have ground to a halt due to the shortage of funds. Even crucial irrigation schemes have been suspended. But Chaudhary is optimistic about devising ways to collect funds to meet the whopping cost of his new schemes. He is currently singing the poll tune and who pays the piper is, of course, the last thing on his mind.

—RAMESH MENON

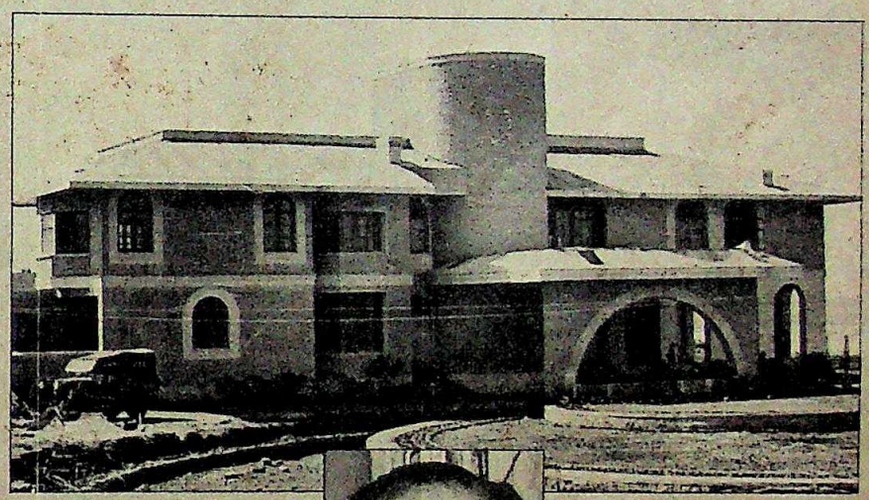
ARJUN SINGH

Under Siege

THE place was guarded like Fort Knox. Policemen surrounded every inch of the huge estate. An additional police force was summoned from neighbouring districts and the entire 16-km stretch leading to the mansion was lined with armed policemen, many of them concealed behind bushes. Mobile vans equipped with wireless sets constantly patrolled the area. The police had erected a four-tiered barricade 2 km away from the place to prevent "undesirable elements" from proceeding towards it. Fire brigades, ambulances and water lorries were in readiness. Ignoring the presence of several VIP's in town that day, the Bhopal collector and SP personally camped on the spot. It was as if the authorities had geared themselves to oppose an invading army.

All this was done to prevent a handful of political demonstrators from "forcibly occupying" Union Communications Minister Arjun Singh's palatial mansion at the picturesque Kerwa Dam on the outskirts of Bhopal. The Socialist Party, led by Raj Narain, had decided to occupy the "place constructed from ill-gotten wealth", on Nehru's birthday, November 14, and "dedicate it to the nation".

The police went out of its way to ensure that the threat was nipped in the bud. In a mid-night swoop before the rally, it arrested Kalyan Jain, Socialist Party vice-chairman who had come from Indore to lead the demonstrators, and three other party leaders. Next morning, as they marched along they were stopped at the barricade before the mansion and all 279 of them, including 59 women, were arrested under Section 151 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (to prevent the commission of a cognizable offence) after a scuffle.



The mansion at Kerwa Dam; and (inset) Arjun Singh

Chandramani Tripathi, president of the Madhya Pradesh unit of the Socialist Party, who led the demonstration in Jain's absence, charges: "Arjun Singh is a symbol of corruption in the ruling party." Five months ago, Tripathi had lodged a complaint with the State Bureau of Investigation, accusing Singh of acquiring property disproportionate to his known income. "They have so far taken no action," said Tripathi. Inquiries revealed that the bureau had sent the complaint to the state Government for forwarding to the Lok Ayukta. However, the Lok Ayukta office has not received it so far.

Built on a vast 10 acre plot, the house, guarded by police and privately-hired toughs, has been shrouded in controversy since its construction began two years ago. Singh's critics estimate the cost of the two-storied 9,000 sq ft house to be between Rs 60 lakh and Rs 1 crore. However, Singh claims it cost between Rs 16 to Rs 17 lakh.

But the Opposition points out that in his list of assets submitted in the state Assembly on March 3, 1960, Singh had declared only Rs 2,500 as his bank-balance. "From where has he got so much money to construct this palatial house?" asked Tripathi. "That statement was submitted about 30 years ago and, besides, my two sons have grown up and they are not unemployed," explained Singh.

Some years ago in the state Assembly, former BJP MLA Vikram Verma had demanded to know the assets of Singh and his family before and after he became chief minister. The question was disallowed on grounds that it was "not in the public interest".

—N.K. SINGH

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KERALA

Judicial History

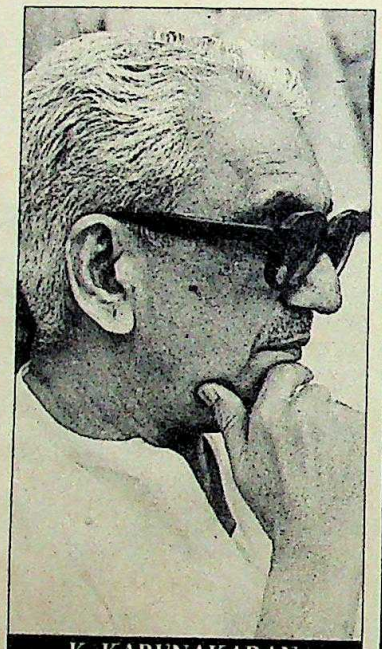
THE Karunakaran Government in Kerala faces its most potent opposition from a most unexpected source—the high court. In the four years of the Karunakaran reign, half-a-dozen court verdicts have been embarrassingly critical of ruling front ministers. Moreover, three of them have had to resign following critical judicial rulings. But last week, Justice Sukumaran's interim order on the two writ petitions filed by Priyadarshini Congress Chairman Kallara Sukumaran and N.F. Silvester challenging the appointment and continuance of Balakrishna Pillai, electricity minister in the Karunakaran Cabinet following his seditious speech last year in Cochin, threatens to create momentous judicial history.

The findings of Justice Sukumaran—that Pillai had violated the oath of office and the accompanying strictures passed on Chief Minister Karunakaran—is unique for it is the first time in the country that a minister has been found having "violated the oath of allegiance to the Constitution". It is also the first time in judicial history that a video cassette (of Pillai's Cochin speech) has been used as a piece of evidence. And it is also the first time in Kerala that a minister may have to resign for the second time following critical high court observations.

The Balakrishna Pillai issue surfaced in May last year when, at a Kerala Congress convention in Cochin, Pillai let loose a virulent anti-Centre tirade. Newspaper reports of the speech suggested that Pillai had called for a Punjab-type agitation to wrest whatever was legitimately due to Kerala. Pillai concluded his speech by saying: "If what is happening in Punjab is to be repeated here, then we are also ready." His seditious speech came at a time when the relationship between the Kerala Congress and the Congress(I) had deteriorated, following Congress(I) attempts to wrest the finance portfolio from the then finance minister K.M. Mani on grounds of "financial mismanagement". Pillai later denied his Cochin speech but reporters who covered the meeting issued a statement saying that Pillai had spoken about a "Punjab model agitation".

K.C. Chandy, a Congress(I) activist, later filed a *quo warranto* petition seeking Pillai's removal for his seditious speech. Justice Radhakrishna Menon, admitting the petition, made the observation "that the minister should have resigned if he had made such a statement". Pillai did resign, after stating that he would return to the Cabinet once the court had given its final verdict. For almost a year, the controversy raged between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary.

Photographs by RAJAN PODUVAL



K. KARUNAKARAN

BALAKRISHNA PILLAI

The very survival of the Karunakaran Ministry depends on the ruling of the high court's division bench in the Pillai case.

The case against Pillai, which was later referred to a full bench, held that it was for the chief minister and the governor to ascertain whether a person sworn in as a minister had violated the oath of office and secrecy. That ended the legal war, but the political battle continued to rage with the Kerala Congress realising that its political prestige was at stake. Karunakaran tried to pass the Pillai buck to the prime minister who diplomatically said it was for the chief minister to decide.

Meanwhile, K.M. Mani found himself isolated in the party following his efforts to counter Karunakaran's moves. The relationship between Mani and Pillai was also strained following Mani's decision to revamp the state Electricity Board without consulting Pillai. Pillai and Karunakaran made up and a deal was struck whereby Pillai would be reinducted in the Cabinet after a reshuffle in which Mani would lose his finance portfolio. Karunakaran then made a mockery of the law by obtaining a "fitness certificate" for Pillai to be taken back into the Cabinet from a retired high court judge K. Janaki Amma, who was asked to ascertain whether there was any violation of the law by reappointing Pillai. And he was reinducted.

It looked, for a while, that the Pillai problem had finally ended. But out of the blue another petition was filed by Kallara Sukumaran, the video recording of the Kerala Congress Cochin convention was finally admitted as evidence and the subsequent judgement has unleashed yet another political crisis. Says opposition stalwart K. Chandrasekharan, a practising lawyer and Janata Party leader: "The chief minister has violated the oath of office by inducting into his cabinet someone who himself has violated the oath of office administered to him." The Opposition knows that with elections due, they cannot get a more potent weapon than the court verdict to blacken the image of the ruling front. Says Karunakaran: "There is no question of resignation now, since the final verdict in the case is yet to be pronounced by the high court." Meanwhile, Pillai has refused to comment on the judgement and instead flew to Delhi for consultation with legal experts on the high court judgement. But the eventual loser will be Chief Minister Karunakaran since the very survival of his ministry depends on the ruling of the division bench.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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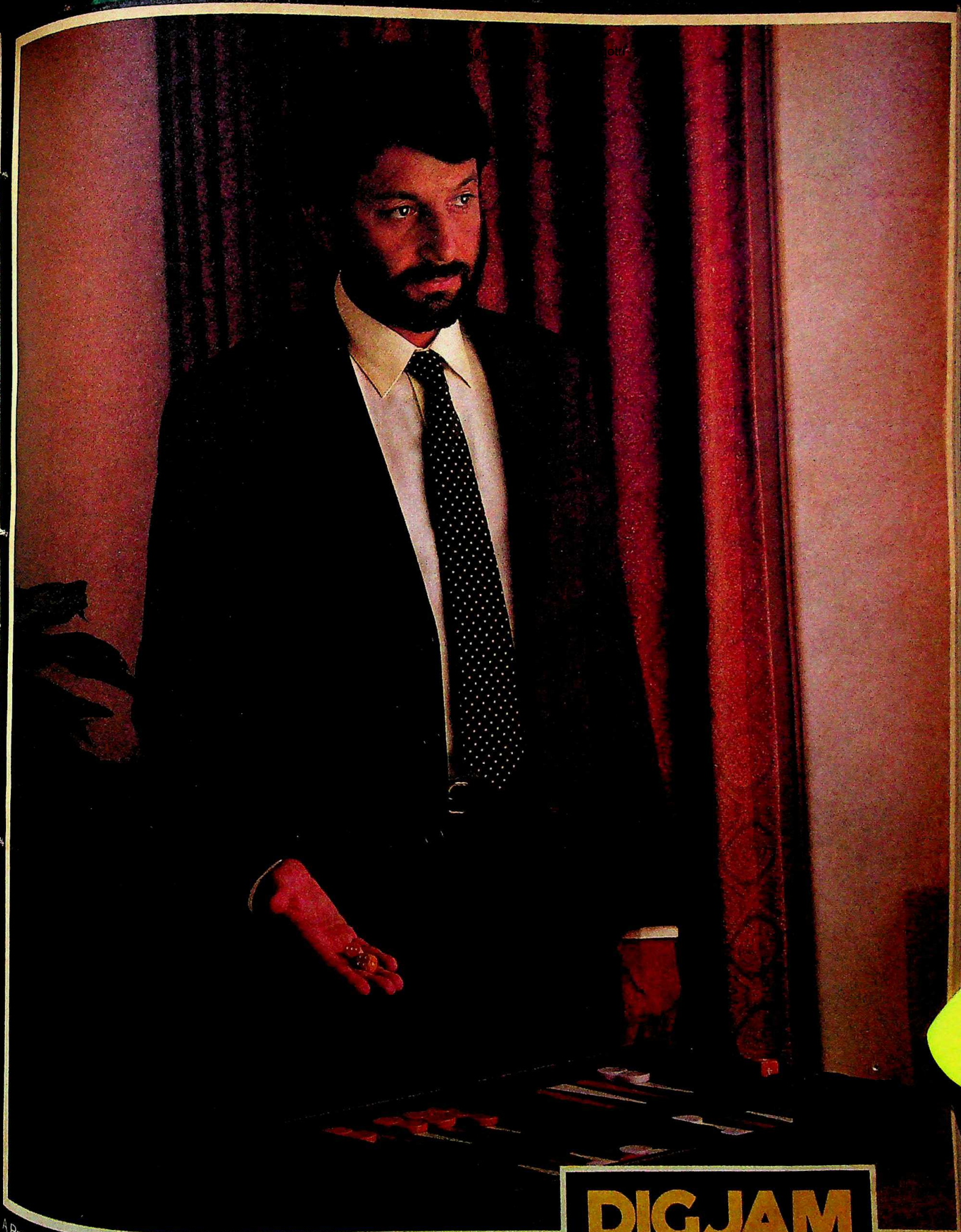

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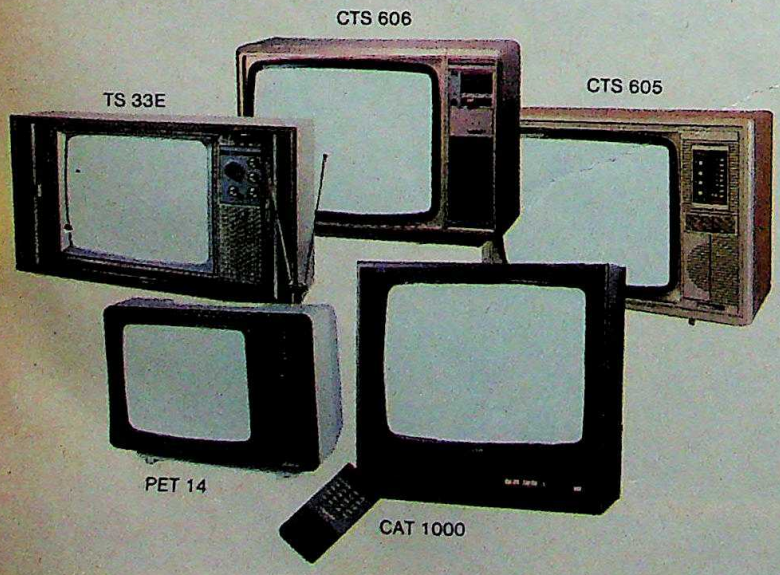

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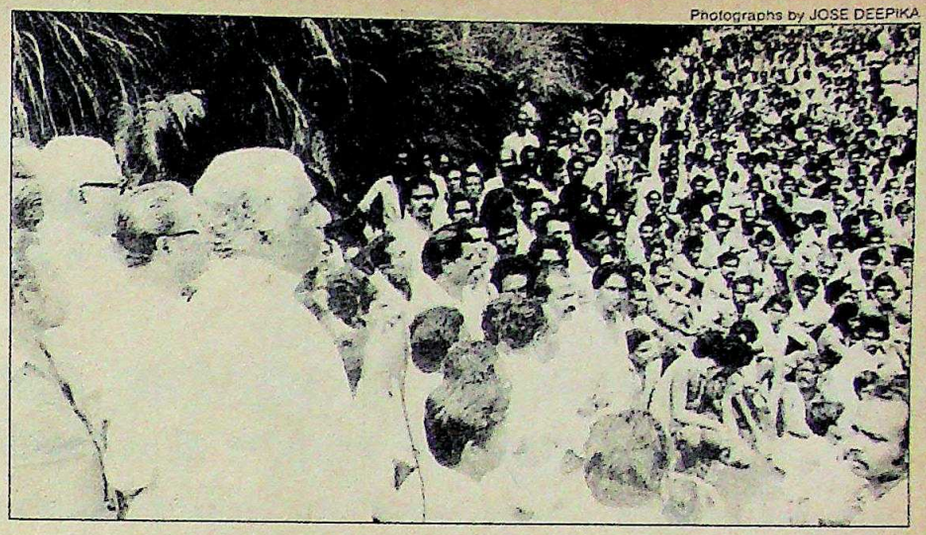
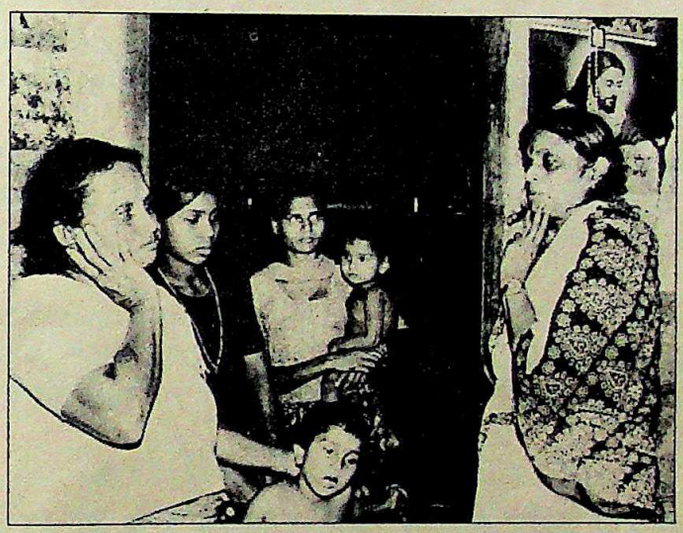
KERALA

Grave Charges

Photographs by JOSE DEEPIKA





Opposition leaders (top) in Idukki; and (left) Sugathakumari in Thankamani

WHEN Kerala Chief Minister K. Karunakaran took over the home portfolio from Vayalar Ravi last May, he had told his supporters that he wanted to "boost the sagging image of the Kerala Police, which under Ravi had become lack-lustre". But barely six months later, Karunakaran is finding it increasingly difficult to defend the policemen. In the current assembly session opposition members raised so many questions about incidents of police brutality that even a ruling party leader said: "The Opposition has never had it so good."

Karunakaran, however, complains that the reports of excesses by the police force are only aimed at discrediting him. He said: "The Opposition, with an eye on the forthcoming elections, is trying to exaggerate police excesses in the state in a desperate bid to pin me down and blacken my image in Delhi."

But even his supporters believe that he is giving too much of a free hand to the police "who have run amuck". Said Sugathakumari, noted poetess and environmentalist: "The men in khaki are the most dreaded lot in the state today and their excesses have assumed dangerous proportions."

The alleged "excesses" of the policemen include: forcing a tribal group of women to dance for them after consuming country liquor in Appara in Wynad district; wrenching one half of a man's moustache clean in the Nemom police station near Trivandrum; stripping and beating a father and son who had been brought in for questioning in the same police station; lathi-charging a peaceful rally of blind students protesting against the mismanagement of a private school for the blind in Alwaye near Cochin. In the last case the Kerala High Court ordered a compensation of Rs 10,000 to be paid to each of the injured following a petition filed by a blind boy's relative.

But it is the alleged rape of women in the Thankamani village of Idukki district that has sent the Opposition up in arms. The outrage which took place on the night of October 22 had its genesis in a clash between local students and the crew of a private bus. The students were reportedly roughed up by the bus-conductor, driver and cleaner and handed over to the police. Next day the villagers seized the bus and demanded an apology from the crew. The bus owner, a Kerala Congress worker, approached the local circle inspector A.C. Thampan, who is reported to be his close friend, to secure the release of the bus. But the police party which went to get the bus was driven away by the villagers and when a stronger force came back, it was stoned. The police opened fire leading to the death of a 60-year-old farmer.

About 42 vanloads of policemen, assembled from Idukki and neighbouring districts, then descended on the village. According to several accounts, a house to house search was launched; male inmates were beaten up and the women raped. However, after the departure of the police no attempt was made to have the women medically examined.

When the Thankamani issue was raised in the Assembly the chief minister denied that there was a mass rape of women by the police. An identification parade organised by the police in Idukki was boycotted by the villagers. Said Father Jose Kotoor, the local priest: "They had brought outsiders to take part in the identification parade and no woman was willing to testify that she had been raped." A mass dharna was organised in Idukki by the Opposition. Said E.K. Nayanar, the opposition leader: "Forty two petitions were received from women saying that the police had misbehaved in Thankamani." Karunakaran ordered a judicial inquiry and appointed Sessions Judge D. Sreedevi to conduct it. Said Karunakaran in the Assembly: "Your (opposition's) charge is that women in Thankamani will find it embarrassing to speak about their nightmarish experience to others. So the Government has decided to appoint a lady judge to bring out the truth."

And though Karunakaran suspended five policemen, including a circle inspector, on sustained opposition demand, it is unlikely that the people's confidence will be restored in the police, especially after the recent incidents. Seasoned politicians recall the fate of the first Karunakaran ministry which had to bow out just one month after being sworn in in 1977 following court strictures in the Rajan case, a college student who had died in police custody. They fear that Karunakaran's defence of his police force may have an upsetting fallout in the coming polls. How far this fear may be justified remains to be seen.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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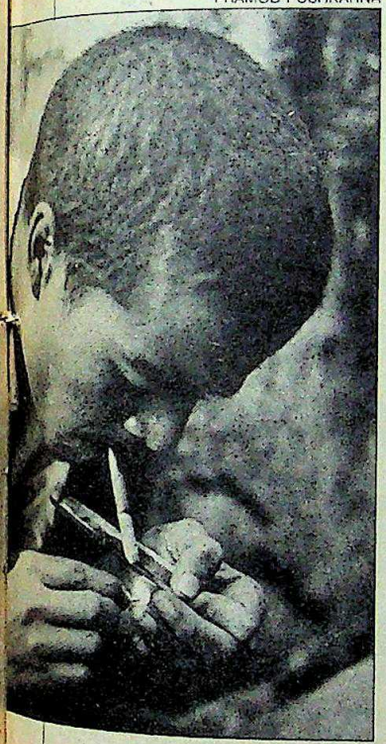
Drug Decline

AT least there's some good news from Tamil Nadu in the otherwise disastrous nation-wide drug addiction scenario. Heroin's high seems to be wearing out finally in Madras city. The incidence of drug abuse, which had begun to assume alarming proportions in the city's schools and colleges last year, has sharply declined this year according to the managements of these institutions. "Between November 1985 and April this year, 96 drug addicts had come to me for treatment. But after April this year, till the end of last month only 24 patients landed up," said Dr M. Naresh Kumar, 31-year-old psychiatrist and doctor.

Glorying in the good news was the police who believe that it was their policing and pressure on the pushers which has led to the decline. To prove their point, they say that the 21 seizures made by the Narcotics Intelligence Bureau(NIB) this year has yielded less than 1 kg of brown sugar, in contrast to the 26 recoveries made last year which yielded 8 kg of the drug. Also, while the police made five raids for opium both last year and this year, they recovered 56 kg in 1985 and only 17 kg this year. Inspector General of Police, Rajasekaran Nair, chief of the NIB, said: "These reduced seizures are in spite of our continuously stepping up our vigilance on drug peddling. I am convinced that this reduction is not due to any slackness on our part. It is because drug abuse itself has declined."

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



Chasing the dragon

Confirming this decline Father Leo Correya, principal of Loyola College said: "I have heard that there have been earlier instances of drug addiction in the college, but during the last five months I have not directly come across a single case of abuse."

One reason for this dramatic decline is heroin's sudden scarcity. The police trace its disappearance to the fact that Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, who were the major peddlers, have been slowly going back to Jaffna. The new Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act and the conviction this year of Shivlal, a youth from Madhya Pradesh, to a term of 10 years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 1 lakh has also served as a deterrent. The carrot and the stick method seems to have yielded positive results.

Natural Conflict

THE quintessential Indian dependence on whatever nature releases from its Pandora's box was seen in the variety of calamities suffered by Uttar Pradesh this year. Either severe drought or raging floods or both have spelt misery in each of the state's 57 districts: 54 were hit by drought and 45 by floods. And 32 districts were hit by both drought and floods.

PRASHANT PANJIAR

Drought area in Uttar Pradesh: perpetual blight

The resultant damage is an estimated Rs 2,801 crore and the state Government has asked the Centre for assistance worth Rs 882 crore.

In fact, 19 districts in the state have been newly designated "perpetually drought-prone" areas. Even if the rainfall is normal in these districts, which was not the case this year, drought is inevitable. Ironically, each of these "problem districts" has at least one river flowing by. Mathura, Agra, Etawah, Jalaun and Allahabad have the Yamuna, Lalitpur and Jhansi the Betwa, Hamirpur and Banda the Ken, Kanpur and Mirzapur the Ganga. Net loss from drought: Rs 1,698 crore.

Raging floods in mid-September dealt a further blow to a populace yet to recover from the havoc wrought by the drought, and caused water-logging problems in 8,925 villages. Net losses from floods: Rs 1,103 crore.

And now, there are conflicting reports of the extent of damage. According to Revenue Department statistics, the kharif crop faced damage of at least 40 per cent, but the Agriculture Department works it out at 20 per cent. At present, the two departments are in a deadlock on the issue of revising figures. In a state where even nature is in conflict with itself, this is hardly unnatural.

Cause Celebre

AFTER 17 months the Shiv Sena finally got down to publicly honouring the man it considers primarily responsible for its victory in the Bombay municipal elections in April last year. Last fortnight, at an elaborate function at Kamgar Maidan, it hosted a civic reception for Vasantdada Patil, now governor of Rajasthan. In the last

Patil (left) and Thackeray: delayed honour

BHAWAN SINGH

NAMAS BHOJANI

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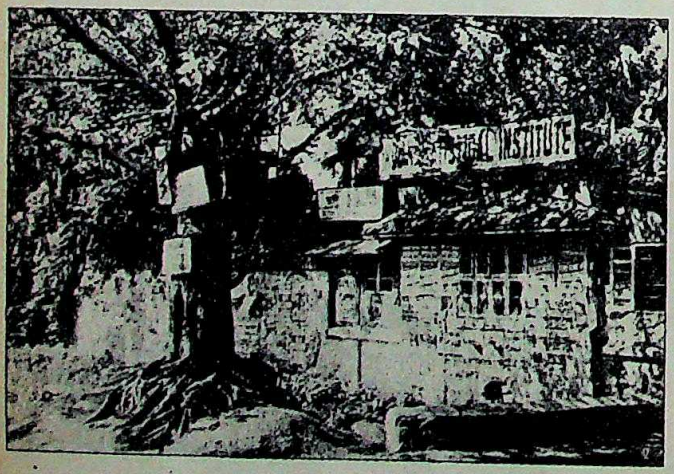
phase of his chief ministership, Patil had fallen out of favour with the Congress(I) high command and was not averse to seizing an opportunity to embarrass the party's leadership. Thus, his equivocal response to a question in the state legislature about Bombay's status played into the Shiv Sena's hands. Bal Thackeray proclaimed his resolve to prevent Bombay being taken away from Maharashtra and, in a municipal election marked by low voter turn-out, got the Marathi-speaking vote and control of the corporation.

The party wanted to show its appreciation to Patil soon after he was appointed governor but he turned down the proposal as there were still unresolved corruption charges pending against him. A retired high court judge who inquired into a land scandal in Sangli, Patil's home-town, has submitted his report to the Government. Though it had not been made public at the time of the civic reception—it will be tabled at the Nagpur session—the report is widely believed to have exonerated him. Still, Patil took the opportunity at his reception to proclaim: "All charges against me have now been cleared." Patil also called on the gathering to "not consider outsiders your enemies" and urged the gathering to rally behind Rajiv Gandhi. Bombay Mayor Datta Nalavade presented Patil with a silver rath. Also present was Thackeray. However, Congress(I) leaders were conspicuous by their absence because of the timing of the reception—just a couple of months before the zilla parishad elections in which the Shiv Sena is expected to throw a serious challenge to the Congress(I) in several districts.

Urban Afforestation

THE relatively new concept of the afforestation of cities has caught the attention of the Government with several ministries chalking out plans to implement it in different states. The idea is the brain-child of anthropologists Kailash Malhotra and M. Vijayakumar who, for over a decade, have been travelling along the busy Barrackpore Trunk Road in



Trees bordering the ISI: multi-purpose uses

Calcutta to reach the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) where they work. They admired the trees that lined the road but that was about all. But recently, they decided to have a more discriminating look at the role the trees played in the lives of the people using the road. This led them to come up with some fascinating findings. Of the 400 trees stretched along the 5-km-long avenue, 142 were used for 205 different activities—economic, social and religious. Some 54 trees were used as parking places for rickshaws, hand-carts and tempos, and also as bus shelters. Another 54 trees (neem and banyan) were used and venerated as places of worship. And the rest provided shade for diverse people like vegetable-sellers, cobblers, motor-vehicle mechanics and barbers. Also, tree cover on the road was totally inadequate and another 400 could have easily been planted. Ecologists feel that Calcutta, like other cities, has an ecologically insufficient area under tree cover. Said Malhotra: "The trees play a vital role in the lives of people, especially those belonging to the weaker sections. While we have been concentrating our efforts on afforesting rural areas, there is an urgent need to have a national policy on urban tree planting."

Cutthroat Competition

MADHYA Pradesh, with its literacy rate of 28 per cent is, at present, right in the midst of a newspaper boom. Papers are opening new editions, installing sophisticated computerised printing equipment, increasing the number of pages in existing editions and even paying hitherto unheard of wages to journalists in an attempt to improve the quality of their products.

SANJEEV GUPTA

MP Chronicle ad and (inset) Editor Maheshwari

The sudden increase in the newspapers' activities has been caused by cutthroat competition among the existing dailies in the state, as well as by the fact that plans are underway by two national chains of newspapers to launch new editions from Bhopal, the state capital. While *The Times of India* group has already been allotted a plot of government land for the purpose, the rival *Indian Express* is lobbying for procuring satellite time in order to publish a facsimile edition of the group's English and Hindi dailies from Bhopal. The *Free Press Journal* is already publishing an edition from Indore, 200 km away, and has also shed its conservative outlook to launch a facsimile edition from Bhopal early next year. The operative question, however, is whether the state capital can, with a population of seven lakh residents, three existing English dailies, seven Hindi dailies and half-a-dozen evening papers, accommodate still more new newspapers?

The Proprietor-editor of the *Madhya Pradesh Chronicle*, Prafulla Maheshwari, remains confident that the advent of national dailies into Bhopal would not cut into his newspaper's circulation. The launching of an English edition by the rival *Bhaskar* group in the city has already caused fierce competition, forcing newspapers to fish for journalists outside the state and pay them salaries that even chief editors of these publications were not able to manage until a few years ago.

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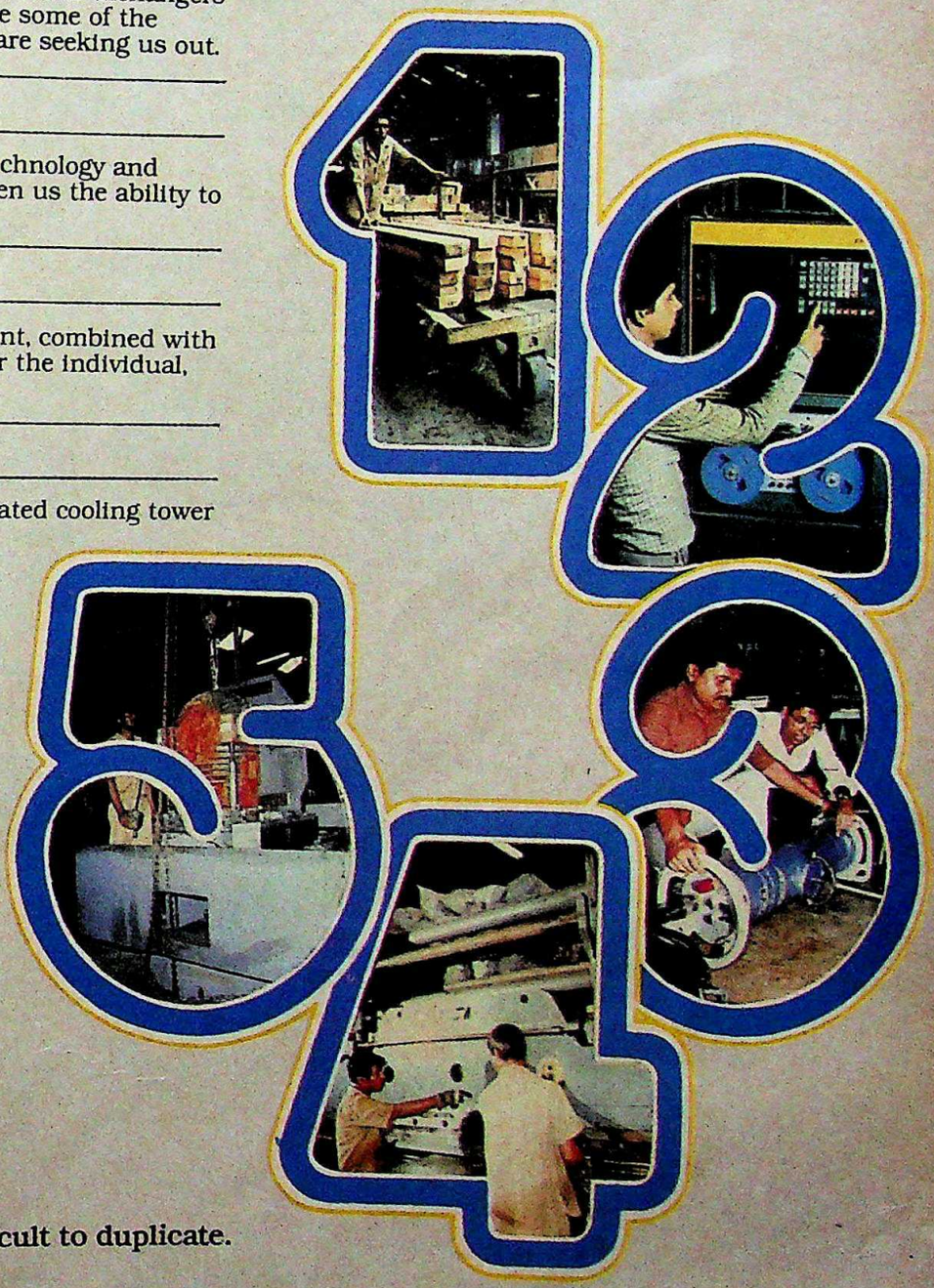

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TAMIL MILITANTS

Suspended Animation

THE fluctuating graph of efforts to end Sri Lanka's ethnic strife took an upswing after the Centre's offensive launched along with a crackdown on Tamil militants in Tamil Nadu. But prospects of a settlement are dim and the Indian involvement could boomerang on New Delhi. Senior Correspondent S.H. VENKATRAMANI and Senior Editor PRABHU CHAWLA report:

THE Rajiv Gandhi Government has literally caught a tiger by the tail. Having dealt itself a hand in Sri Lanka's ethnic strife by periodically raising the stakes for both the key players—the latest example being last fortnight's SAARC summit in Bangalore—New Delhi now finds itself inextricably trapped in an increasingly dangerous and debilitating game. However honourable the intentions, South Block is finding that its desperate attempts to broker a settlement of the Tamil tangle are like performing a trapeze act over a mine-field.

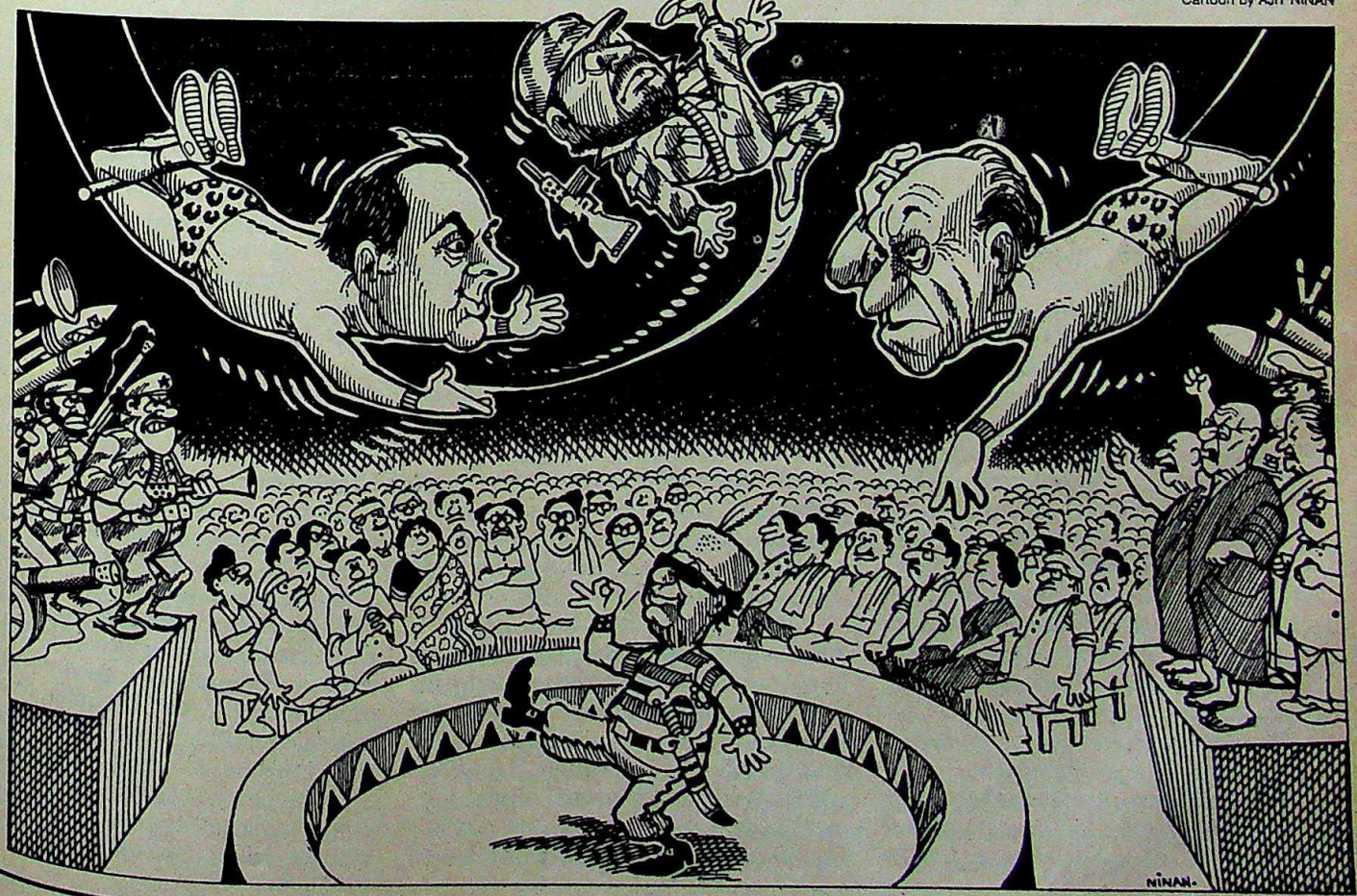
Nothing illustrates this better than New Delhi's curious—and clumsy—crackdown on the Tamil militants in Tamil Nadu immediately before and after the Bangalore summit attended by Sri Lanka President J.R. Jayewardene. Though the Centre has denied a hand in the crackdown, the militants and most observers are convinced that state Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran would not have given the go-ahead without New Delhi's tacit approval.

The pre-summit crackdown was, in diplomatic terms, a viable gambit since public opinion in Tamil Nadu had taken a sharp turn against the militants and there was little negative fall-out from the disarming of key militant groups.

Then, last fortnight, the Tamil Nadu police raided—for the second time—the militant groups, most importantly the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and snapped their vital links with their counterparts in northern and eastern Sri Lanka by confiscating their communications equipment. Said LTTE spokesman A.S. Balasingham: "We lost all our eight wireless transmitters and receivers in the coastal areas of the state like Rameswaram, Mandapam, Vedaranyam, and Madras." Three transmitters operated by the Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and one by the Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) were also seized.

The sudden severance of communication links was a major blow to the militant leaders' ability to get constant information about the Sri Lankan Army and pass on instructions to their cadres on the island. Said Velupillai Pirabhakaran, LTTE leader and military commander, who undertook a highly-publicised 'fast unto death' in protest: "With this seizure of our communications machinery, the most vital link in our armed liberation struggle was broken. We got the impression that all these

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



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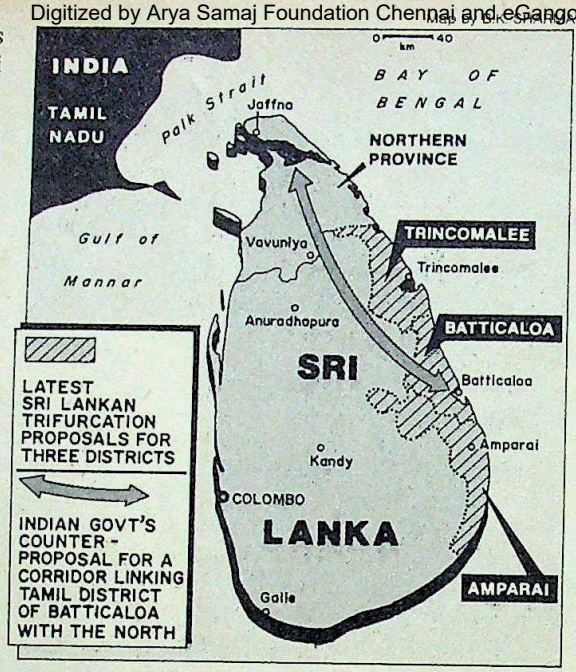
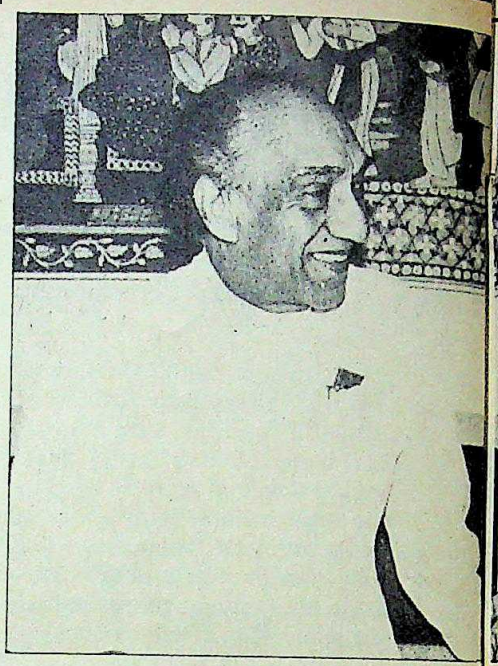
steps were taken to pressure us to sign a settlement with the Sri Lanka Government."

That was only too obvious. But the Centre underestimated the militants' deep-rooted mistrust of the wily Jayewardene. There was one further crucial misjudgement—the Indian Government's capacity to pressure the militants just did not work this time round, mainly because public opinion in Tamil Nadu had once again swung violently behind the militants. Even the Congress(I) leaders like the aggressive Rajya Sabha member P. Thangabalu sent telegrams to the prime minister protesting against the crackdown.





MGR, who had consistently created the impression that Pirabhakaran was his protege, found the militant leader impervious to his appeals. Soon after meeting key Indian negotiators, Union Minister of State for Home P. Chidambaram and Minister of State for External Affairs K. Natwar Singh, who were en route to Colombo, MGR said: "Pirabhakaran is not prepared to accept any suggestion. Nor is there any unity or consensus of opinion among the various militant groups. One group doesn't accept another's view. How can there be an early solution?"

The anticlimax to the drama came when the state and Central governments began accusing each other of responsibility for the ill-conceived crackdown. In what looked like an orchestrated campaign, the Centre publicly said that the state police had acted on its own. Said a Home Ministry spokesman: "We are shocked by the Tamil Nadu Government's action. We are trying to find out why this action was taken at this juncture." Said Chidambaram: "We are trying to find out the circumstances under which the state police took the action." But police officials asserted that they acted at the Centre's behest. Said a police source: "The Police Department only carried out orders from the competent authority. And you know the state Government wouldn't have given the orders of house arrests and arms seizures without clearance from the Centre."

But even without the crackdown, it was clear that the attitude of the Central and state Government to the militants has been hardening. The Centre is upset that the militants are recalcitrant and have been repeatedly rejecting outright the modifications the Sri Lanka Government has been making to its provincial council proposals without providing concrete counter-proposals. So far, only the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front(TULF) has come up with a set of counter-proposals recommending the formulation of a single Tamil linguistic state in Sri Lanka comprising the northern and eastern provinces. But the militants have been demanding what virtually amounts to an independent Tamil Eelam by reiterating the four cardinal principles they enunciated in Thimpu—the recognition of a unified and territorially contiguous Tamil homeland, recognition of a distinct Tamil nationality, grant of the right of self-determination for Tamils, and grant of the rights of plantation Tamils who are basically Indian settlers.

The Trincomalee corridor is crucial because the Tamils have been touchy about the alleged Sri Lankan ploy to divide their homeland into the north and the east.

The Government of India has been emphasising that it does not support the Tamil militants' demand for an independent Tamil Eelam state and will not even endorse their claim for greater autonomy than what Indian states enjoy. Despite the crackdown however, and the drama during the SAARC summit, when key militant leaders and MGR were flown down to Bangalore, the militants haven't budged an inch. Says EPRLF Secretary-General K. Padmanabha: "We are not against negotiations. We will cooperate with India in its efforts to find a peaceful solution to our problem. But we will not give up our struggle for a homeland."

It is precisely due to the Tigers' inflexible attitude that MGR, ostensibly under advice from the Centre, agreed to get tough. Moreover, the Centre was convinced that it could not allow militant activity to continue from Indian soil indefinitely. Not only was this causing considerable embarrassment to India's international image, it was also hampering New Delhi's attempts to put its views across forcefully enough on terrorism. Also, the hawks in the militant ranks were gaining the upper hand. Pirabhakaran's LTTE now openly says that it will take part in future negotiations only if it is recognised as the sole representative of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka.

Further fuel to the ethnic fire was added during the secret negotiations in Bangalore during last fortnight's SAARC summit. The meetings between Rajiv Gandhi and Jayewardene in fact, overshadowed the summit. MGR and Food Minister S. Ramachandran were summoned to Bangalore to let Central leaders know what kind of proposals would be acceptable to the militants. Reliable sources say that MGR convinced the Centre that he would make Pirabhakaran come round if Jayewardene yielded a little more ground and he went so far as to stick his neck out by getting the LTTE leaders to

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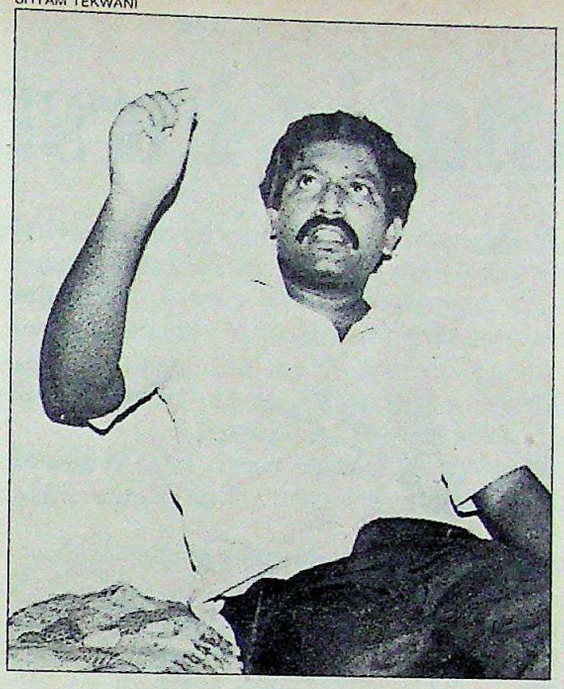
SHYAM TEKWANI



Rajiv with Jayewardene in Bangalore; and (right) Pirabhakaran

come to Bangalore. Accordingly, Pirabhakaran and his aides were flown to Bangalore, where Jayewardene unfolded his latest scheme of trifurcating the eastern province into the provinces of Batticaloa, Trincomalee, and Amparai, each with its own provincial council.

Till now, Jayewardene has been offering to make the north and the east two separate provinces. The Tamils have been insisting that the whole of the north and the east should form one united Tamil province. India in its mediatory efforts, has been trying to see if a provision for a linkage between the two provinces would satisfy the Tamils.

But in Bangalore, Jayewardene gave a little more in the east to the Tamils; he offered to form a Tamil-majority Batticaloa province, a Sinhala-majority Trincomalee province, and a Muslim-majority Amparai. He even offered to set up a boundary commission to demarcate the Tamil areas of Batticaloa and Trincomalee and consider if they could be merged with the northern province. Reportedly the Sri Lanka Government had earlier, through its own emissaries, tried to strike a deal with Pirabhakaran—he could become the chief minister of the northern Jaffna province if he agreed to the proposals and TULF leaders could seek parliamentary pastures. Despite all these behind-the-scenes preparations, Pirabhakaran and other LTTE leaders rejected the proposals as being "seriously inadequate" and reiterated the view that the north and the east as a whole was indivisible.

There is a background to Pirabhakaran's intransigence in Bangalore in spite of the Sri Lanka Government's offer of the Jaffna chief ministership. LTTE's regional commanders and cadres in Sri Lanka had reportedly told Pirabhakaran that he could not accept being chief minister after having taken shelter for so long in Tamil Nadu, leaving them to face the Sri Lankan Army all this time.

But in spite of MGR having given up hopes on Pirabhakaran coming round, the Centre is pursuing its mediatory efforts in earnest. The external affairs ministers of India and Sri Lanka, K. Natwar Singh and A.C.S. Hameed, worked out further improvements to the Bangalore proposals in Delhi, and Hameed has taken the final draft to Colombo to obtain Jayewardene's clearance to present it to the Tamils. Rajiv sent Natwar Singh and Chidambaram to Colombo to persuade the Sri Lanka President to accept the modifications worked out in Delhi. Reliable sources indicate that the modifications relate to the formation of a corridor under Tamil jurisdiction in the Trincomalee province to link the northern Tamil province to the eastern Tamil majority province of Batticaloa. The Trincomalee corridor is considered crucial because this strategically important province is the nothernmost of the three eastern provinces and Tamils have been very touchy about the Sri Lankan ploy to divide their homeland into the north and the east. They claim that in Trincomalee maximum Sinhalese colonisation has taken place.

But exactly how the Indian Government can still persuade the Tamil groups to accept any modified proposals is unclear. Rajiv Gandhi said in Bangalore that Jayewardene's trifurcation idea for the east was "a reasonable offer", but that did not prevent the LTTE from turning it down. Natwar Singh reported "progress" in the Bangalore talks and MGR specified in the state Assembly that some broad agreement had been reached in Bangalore on the devolution of powers to the provincial councils to be formed. But the Tamil leadership is still unconvinced. Said LTTE's Tilakar: "Devolution was not discussed at all. We were only sounded out on the trifurcation proposal, and we rejected it." Added EPRLF's Padmanabha: "No settlement can be enforced on us." And Pirabhakaran now says: "Our ambition is made of sterner stuff. And our stand on Eelam remained unchanged."

With the militants in a fighting mood and Jayewardene hampered by powerful local pressures in Colombo, New Delhi faces a diplomatic task of unprecedented magnitude.

New Delhi is thus caught in a delicate position. Popular passions in Tamil Nadu will prevent Delhi from trying to openly cow down the militants. Moreover, opposition parties like the DMK were silent only till the fear persisted that the militants were locally unpopular. And the fact that the recent police crackdowns coincided with the Sri Lanka Government's plans to launch a massive military offensive on the northern provinces has earned the militant groups a lot of extra sympathy. Much, therefore, will depend on the extent of the response from Colombo to the latest diplomatic offensive by Natwar Singh and Chidambaram. With the militants in a fighting mood, MGR threatened with losing political face, and Jayewardene hampered by powerful local pressures in Colombo, the Indian Government faces a diplomatic task of unprecedented magnitude. In trying to play the honest broker, India has found itself saddled with the initiative.

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SONIA GANDHI

Enigmatic First Lady

FOR the first time since Independence, the country has a visible First Lady in Sonia Gandhi. And as the mini-centres of power around Rajiv Gandhi crumble—Arun Nehru, Arjun Singh, Arun Singh—the rumour spreads that the new mini-centre of power is none other than Sonia herself.

The result: new curiosity about the prime minister's Italian-born wife. What is she really like? Does she in fact play any role in politics, does she advise and influence her husband, how much does he listen to her, is she pulling the strings from behind the security curtain that envelops her? Indeed, what role should Sonia Gandhi play as the prime minister's wife?

Deputy Editor DILIP BOBB and TAVLEEN SINGH tapped well-informed sources in the capital and talked to some of the friends of the prime minister's wife to piece together this picture of the enigmatic Sonia:

HAD fate—in the form of assassins' bullets—not intervened, she would have probably been quite content to linger in the shadow of her formidable mother-in-law, her assiduously protected privacy undisturbed by the fact that she belonged to the most famous family in the land. But destiny—and dynasty—willed otherwise. Unwarned, Sonia Gandhi was suddenly pitchforked into the position she would have least wanted—India's First Lady.

It is, as the last two years have painfully revealed, a role she is not comfortable in. Compared to the relaxed style of her debonair husband, she appears awkward and wooden. Though impeccably attired and carefully groomed, her face, framed by luxuriant chestnut hair, is an immobile mask. Perhaps deliberately, her public personality has given her the image of a mere ceremonial appendage to the prime minister. She is not a Lalita Shastri, but neither does she seem cut out to be a Nancy Reagan or a Raisa Gorbacheva. And the fate of someone who falls between two stools is not a happy one.

True, the threads of tragedy have knitted her life into a ragged tapestry. She is currently perhaps one of the least envied women in the world. A foreigner flung into confrontation with the complexities of Indian political life, her husband the number one target on terrorist hit lists, her children unable to lead normal lives, her home turned into a grim and forbidding fortress, and heavily-armed security guards dogging her every footstep.

But all that has also seemingly forced Sonia to withdraw even deeper into her shell and inevitably turned her into something of an enigma. Despite all the spice-laden speculation, precious little is really known about her as a person. Her popular public image is her grim-faced vigil beside her husband at public functions or on his foreign trips. In between, she vanishes into her Looking Glass world, accessible only to a handful of friends who are as paranoid about her privacy as she herself. On one of Rajiv's tours, a female aide was asked to wave to the crowds from her car as a stand-in for Sonia. It speaks volumes for her public personality, or lack of it, that the deception was successful.

So there are the rumours, and the speculation. Disparate sections of the ruling party urge her every now and then—albeit unconvincingly—to take the political plunge as an office-bearer of the Congress(I), even party president. And according to one brand of rumour, Sonia is the power behind the throne, plotting the downfall of opponents through cabinet reshuffles (she didn't trust Arun Nehru, after all) and advising her husband on everything from the Kashmir coalition to Pepsi Cola's entry into India.

> **It is a role she is obviously extremely uncomfortable in. Compared to the relaxed style of her debonair husband, she frequently appears awkward and wooden.**

On all this, Sonia has refused comment, also declining to give press interviews. The only interview she has given in India so far was to a Hindi periodical in June last year. In that, she came across like a mushy Mills & Boon heroine ("When one is in love, that love gives the person an extraordinary strength of mind. This strength wards off any fears. The sole aim is to unite with the lover. Once that is accomplished, everything else is unimportant. I wanted Rajiv...and Rajiv is my greatest security.").

So what manner of woman is the Rani of Race Course Road? The power behind the throne or an ordinary housewife befuddled by events beyond her control? Her restricted circle of friends are the only ones who can flesh out the rigid contours of her being, and they do so reluctantly—and anonymously.

Sonia Gandhi (nee Maino) has of course all the physical attributes of the quintessential First Lady. She is young, has an attractive face and figure and the ability to carry herself with poise and grace. Her deep, husky voice carries faint traces of her Italian upbringing when she converses in English, and she understands Hindi perfectly though she speaks it haltingly. Sonia takes pains over her personal grooming, even when she is at home, and manages to look much younger than her 40 years. She maintains an elegant residence, has excellent taste and is almost a role model for the perfect *hausfrau*, wife and mother.

Before Rajiv's unforeseen entry into politics, both of them used to go to a fair number of Delhi parties where they would invariably be the centre of attraction, if only because of the Gandhi name. But even then, while Rajiv was relaxed and easy to converse with, Sonia was relatively shy and often preferred to stick by his side rather than circulate.

Friends differ on who is the stronger personality. Some say that it is Sonia, and point out that she has proved quite tough, for she has after all gone through a great

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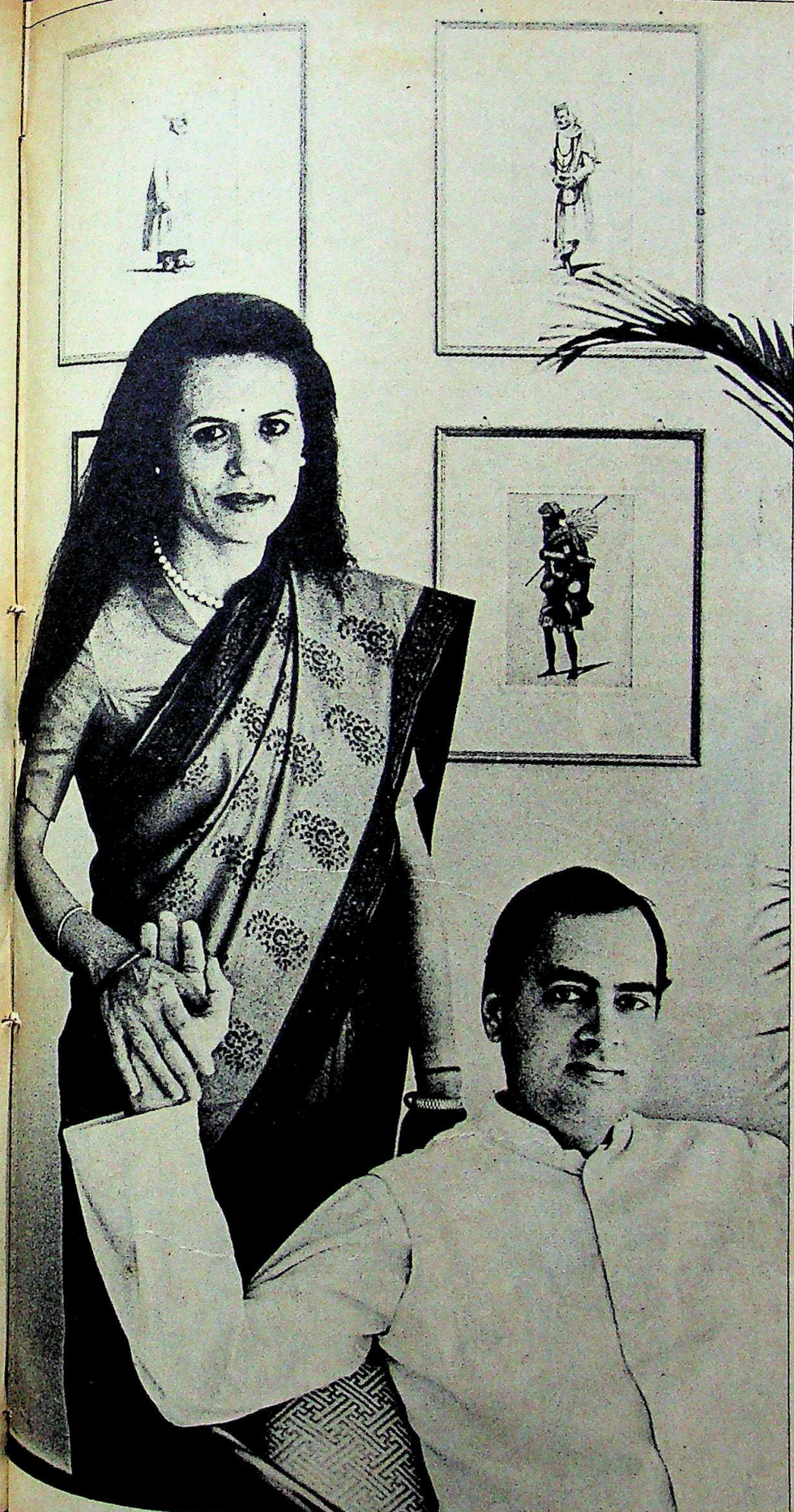
RAGHU RAI



Sonia and Rajiv: close understanding

deal. Others say that increasingly it is Rajiv who is proving the stronger personality. Whatever the case, Sonia seems to play the lead role when Rajiv is not being prime minister. Thus, it is she who decides who will come to the house, even sometimes who will be invited to official banquets. During the Gorbachev visit, it was Sonia who apparently made sure that Jaya Bachchan came for a banquet although the wives of several ministers and senior officials were told to stay at home because the guest list was too long.

Those who have known her over the years detect a dramatic change between the Sonia who was Mrs Gandhi's daughter-in-law and the Sonia who is the prime minister's wife. Earlier, she used to laugh more easily and enjoyed meeting friends for shopping sprees, coffee or meals. Her conversations tended to be about things to do with the house rather than serious issues. Now, she is said to be more reserved, worried about the cloistered environment in which her children have to grow up, fretful about the constant security and of chinks in the armour. She only allows herself to be totally at ease and unguarded with her immediate family. In recent weeks, however, she is said to have become more relaxed, more accepting of her fate.

In the last couple of years, friends have advised her on what she could do. Culture was suggested as a possible area, but Sonia felt that as a foreigner there may be resentment if she got involved. There was talk of her participating in issues relating to the welfare of women and children and in the early days of Rajiv's rural tours, separate programmes would be laid out for her. But she did not show any interest in them either, preferring to be by her husband's side. When asked recently why she did not take advantage of her position to make an active contribution to women's and children's welfare, she replied: "I would like to very much, but I feel that if I said yes to one programme then I would have to take on others as well; and then I would have no time at all with the children."

This is in contrast to the days when Rajiv was an MP and she would make regular pilgrimages to Amethi to nurse the constituency as if it were her own. She would travel from village to village, addressing herself to such problems as health care, schools and drinking water. Arun Singh's wife Nina, who used to accompany Sonia, recalls: "Our day would begin at about six in the morning and end after nine at night. All day the women would come with their children,

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who invariably had eye infections or some other medical problem. And there used to be so much dust that it was quite amazing how Sonia never got one of her asthma attacks." Even during the 1984 elections, Sonia campaigned in Amethi, but she has hardly visited the constituency since.

If she has withdrawn from Amethi, she shrinks from other public duties too, like speaking to an audience. Though she can talk animatedly in the company of friends, mostly wives of Rajiv's school and college chums, she has an in-built aversion to speaking in public. Since the last election, when she campaigned for her husband in Amethi, she has not made a single public statement. Her only public utterance, if it can termed that, was at the meeting organised by the Indian National Congress during Rajiv's visit to the US when, in response to prolonged shouts from the audience and whispered coaxing from her husband, she stood up to say: "I will say just two words, 'Jai Hind'."

She has obviously not taken very well to being First Lady. For her the stilted formality of official functions is almost painful and what disturbs her most is the sycophants. As she recently told a friend: "I love going with Rajiv into the villages because there at least people are direct and straightforward and only say what they mean. It is such a change to meet people who are not there simply because they have to be."

Bureaucrats in the Prime Minister's Secretariat confirm that she is most relaxed when in the villages. One of their favourite stories is of a trip to a village in Orissa where Rajiv and Sonia had gone into the hut of a poor peasant. A woman was there with a small baby in her arms. As they were about to move on, Sonia noticed that the baby had eye infection and immediately summoned the prime minister's doctor to examine the child. She asked the mother her name as she was leaving, and it turned out to be Sonia.

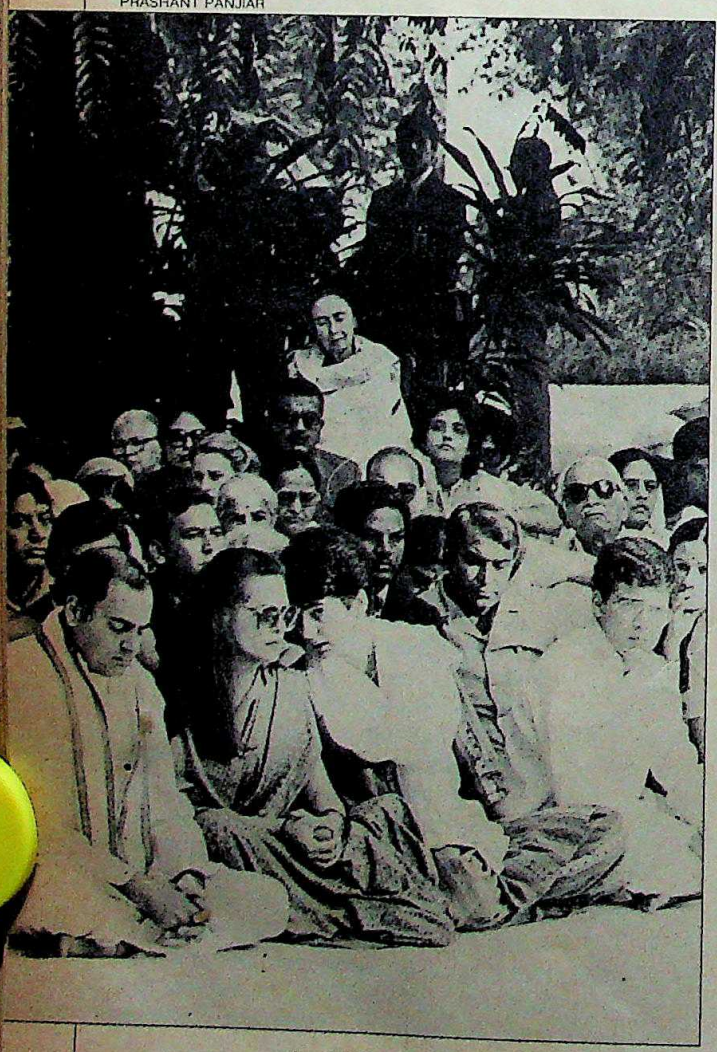
Sonia's problems stem from the fact that she seems unable to make up her mind about the kind of First Lady she would like to be, and that too in a country which has never really had one. Had she been a Lalita Shastri—unseen, unimportant, unknown—she would have been ignored. But her dilemma appears to be that she wants to be high profile without making the contribution that goes with it. In a land where there is no dearth of worthy causes, her 'decorative doll' public image has been of no help.

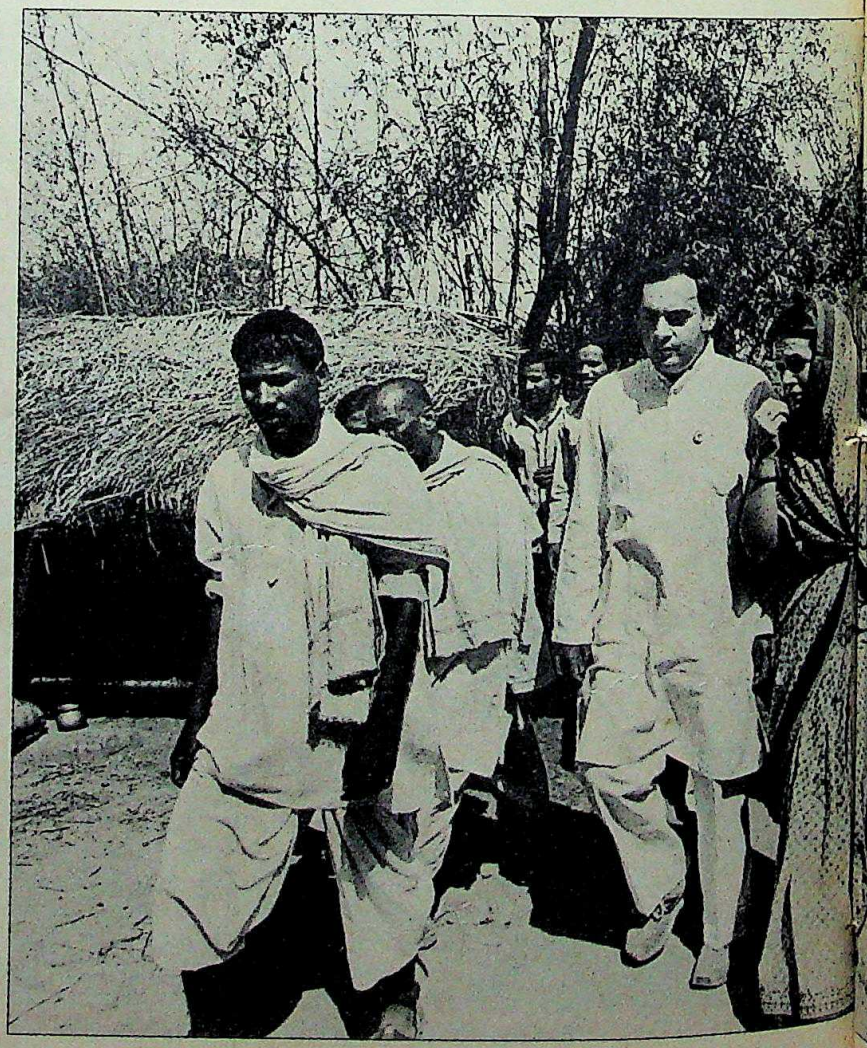
Her close friends say that stories about her influence really disturbed and irritated her in the beginning. But she has learned to ignore or accept them as part of the price she has to pay. When stories about her being the alleged power behind the throne were repeated to her recently, she commented to a friend: "Don't they realise that if I had that much influence over my husband he wouldn't have been an MP, leave alone prime minister?"

When asked about another related story doing the rounds—that she had managed to have her former Hindi tutor given a Rajya Sabha ticket from Madhya Pradesh—she retorted that although she did remember someone who had taught her Hindi in 1968, she neither remembered his name nor was she aware of how tickets

The family (left): first priority; (right) Sonia with Rajiv in Amethi: initial interest

PRASHANT PANJIAR





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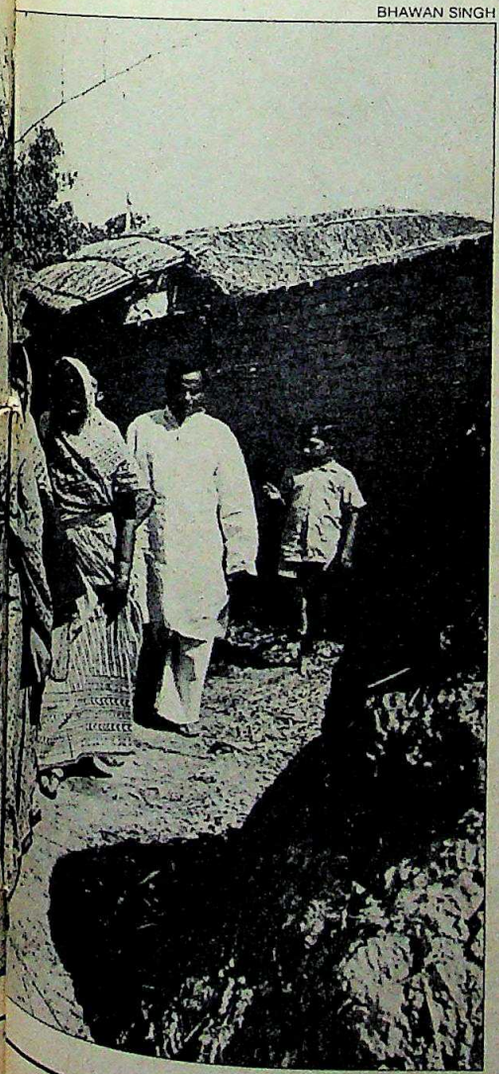
were given or when. Friends admit, however, that because she and Rajiv are so close, he does often use her as a sounding board, trusting her gut reaction about certain people or events. In the US, for instance, Sonia sat up till 5 a.m. with Rajiv while he was giving the finishing touches to his speech to the US Congress because he wanted her reaction to it. But apart from that, friends say she is totally apolitical, and wouldn't know the portfolios of many of the Cabinet ministers.

In fact, her aversion to politics is the one thing about her that her friends are willing to talk about and recall that she tried very hard to dissuade her husband from becoming an MP. In fact, Sonia became eligible to vote only as recently as 1982 when she gave up her Italian passport and became an Indian citizen, and she has only voted once, in December 1984. Even after Rajiv became prime minister, her distaste for politics has not left her and she has tried to keep political matters as far from her home as possible.

The result is that although only a wall separates Number 5 and Number 7 Race Course Road, the two houses are so different that they could almost be in separate worlds. Number 7 represents the political side of Rajiv's life and consists of the usual series of sparsely furnished rooms and government-issue portraits of Mrs Gandhi and other leaders. Number 7 is reserved for meetings with politicians, Number 5 is strictly Sonia's preserve, where only family and close friends have access. This is as Sonia wills it, but as Rajiv wills it too.

BHAWAN SINGH



It is a beautifully-decorated home that perhaps is the only visible window to her personality. The *objets d'art* have been collected over the years from different parts of India. There are glass paintings from Tanjore, tribal art from the East and old wood carvings from the South. There is almost nothing European about the house and friends say that this reflects a conscious decision on Sonia's part to put Italy behind her when she came to live in India. When asked about this she once said: "I was so happy here that I had no reason to miss Italy. I missed the food so I learnt to cook but other than that I never felt like an outsider here. I learnt the language quite quickly so that helped and also I took to the customs very easily. I never thought of them as being strange."

She enjoyed visiting villages with Rajiv because "there, people are straightforward and only say what they mean".

The extreme privacy of their home has meant that the prime minister is cut off from the kind of informal political contact that is invaluable and which was a regular feature of the household that Mrs Gandhi ran. Indeed, it is because the household is open to only a few old friends, who make for an exclusive club, that there has been so much rumour-mongering about Sonia wielding surrogate influence, and of her friends using their privileged access to get things done for themselves and their friends. Asked about this, someone close to the Gandhi duo countered: "So what should they do? Stop seeing all their friends?"

Nevertheless, the Gandhis' inability or unwillingness to distance themselves from friends who have taken advantage of their friendship has resulted in at least some of them doing very well in their fields of enterprise (whether it is contracts for interior decoration or export deals with the Soviet Union). Some of the friends have even managed to dramatically alter their standards of living.

One of the people with whom Sonia most certainly did not get along was sister-in-law Maneka. The two had no common interests, friction was common and there was an infamous quarrel when Maneka complained that her pet dog was not getting its dog biscuits. One of the stories that Sonia herself recounted to a friend was about the time when she and Maneka saw the film *Network*, about a ruthless, power-hungry woman who as the top executive of a television network uses people to advance her own career and her network ratings. To Sonia, the woman represented evil and she said she was deeply shocked when, after the film, Maneka remarked that she would have loved to have been in the woman's shoes.

Constant exposure to the realities of Indian public life appear to have done nothing to alter Sonia's interests or to extend her horizons to doing something more meaningful than just being by her husband's side. In fact, she is almost exactly like any other upper class Indian memsahib whose interests are confined entirely to the world that is her home. She likes good clothes and nice jewellery, and has a taste for the good things of life even if they don't come cheap. Sonia is also said to be an indefatigable shopper. Friends say she can spend hours browsing around antique shops. Generally she is accompanied on her shopping expeditions by close friends, often one of the Bachchan wives. Rajiv's political life is to her his job, something that she does not really wish to become involved in.

It is this obsession with her privacy and her immediate family that is perhaps the key to her public personality. Friends say that Sonia's reluctance to get involved in any public activity is also because she feels there would be even more rumours about her being the power behind the throne if she played a less passive public role. And there is also the trauma of Mrs Gandhi's assassination. She was particularly attached to her famous mother-in-law, despite the vast differences in their personalities, and was shattered by her death, especially since she was the first to reach the body on that October morning and the horror of that day has never quite

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left her. She was the only member of the family at home when it happened and ran out when she heard the shots because she thought it was some servant child playing with firecrackers. As recently as last Diwali, she confided to a friend: "I cannot hear the sound of fire- crackers without it all coming back." In an interview to a British newspaper she said of her relationship with Mrs Gandhi: "The first words she said to me were 'Sonia, I'm a mother. Don't be afraid of me. After having brought up two children, I can now understand how much sympathy and love a mother who becomes a mother-in-law needs.' I always gave her understanding and she always gave me love. We never quarrelled. We were very close."

The trauma of the assassination was so severe that it brought on one of the asthma attacks she is prone to and she lost more than 10 kg in weight. It has also made her paranoid about Rajiv's safety. According to people in the know, she was constantly pointing out security flaws during Rajiv's early days as prime minister and she admitted after the trip to the US last year that she had spent it in a state of constant terror. But of late, and despite the October 2 incident, she has learned to be more fatalistic about the security threat and attributes it to the acceptance that what has to happen will happen.

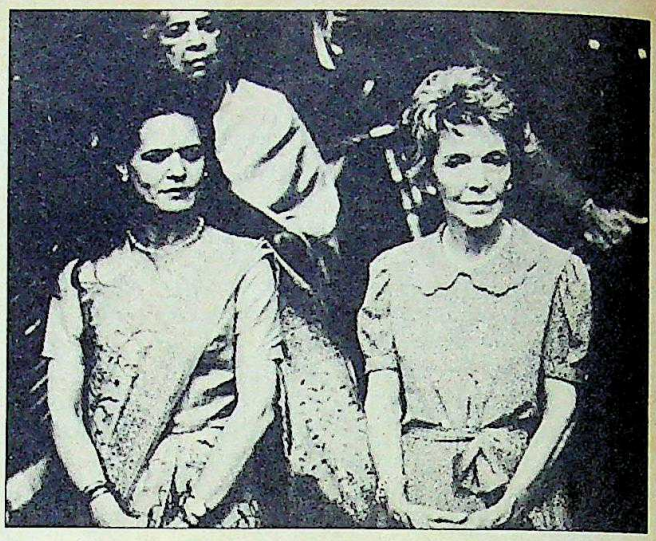
But that does not prevent her from expressing normal maternal concerns about the upbringing of her children and the fact that they have to live in a state of virtual house arrest. However, she does try to make up by being around them as much as possible, especially since they deeply miss seeing their father as much as they used to. As a family they were exceptionally close, and Rahul and Priyanka have taken a long time to adjust to the fact that they cannot live normal lives. In the beginning, they were constantly asking if they could be allowed to go back to school and there is still a certain amount of heartburn over the fact that they cannot accompany their friends to parties and discotheques. On week-ends, they sometimes have friends coming over, but rarely go out themselves.

Friends admit that Rajiv often uses Sonia as a sounding board, trusting her gut reaction about certain people, events and issues.

Sonia's own day consists largely of attending to various chores around the house. Her life even before Rajiv became prime minister was always adjusted to suit his, and now it is even more so. Since she has kept away from Rajiv's political life, her official duties consist mainly of being at his side at official functions or playing reluctant hostess at various official dinners and receptions. As one British paper described her during an official visit to Britain: "She has been in the public eye all week, although few noticed her—beautiful, obedient, discreet and hating every minute of it."

One of the few official duties that she does seem to enjoy a great deal, however, is choosing menus for official banquets in Hyderabad House. According to sources in Welcomgroup, their corporate chef Richard Graham actually prepares the meals but Sonia decides what will be served. During the recent SAARC summit meeting in Bangalore, the final five-course menu for Rajiv's banquet for the heads of state was sent to Sonia for her approval and she requested that the main course be changed to something more Indian. Sonia herself loves good food and she and Rajiv could often, in the days before politics entered their lives, be seen dining at various Delhi restaurants. Their favourites were the Bukhara at the Maurya, the Orient Express at the Taj Palace and the Captain's Cabin at the Taj Mahal. Indeed, Rajiv was once described as a pilot growing plump on his wife's pasta.

Since Rajiv makes it a point to come home for lunch as often as possible, Sonia ensures she is always around since this is her one chance to see him during the day. In the evenings, he prefers to work at home after dinner so that the family can be together. Entertaining on a personal level is restricted to the occasional dinner party for a few close friends every three months or so, and just as occasionally are they able to visit friends on special occasions like weddings, birthdays and anniversaries.



PRASHANT PANJIAR

(Top) Sonia with Nancy; and (above) Raisa Gorbacheva: a study in contrast

When she has a few moments to herself, Sonia leaves the house to visit an exhibition or goes to the National Museum to pursue, in fits and starts, a course in art restoration. She is said to know a great deal about European art and is a serious museum-goer. Her other real interest is opera, and she can listen to music for long stretches. She is not very interested in books, but does manage to glance through most of the daily newspapers and some magazines.

Sonia's other interests are clothes and cooking. She is also said to have a weakness for Indian textiles and tends only to wear saris that are handloom—cottons and khadi for daily use and silks and brocades to grace grander occasions.

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RAGHU RAI

Relaxing at home: rare moments

When in the house or at informal gatherings she likes to slip into western clothes, which are generally bought for her by her sisters or parents who visit from time to time. Although she no longer finds time to do much cooking herself, she still takes a great interest in supervising the kitchen and friends say her favourite concoctions are mouth-watering lasagna and prawns in garlic sauce. Sonia was born a Catholic but is not deeply religious person. In fact, to avoid any religious problems, Sonia and Rajiv got married at a civil ceremony in Delhi.

One of Sonia's distinctive qualities is said to be her generosity. Friends invariably receive presents on birthdays and other occasions and she almost never goes to somebody's house for a meal without coming armed with some gift or the other. She also goes out of her way to help people in trouble even if they are not really close friends. There are innumerable stories of how she has rallied around friends in need.

Initially, her closest friend was Arun Singh's wife, Nina. The two were inseparable and met almost every day, but in recent months there has been a sharp cooling off in the relationship. Friends say that Nina Singh has not been seen in Sonia's house for months. This, however, does not seem to have affected Rajiv's own relationship with Arun Singh. But Sonia's extreme reserve and shyness prevents most people from becoming too close and their circle of friends has remained unchanged since Rajiv became prime minister.

Sonia's closest companion these days is Maria Quattrocchi, wife of the Delhi-based Italian business representative, Octavio Quattrocchi. Her other friends include the wives of the Bachchan brothers, Jaya and Romola, and Amitabh's mother, Teji who she has a close rapport with, Nimal Thadani, wife of a businessman friend and schoolmate of Rajiv's, advertising executive Romi Chopra, Rajiv's pilot buddy Satish Sharma and his Dutch wife, and *Indian Express* Editor Suman Dubey and his wife Manjulika. Her relations with the Quattrocchis have been cause for as much gossip and speculation as the business successes of other friends close to the Gandhis. Within the Congress(I) there is a great deal of resentment over the access that 'the friends' have to the prime minister, and the access is often through Sonia.

But Sonia has so far shown no desire to distance herself from any of her friends or, for that matter, add to their number and widen her own somewhat limited horizons. She may not be a Raisa Gorbacheva or a Nancy Reagan but she does, in the ultimate analysis, have a duty to perform, even if it is largely for the sake of the public image. Sooner or later Sonia will have to decide what she wants her role to be. She can either disappear completely into the world of shadows and privacy that she has surrounded herself with or step forcefully onto the public stage which, as prime minister, her husband is forced to occupy. In public life, and more so in political life, the middle road is not usually an easy one.

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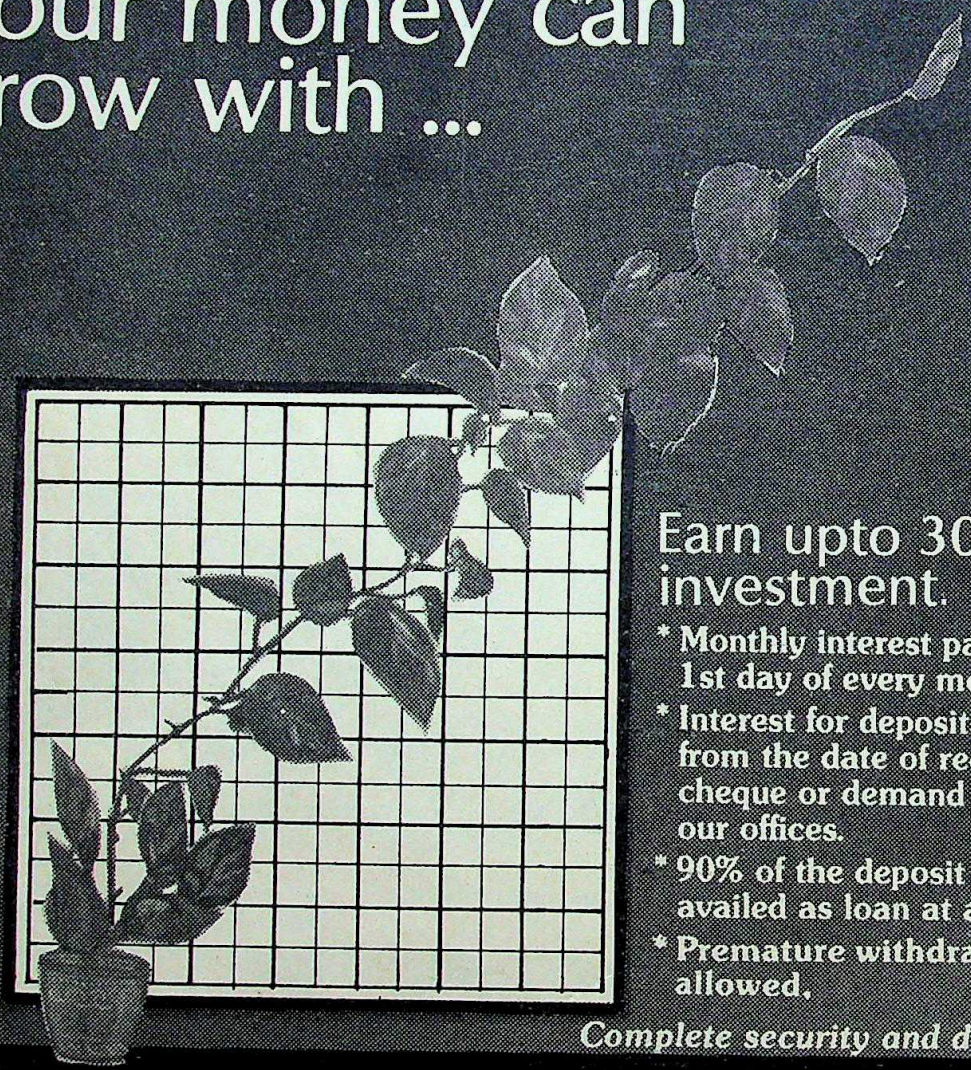

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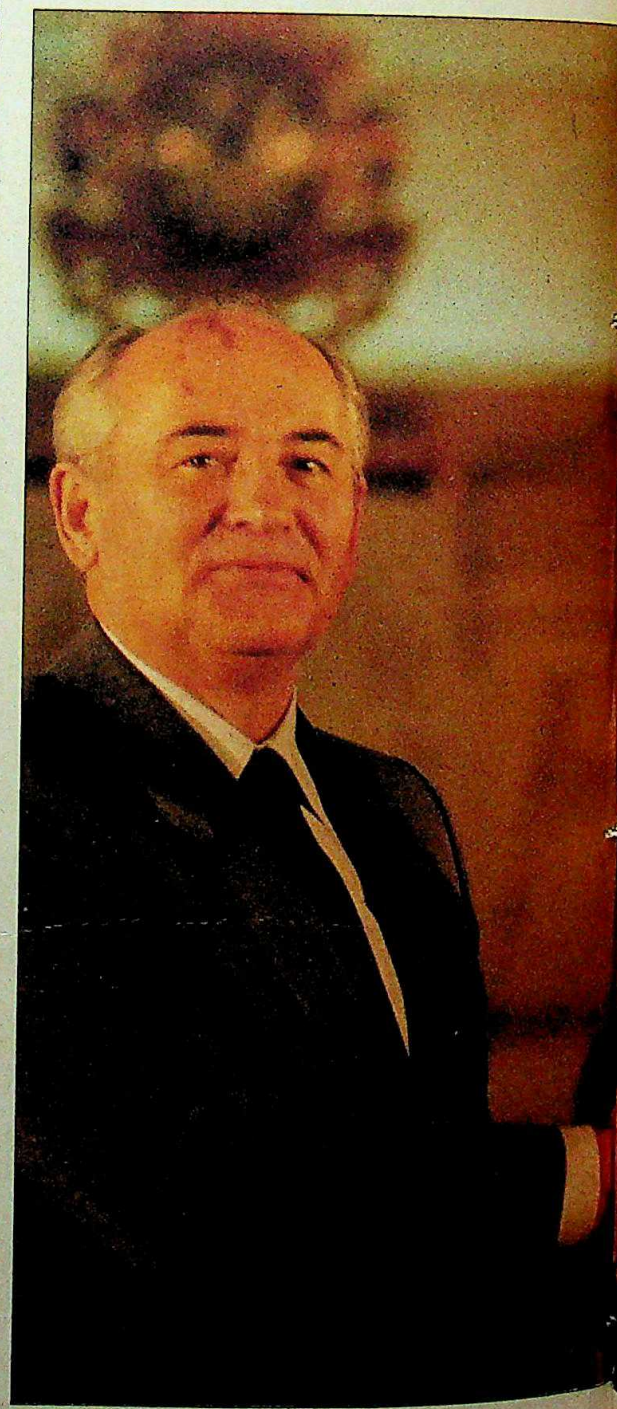
INDO-SOVIET RELATIONS

THE SECOND

SOVIET supremo Mikhail S. Gorbachev's four-day visit to India last week was a world event. Almost without warning, the real significance of the Gorbachev visit exploded like a geopolitical bombshell whose reverberations are being felt and analysed in almost every world capital. Overnight, a superpower and the leader of the increasingly influential Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) transformed what has been a somewhat hesitant and diffident relationship into an aggressive new partnership that could have far-reaching consequences for international diplomacy.

While both sides insisted that what had emerged by the end of the visit was not an alliance in the diplomatic sense of the word, but a deeper and more mutually meaningful relationship based on a brand-new realisation of "intelligent self-interest", there was little doubt that the

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



(Clockwise) Gorbachev's motorcade at Vijay Chowk; shaking hands with Rajiv after the Delhi Declaration; and inspecting a guard of honour: a bold assertion

BHAWAN SINGH

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D HONEYMOON

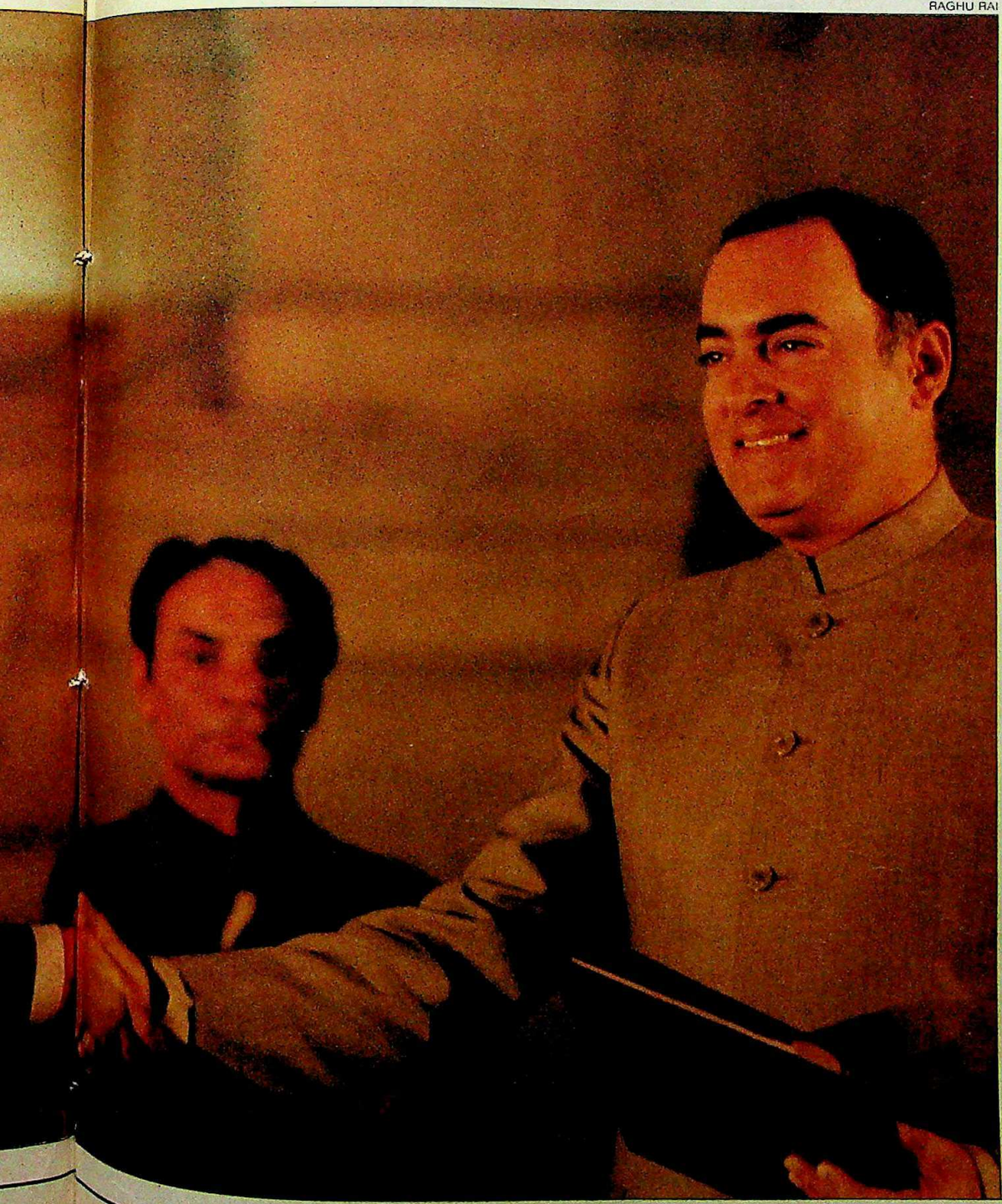
two nations are now locked in what appears to be an ironclad embrace in almost every sphere of activity.

With the signing of the Delhi Declaration, the two countries announced to the rest of the world that their global interests now coincide more than ever before. Any lingering doubts about the defence relationship between the two countries were quickly dispelled with the Soviets offering—and India accepting—a virtual carte blanche for the procurement of the latest military hardware. In the economic field, India put its eggs more firmly in the Soviet basket and promised to buy not just more capital goods but also consumer items. And, in the area of technical and scientific cooperation the two nations entered a new phase in which the Soviets agreed to ease India into the area of high technology and the 21st century.

Specifically, the agreements include:

► The joint proposal for an interna-

RAGHU RAI



"When friends come calling, our hearts light up. We are delighted to have you in our midst."
RAJIV GANDHI

"We shall not take a single step in our foreign policy that could damage India's real interests."
MIKHAIL S. GORBACHEV

"We value the help we have received in completing the first phase of our industrialisation. We are now poised for the next phase of technological modernisation."
RAJIV GANDHI

"The Soviet Union strongly condemns all those intrigues and plots against your country as well as any attempts to undermine India's integrity and unity."
MIKHAIL S. GORBACHEV

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tional convention banning the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. As a first step, India already has plans to organise an international seminar on the subject early next year in Delhi.

► The Soviets agreed to "open all doors" for Indian participation and involvement in Soviet research programmes in high technology. Academician Marchuk, president of the prestigious Soviet Academy of Sciences and the Soviet Union's top brain in supercomputer research, will be arriving in India shortly to finalise the details.

► The unexpected Soviet offer to build an international space centre in India involving space scientists and researchers from all the leading space powers, which will have the capacity to launch space vehicles and satellites and conduct advanced laser research.

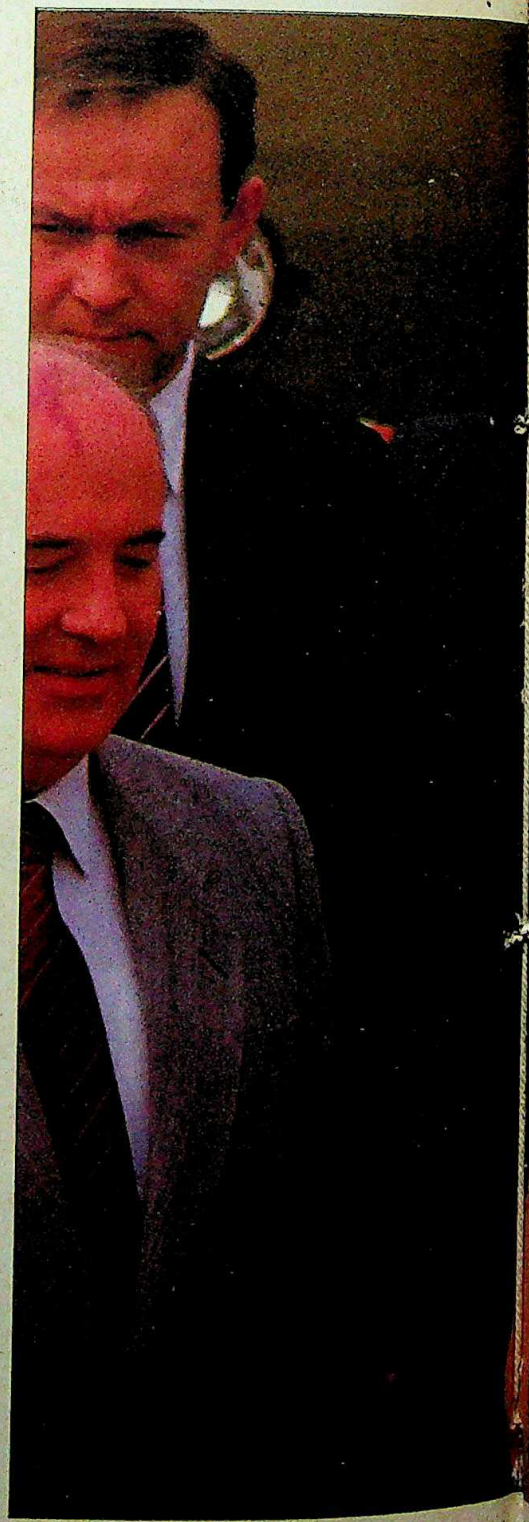
► An array of the most sophisticated Soviet weaponry including the Soviet version of the AWACS, an earlier delivery of the latest MiG fighters, air-to-air missiles capable of countering any foreseeable regional threat, new submarines and long-range naval aircraft.

► A dramatic expansion in economic and technical cooperation which includes new credit worth an unprecedented Rs 2,000 crore, for major projects mainly in the energy sector. Bilateral trade is now poised to go up fourfold in the next six years.

But it was essentially the timing that transformed the Gorbachev visit into what is probably the most major diplomatic exercise in modern Indian history.

Gorbachev with Rajiv at the press conference and (right) Raisa hugging Sonia on arrival

PRASHANT PANJIAR



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With cold and calculated deliberation, the Indian Government used the visit to let the world know that, in a changing security environment, India was no longer embarrassed about holding the Soviet bear's hand in public.

Behind the pomp was the circumstance. There was a powerful compulsion in South Block at this particular moment in time to reaffirm India's relationship with the Soviets. When the Gorbachev visit was finalised several months ago, there were no significant geopolitical compulsions for New Delhi to afford it the kind of exaggerated importance it finally did. Had the visit occurred six months—even six weeks—ago it would have been billed as a "friend comes calling", a confirmation of the traditionally close ties and mutuality of interests between India and its gigantic northern neighbour. But recent events have added a new significance to the Soviet leader's visit that neither side had earlier envisaged.

Few people outside its cloistered confines realise the deep anger and disillusionment with the US that was generated in South Block by the recent visit of US Secretary of Defence Casper Weinberger to the region. Weinberger's visit was billed to be a new phase in Indo-US relations. In New Delhi, he emphasised America's deep and genuine desire to improve relations with India, made encouraging noises on the sale of the supercomputer and even defence equipment, and then at his next halt,

RAGHU RAI

"I think Gorbachev is a very responsible and sincere leader especially when compared to Reagan. He offers the hope for a non-nuclear future."

HARI R. ACHANTA, 25
management trainee, Bangalore

"According to our local beliefs a birthmark on the head is a very lucky sign. I began to wish that my son had been born with a similar mark."

K. DEVAKI, 45
a cleaning woman at the state house in Trivandrum

"The Gorbachev visit must certainly have provoked Pakistan. It appears to me that after this visit the prospect of war with Pakistan has become greater."

ASHOK LALWANI, 26
trader, Lucknow

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Islamabad, unveiled US intentions to supply Pakistan with the AWACS, the latest M1 Abrams tanks—which can hardly be used on the Afghanistan border—and the improved version of the F-16. In Indian eyes, Weinberger's actions—he had not given a hint of US intentions while in New Delhi—were not just seen as a betrayal but as a major insult. This is perhaps the crucial difference in South Block's eyes; the fact that the Soviets treat India not just as a regional power but as an independent global power. The Americans tend to treat India like an impoverished tinpot nation. In fact, the impact of the Gorbachev visit has not been lost on the Americans. As one senior US diplomat in New Delhi admitted: "A debate has already started within American circles about why we 'lost' India."

The Gorbachev visit and its implications were clearly designed to bring about what one Indian diplomat aptly described as "a sobering effect on capitals throughout the world". By what amounted to a public proclamation that its relationship with one of the superpowers had acquired an international stance, New Delhi was giving out unmistakable signals that it was deadly serious about protecting its global and regional interests.

The current shift in Indian perceptions was best illustrated by the fact that the 15th anniversary of the Twenty-Year Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation passed almost unnoticed two months ago. "The US has done a commendable job of reminding us of that treaty," says K. Subrahmanyam, director of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses and a long-time Moscow-watcher. There were, from the Indian Government's point of view, other urgent compulsions for boosting the Gorbachev

"America doesn't support us. Russia does. President Reagan does not seem to like India. He should change his policies. His Star Wars is a criminal waste of money."

P. PERIANNAN, 43
textile merchant, Bangalore

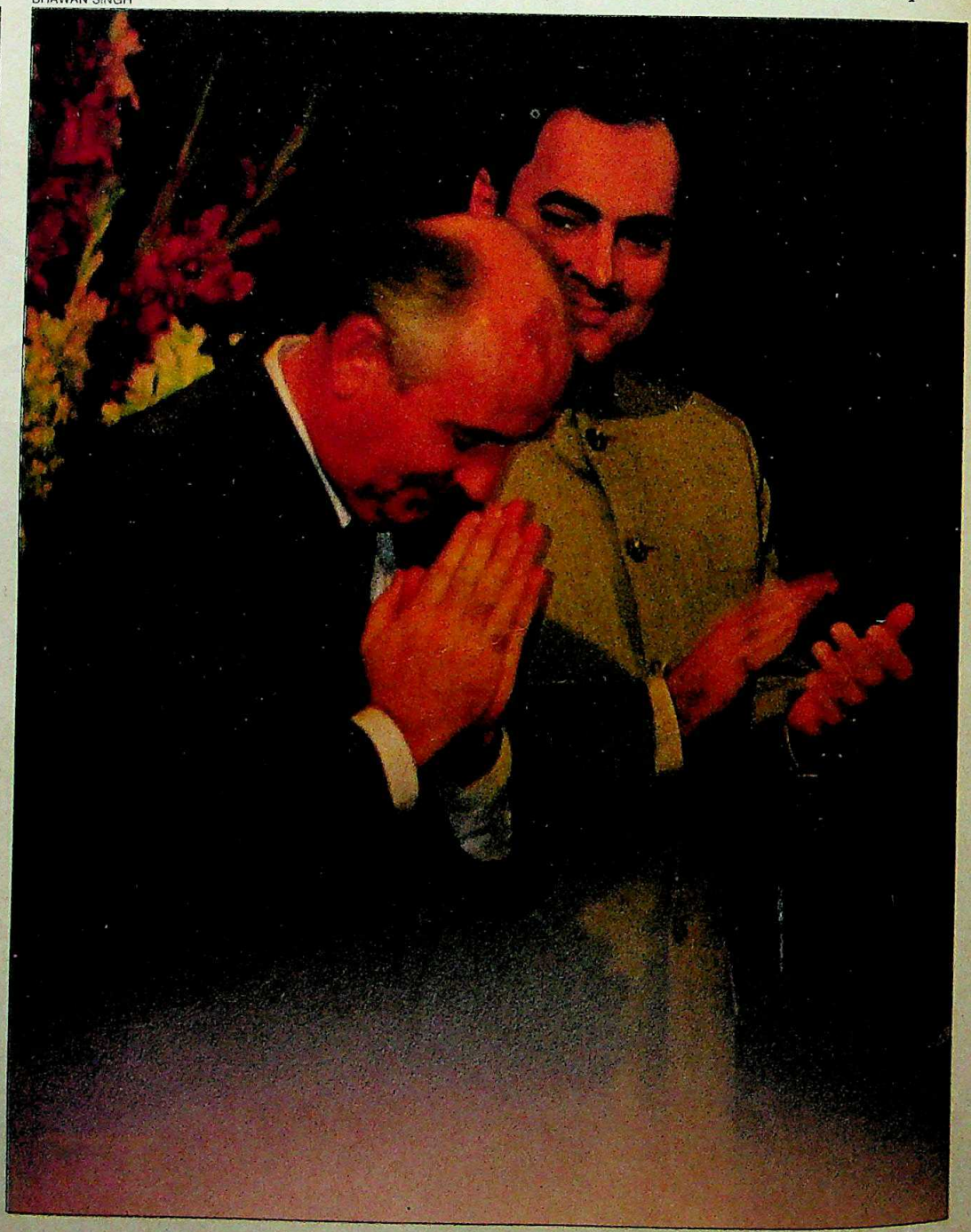
"Rajiv Gandhi has now definitely turned pro-Russian like his mother. His love for the United States has now withered."

S.P. SINGH, 41
lawyer, Lucknow

"Gorbachev's visit is one of the most important international events of the year. The kind of solidarity that the two countries are exhibiting is enough to make any country with ulterior motives think twice."

DEEPAK HEGDE, 27
computer sales executive, Ahmedabad

BHAWAN SINGH



Gorbachev greeting members of Parliament: elevating the relationship

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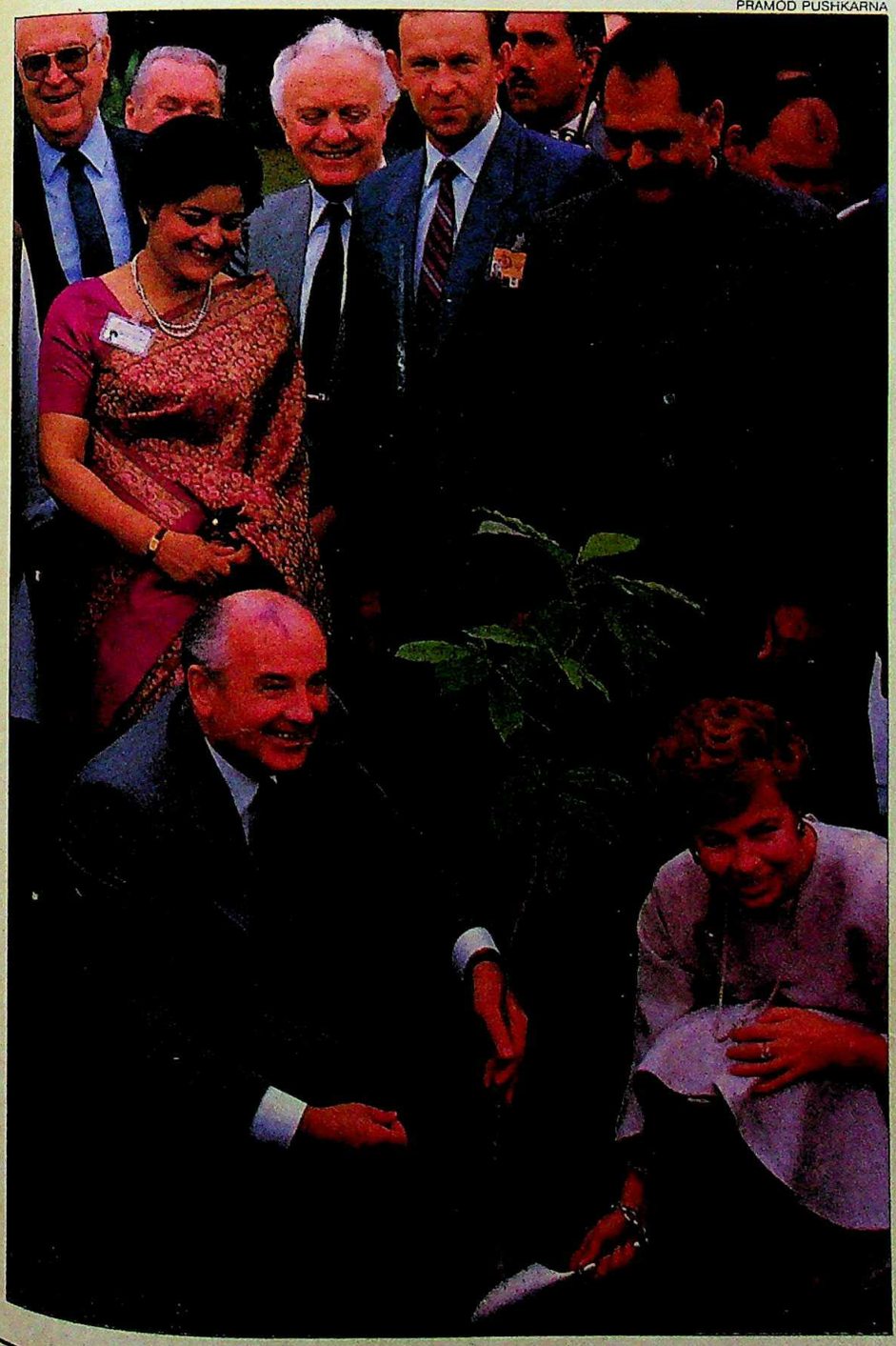
visit to an elevated level. It was, in its domestic dimension, a deliberate statement directed at the Indian public. The border intrusion by China, the threat of the Pakistan bomb, the AWACS and the militarisation of the region had created a tangible sense of insecurity in the country. The visit was used to give public reassurance that, if it comes to the crunch, India has a powerful friend to rely on.

Even though Gorbachev, in his public appearances, seemed to be lukewarm in his answers to direct questions about the Soviet response to threats on Indian security from countries like China and Pakistan, in carefully-selected forums like the Indo-Soviet Friendship Society, he categorically stated that the Soviet Union would not stand idly by in case of any threat to "India's unity and integrity", adding, "we shall not take a single step in our foreign policy that could damage India's real interests."

It was precisely that awareness—a large majority of the Indian public is currently convinced that another war with Pakistan is imminent—that prompted India to turn the visit into a second honeymoon. This time, unlike previous occasions, India was clearly stating that its relationship with Moscow is to be the fulcrum of its foreign policy.

Gorbachev and Raisa plant a sapling at Rajghat: the new image

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



THAT stand was, somewhat surprisingly, heavily endorsed by a sampling of Indian public opinion on the eve of the Gorbachev visit. Despite the visible western orientation in Indian society, a snap poll conducted by a Sunday paper two days before the Soviet leader's arrival revealed that 93 per cent of those polled considered the Soviet Union as India's "best friend" and, more significant, 72 per cent felt that it was in the country's interest to have closer relations with Moscow as against 16 per cent who favoured closer ties with the US. Further, 68 per cent of the respondents backed India's policy of putting most of her defence eggs in the Soviet basket. The poll was widely seen as a reflection of growing public disenchantment with the US and its militarisation of Pakistan.

The visit was in turn used by the Soviet leader as an extension of his high-profile and high-priority international peace offensive from a new launching pad—India. Significantly, the team of officials accompanying Gorbachev to New Delhi was virtually the same brains trust he had at Reykjavik and which now advises him on policy issues. Having already gained considerable ground at Reykjavik in his role as a crusader of world peace—and in the battle for international public opinion—Gorbachev launched his latest peace missile, the joint call along with India for an international convention to outlaw the use of nuclear weapons. Since India has already sponsored a United Nations resolution along similar lines, New Delhi was only too happy to go along. If the Delhi Declaration does eventually lead to a convention and some kind of general agreement, Rajiv will get much of the credit for having dealt with one of the superpowers on an equal footing on a matter which is of interest not only to Asia and the Soviets but also to Europe and the American public.

Gorbachev's mission also contained a diagnostic element. Together with his key advisers, Gorbachev was here to make an on-the-spot assessment of the Indian leadership, its strengths and weaknesses, and the stability of the country. There has been not inconsiderable concern in Moscow at Rajiv's pro-West image and some criticism, most notably in *Pravda* last August 14, on his economic policies. Furthermore, Gorbachev does not have any sentimental legacy to fall back on like Khruschev had with Nehru or Brezhnev

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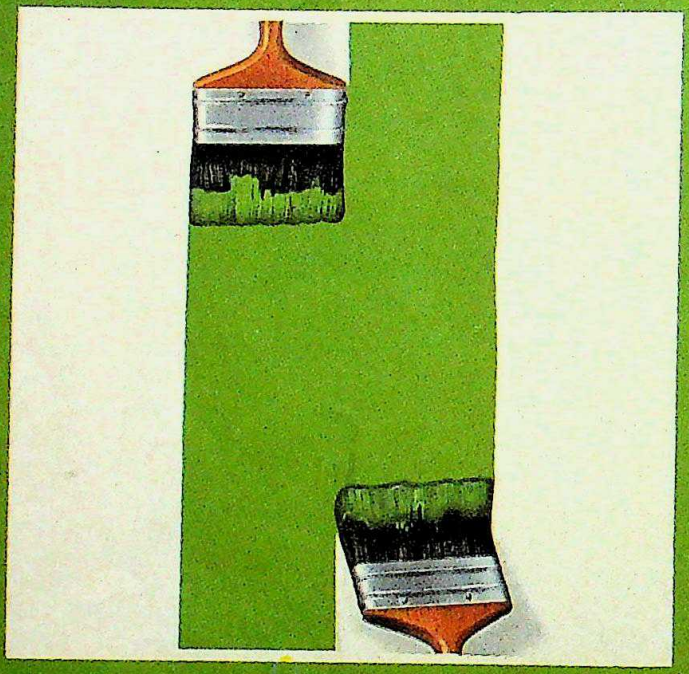

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with Mrs Gandhi. Gorbachev is, in a sense, starting from scratch and he needed to reassure himself that Rajiv was someone he could trust in a crisis. By the end of the visit, however, the Soviets were apparently reassured on all counts.

ON another level, the Gorbachev visit and the new honeymoon with New Delhi dovetails neatly into the new Soviet strategy of projecting itself as a friend and sympathiser of the Third World and painting the US as a threat to Third World stability. In support of this strategy, the Soviets have been quoting US President Ronald Reagan's recent statement that "regional conflicts are more important than arms control". Moscow's good relations with New Delhi are thus a convenient peg on which to hang their new hat considering India's leading and highly active role in NAM and SAARC.

There are, of course, other compelling reasons, apart from purely historical ones, as to why the Soviets need India as much as India needs the USSR. The Soviets have realised fully well that they don't really have many friends in the international arena. Of its three most successful bilateral relationships outside the Warsaw Pact, the two with Cuba and Vietnam, based on costly subsidies, are a drain on the Soviets' already beleaguered economy. The relationship with India, apart from subsidised arms sales, remains economically viable. The relationship also legitimises Soviet relations with the rest of the developing world—the real arena in which its battle with the US is being waged.

In the wider context, Gorbachev has embarked on a totally new concept of "Soviet internationalism". His thinking is a radical departure from previous Soviet leaders: that the only way to counter the American threat was to achieve nuke-for-nuke parity. Gorbachev realised that this was falling into the US trap of diverting increasingly scarce resources away from internal economic development into a debilitating arms race. His strategy is aimed at mobilising international public opinion behind his peace crusade and to indirectly expose the Americans as a warmongering and destabilising force, specially in the Third World arena. The Delhi Declaration was a deliberate—and logical—extension of this strategy. If the US ignores the anti-nuclear convention proposal, it will be in danger of being isolated and branded as an outlaw nation. For Gorbachev, there was no better stage than New Delhi with India having already mobilised international public support for its Six-Nation Initiative on nuclear disarmament.

Gorbachev, however, carefully abstained from any sabre-rattling during the visit. He did not directly attack the US

PRASHANT PANJIAR

(From left) Tiwari, Natwar Singh, Venkateswaran and Faleiro: the foreign policy powerhouse

"Since Rajiv came to power all I've seen is that he goes on foreign trips and invites foreign leaders. There has been no benefit to the nation but the leaders seem to be having a good time."

RAM PRASAD, 32
a paan seller, Delhi

"Whatever Gorbachev said in Delhi will be good for the nation only if properly implemented. But everybody knows these superpower leaders speak from both sides of their mouths."

RAGHU BANKA, 35
owner of a bookshop, Patna

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Sidelights

IN what could well have been a display of Russian warmth Raisa Gorbacheva, in a gesture that is rather unusual in India, grasped National Museum Director Dr Laxmi Sihare's hand and held it for a few moments during her tour through the cultural centre. A completely bowled-over Dr Sihare was stunned by the depth of her knowledge of Indian art and philosophy. He also described her as the "most intelligent VIP I have ever escorted". She did not have the air of the wife of one of the most powerful men in the world, observers said.

The 50-minute tour took her leisurely through part of the pantheon of godheads on display, but the journey was hurried past the *Shivalingam*, thereby forestalling any opportunity for intelligent questions about this particular object d'art. Soonafter, a sculpture of a "courtesan fleeing from pursuing youths" arrested her attention. She wanted to know why the men were pursuing her. Pat came Sihare's response: the girl was a bit tipsy and the young men were helping her.

■ At the tea-party given for Raisa by Sonia Gandhi to meet the capital's female glitterati were present Amal Allana, theatre personality; Kamla Choudhary, chairperson of the Wastelands Development Board; Sheela Dhar, music expert; Geeta Kapur, art critic and historian; Pupul Jayakar, cultural adviser to the prime minister; and Veena Das, a professor from Delhi University. Raisa chit-chatted about several things. She talked about the Hindi films she had seen. Overheard: "I liked *Disco Dancer*." With Veena Das, Raisa discussed the role of the woman in the home. She said that even though she has a Ph.D. in social philosophy, it was important for her to "be a woman first" and to provide the warmth needed at home to her husband and children. Her Indian circle was fascinated to learn that she enjoys Indian classical ragas to which she was introduced by listening to Ravi Shanker's music after reading his biography, as well as the works of Rabindranath Tagore.

■ Just before the banquet dinner at Hyderabad House, the prime minister's office called the wives of some of the senior ministers and told them that they should not attend the dinner because more invitation cards than spaces available had been sent out. So it became a question of guess who was not coming for dinner. But the one who did come created an envious stir: Jaya Bachchan, the wife of a junior MP.

■ Except for the lunch at Rashtrapati Bhawan, Gorbachev was not officially scheduled for any other meeting with President Zail Singh. On the eve of Gorbachev's departure, the President, feeling a bit left out, called the CPSU general secretary in his suite at Rashtrapati Bhawan to say goodbye. In fact, in his down-to-earth style, Gianiji even offered to wish the Russian leader farewell in person. But Gorbachev, touched by this gesture, offered to make an unofficial visit to the Indian President on his own. And promptly at 8.30 a.m. on the day of his departure, Gorbachev showed up at Zail Singh's quarters at Rashtrapati Bhawan where the President was waiting with his family, including grandchildren. "I know that you are a believer in communism," Gianiji told his distinguished caller. "But with the peace initiative you have launched, the world will remember you as a man who spread Gorbachevism." The warm and unexpected tribute made the Russian leader blush with embarrassment.

■ Marxist demagoguery, support for the just armed struggles for liberation of oppressed Third World nations and anti-imperialist sabre-rattling, received a deep burial during Gorbachev's Delhi visit. The communist leader, during his speech before the joint session of Parliament, stunned listeners by talking—Vedantic existentialism-style—about "the search for the meaning of life" and the tradition of "the eternal triad: human being, humanism, humanity". Socio-political systems, "ideology, and national and cultural distinctions", he said, must not be allowed to "hamper dialogue". He also referred to Rabindranath Tagore's novel *The Home and the World* which, he said, had influenced him in his quest for world peace, and Marxism came full circle to Buddhism when the Soviet leader quoted the words of Buddha: "The greatest victory is one in which nobody is defeated and all can share in that victory." This was a testament not only to Gorbachev's sensibilities but also to the meticulous preparation and homework done by his delegation.

■ During the joint press conference of Gorbachev and Rajiv there was at least one embarrassing moment for the Soviet leader. A singularly verbose and loquacious newsman from an Andhra paper asked the visitor a long-winded question which contained several parts and subparts. After the newsman had completed his chore, Gorbachev leaned towards his translators to find out what exactly he had been asked. Then Gorbachev prefaced his answer with the words: "In response to your discourse..." and the audience burst out into raucous laughter. People laughed because Gorbachev, quite aptly, they believed, had characterised the

Gorbachev with Zail Singh; and (below) Raisa with Sihare: impulsive gestures

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

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question as a "discourse". But Gorbachev stopped short in his tracks and went red in the face thinking he had committed some unpardonable bloomer. He immediately whispered to those around him whether he had said anything wrong but was reassured that he had not. Perhaps the Russian word for "statement" or "question" is translated into English as "discourse". Little did Gorbachev realise that far from having committed a faux pas he had actually hit the nail right on the head.

■ The Russian delegation brought with it seven plane-loads of foodstuff, security and communications equipment, and 31 cars. For the first time in India's diplomatic history, a foreign dignitary staying at Rashtrapati Bhawan did not use the local staff for cooking food. Barring cooking gas and utensils, everything else was brought from the Soviet Union. All the 10 rooms of the Guest House were taken over by Russian security three days before Gorbachev's arrival. Over 500 security men, including the chief and deputy chief of security, came for the mission. No Indian security personnel and communications experts were allowed into the Russian quarters. Most of the security contingent stayed at the Centaur Hotel, where occupancy suddenly shot up from 20 per cent to House Full status.

■ Almost eight weeks before Gorbachev's visit, the prime minister established a small ministerial committee to prepare a detailed blueprint of the impending visit. It included Foreign Minister N.D. Tiwari, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs K. Natwar Singh and Commerce Minister P. Shiv Shanker. The committee was later expanded to include Finance Minister V.P. Singh, Energy Minister Vasant Sathe, and Steel and Mines Minister K.C. Pant. An informal group of brainstrusters, including P.N. Haksar, Ashok Mitra, P.N. Dar, Mohit Sen, and S. Chakravarty—the country's leading "leftist" thinkers—advised the ministerial group.

■ In order to make Gorbachev's stay comfortable and cozy the Government set up an informal group to redecorate all the guest suites in the annexe of Rashtrapati Bhawan. The group's members included Union Minister of State for Home P. Chidambaram, Sunita Kohli, an interior decorator, and Mrs Natwar Singh. They changed everything—curtains, bedspreads, carpets, and even the wall-paint.

and avoided any public references to Pakistan and China in the Indian security context. If he had wanted to play to the Indian gallery, it would have been the popular thing to do. But his not doing so indicated that the new Soviet international stance is not one of name-calling but based on sobriety and mature statesmanship, designed to attract all nations, regardless of ideology, into his concept of world peace as expressed in Reykjavik, Vladivostok and now—New Delhi.

BUT the dust kicked up by the "internationalising of the relationship" as Gorbachev called it, perhaps deliberately, succeeded in obscuring the bilateral significance of the visit.

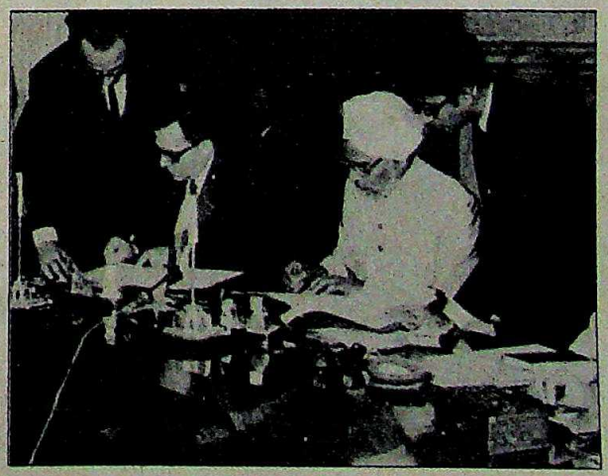
► On China, the Soviets assured New Delhi that the rapprochement between Moscow and Beijing has still a long way to go because of the many hurdles involved, but that any major improvement in Sino-Soviet ties would have no military implications for India.

► On Pakistan, the Soviets made it clear that they will have no hesitation in coming to India's aid in the event of a conventional conflict. India repeated its conviction that Pakistan is "two-screw-driver turns" away from nuclear bomb capability. Rajiv told Gorbachev that if India was finally convinced that Pakistan has the bomb it will have to reconsider its nuclear options. The Soviets also assured India that there was no reason to panic over the AWACS, if and when the acquisition takes place. The wide-ranging defence agreement *(see page 102)* worked out between Minister of State for Defence Arun Singh and his Soviet counterparts in Moscow prior to the Gorbachev visit is intended to provide "adequate counters" to the AWACS.

► On Afghanistan, the Soviets made it clear that they want to pull out of that country but only if their conditions—a pledge that the US and Pakistan will stop military aid to the Mujahideen and the presence of a government in Kabul that is friendly to the Soviets—are met.

There were, of course, points of delicate disagreement, most notably on Gorbachev's crusade for an Asia-Pacific security pact, first spelt out in his now historic speech last July at Vladivostok. The Indian response was not as forthcoming as Moscow would have wished. Rajiv termed it a "good concept" that was

Nehru, Indira with Bulganin, Khruschev; (below) signing the 1971 treaty



"As I watched Gorbachev I said to myself that he is both dignified and aristocratic. His association with us has definitely boosted India's image abroad."

J. VILASINI AMMA, 60
housewife, Trivandrum

"I wonder why we have to keep up this relationship with Russia. Only the Jews and Jewish countries will stand by us in time of need because we have common enemies."

NARAYANA REDDY
doctor, Madras

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GUEST COLUMN/BHABANI SEN GUPTA

A Different Beginning

THEY had met before, in May 1985 when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited Moscow, and again in October, when he briefly stopped over there on his way back home from the United Nations. But when Rajiv Gandhi and Mikhail Gorbachev met for the third time in New Delhi last fortnight, both had changed and matured, both had learnt from their different experiences with domestic and world realities. Gorbachev had consolidated his leadership in the Soviet Union and cast his charisma beyond the frontiers of his own country. Rajiv Gandhi had lost some political ground at home and had been rebuffed by the US in his efforts to rearrange superpower relationships with India and Pakistan.

By the time the visit was over and the 80-member Soviet delegation, which included some of the Soviet Union's most competent scientists, military thinkers, development economists and political and foreign-policy strategists, took off from the Indira Gandhi International Airport, Indo-Soviet relations had been placed on a different footing. Gorbachev gave Rajiv more than the latter had expected: the status of the leader of a world power. Rajiv gave Gorbachev more than the latter had expected: endorsement of the Soviet position on arms control and disarmament at the Reykjavik summit.

Gorbachev came to the Indian capital not without certain misgivings. A strong rapport had been established between him and the prime minister during their two meetings last year. But since then the Soviets had seen Rajiv flirting with the US, and wondered if he was not moving to a position of equidistance from the two superpowers. Gorbachev, therefore, wasn't sure if Rajiv would endorse his stand at the Icelandic summit and hold the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI)—or star wars programme—of Ronald Reagan solely responsible for the summit's collapse. Nor was he certain that the prime minister would respond positively to his concept of Asia-Pacific security, which he had outlined briefly, for the first time, in May 1985, while welcoming Rajiv Gandhi at a banquet in the Kremlin.

The prime minister had done his homework well for his meetings with the general secretary. He had been stung by the unfolding integration of Pakistan into a larger, long-term US military strategy for the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean region, by the reliable reports he had received of the acquisition of air and naval base facilities by the US in Pakistan and by the proposals to transfer to Pakistan hi-tech spy and weapon systems through most of the next decade. All this while he had been told by US officials that they were sensitive to India's security concerns and its depleted hard-currency kitty.

> "The visit was significant for Gorbachev accorded Rajiv the status of a world leader while the latter fully endorsed the Soviet position at Reykjavik."

However, in their nearly 10 hours of private conversations, when the two leaders explored almost the entire field of international problems, they found themselves, in the words of a Soviet source, "in complete agreement on nearly every issue".

At the very first meeting, Rajiv described the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and Indian Independence in 1947 as two parallel historic events of this century that considerably weakened world imperialism. On SDI, Rajiv was as firmly negative as before. Like Gorbachev, he wanted the accord reached at Reykjavik to stand, and to be built upon in further talks between the superpowers. He "Indianised" the Gorbachev concept of Asia-Pacific security. This had been the Indian goal since Independence, he said. India's strivings in this direction were manifest in the Asian Relations Conference of 1946, in the Bandung Declaration, in non-alignment, in Panchsheel or the five principles of peaceful coexistence. The two leaders agreed that progress to that distant goal could only be made step by step, through bilateral, multilateral and regional efforts, roping in all nations, big and small.

The Soviet delegation was also pleased that Rajiv legitimised a Soviet role in building a non-military security system for the Asia-Pacific region: the USSR, he declared in his speech at the banquet on November 25, is an Asian power.

Rajiv's reference to the Indo-Soviet treaty elated the visiting Russians. They were doubtful about how the prime minister would see the treaty, which Moscow always perceives to be the foundation of the Indo-Soviet relationship. In the joint statement issued after their talks in Moscow in May last year, the treaty was described as a contribution to peace and stability in Asia and the world. This time, however, the prime minister placed the treaty in a bilateral, regional as well as global context, which was highly satisfying to the Soviet leadership. He stressed the treaty's edge of relevance in the currently-building security environment in South Asia: a clear message to Pakistan and its patrons that India could call upon the awesome resources of its time-tested friend in the event of a challenge to its frontiers and its independence.

A considerable portion of the talks between the two leaders, and at another level—or several levels—between ministers of the two governments, was devoted to actual exploration of ways and means to elevate cooperation to a higher level, though this would not be easy and will take years to do. Rajiv Gandhi told Gorbachev that there was a good deal in common in what both of them were trying to do in either's homeland; they could learn a lot from each other's experience. Both were trying to accelerate growth and development, both were modernising vast economies, both were fighting inertia, outdated dogmas and attitudes, corruption and routinism.

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At one stage in the talks, Gorbachev mentioned that the success of the modernisation and development efforts of the Soviet Union, India and China, countries in which one-half of mankind reside, would mean a tremendous change in the global situation.

Both Indian and Soviet sources pointed out that when the two leaders discussed regional issues—US arms for Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kampuchea, Nicaragua and South Africa—the quest was for constructive answers to the prevailing problems and the emphasis was on finding ways of dialogue and cooperation rather than conflict and confrontation. When China came up for a detailed survey, the effort once again was to explore ways of normalising Sino-Soviet and Sino-Indian relations on parallel lines.

A good summit is over, but its fall-out will have to be watched in the months ahead. The main question that is being asked in the diplomatic circles in New Delhi is whether the closeness established between India and the USSR on major controversial world issues would not chill the Reagan Administration's belated ardour for India's young and supposedly pro-western prime minister.

The Americans obviously did not relish Rajiv Gandhi's endorsement of the Soviet position at Reykjavik, but they were not surprised by it. What caused the most disappointment in US diplomatic circles was the prime minister's categorical commitment to the Indo-Soviet treaty, and his emphasis on its relevance in the context of recent developments in US-Pakistan relations. For Pakistan this had a grim message which that country's diplomats noted with deep concern.

In Chinese diplomatic circles, the summit's importance lay chiefly in what it might mean for Beijing's relations with Moscow and New Delhi, and for relations between India and Pakistan. China isn't going to hug the USSR until the Kampuchean issue is resolved with the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from that country. Members of the Gorbachev team confessed in private discussions that a Kampuchean breakthrough wasn't expected in the immediate future. Sino-Soviet relations would therefore normalise only slowly and undramatically. Chinese diplomats were curious to know if the summit would lead to a new Indian approach to China. This time will reveal.

required to be studied further. The lukewarm response is understandable since, as political commentator Nikhil Chakravarty wrote: "We can't let Gorbachev run away with our copyright."

THE Indian Government had consistently turned down the earlier Asian Security concept peddled by Leonid Brezhnev. The Brezhnev plan was presented to India on at least four occasions, but New Delhi did not respond mainly because it contained an in-built bias against China, and indirectly, the US. The Gorbachev concept is different in the sense that it calls for the involvement of all the concerned powers, including the US, but India is still not keen to being dragged, willy nilly, into a Soviet-sponsored initiative when it has already launched several initiatives on its own in forums like NAM and SAARC. The two sides also differ on the nuclear disarmament issue in relation to the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The Soviets firmly back the NPT and its attendant safeguards which India believes is discriminatory since it legitimises the right of the superpowers to maintain the nuclear edge while asking the newer nuclear club members to open up their installations to international inspection and control.

But in the present bilateral context, the Gorbachev visit has been a windfall for both sides. According to foreign policy analysts in Moscow, before the impetus given by the Gorbachev visit, Indo-Soviet relations were in a state of stagnation. The political reality is that the close ties between the two countries are often bugged by mutual incomprehension at one level, and indifference and hostility at another. Even at the best of times in Indo-Soviet relations, during the Khruschev-Nehru phase and during the Indira-Brezhnev period, when relations at the top were excellent, there was apathy, indifference and obstruction at lower levels.

The reasons are not a mystery. The incomprehension exists because the mutual perceptions of Moscow and New Delhi about each other are sometimes based on misunderstandings and sometimes on deliberate ambiguities in order to avoid aggravations. The apathy and obstruction comes from officials on both sides. Reports from Moscow indicate that Soviet policy makers believe that a strong pro-West lobby exists in South Block which is hostile to Indo-Soviet ties and has

Mrs Gandhi with Brezhnev in 1980: sentimental legacy

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

"Gone are the days when the intelligentsia used to warn that we should not get close to the Soviets. After Gorbachev's visit, the feeling is that we should get closer to the USSR than ever before. Rajiv did not seem to fawn over Gorbachev. Both leaders seemed to relate to each other as equals."

BEHRAM ANKLESERIA, 39
doctor, Ahmedabad

"Who? Gorbachev? I don't know him."

YADUNANDAN, 35
rickshaw puller, Kanpur

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no interest in furthering them. Thus, ideas and projects mooted at the highest levels often get bogged down below. For example, in the last quarter of a century, there has been repeated talk of joint industrial projects between the two countries. The topic always surfaces when the leaders of the two countries meet. But it has never got off the ground till the Gorbachev visit.

Another negative factor is the lack of subtlety and polish on the Soviet side. The mental horizon of Soviet officialdom and intelligentsia is tied up with the West, specially America. Nothing else matters. Once the hullabaloo and rhetoric of VIP meetings is over, their attention reverts to what is to them the more serious part of their foreign policy business: America, Europe and China, in that order, the order which is psychologically real to them.

In that sense, the Gorbachev visit has succeeded in giving a new and more permanent vitality to the relationship. Indian officials involved in the talks and the pre-visit discussions say that there has never been a visit by leaders on either side where the exchanges have been as frank and open-minded. More so, since both leaders have much that is in common. Their domestic compulsions are remarkably similar—the problems posed by a rigid and stifling bureaucracy which has become a major inhibiting factor in their mutual desire to hasten the pace of economic development and keep pace with technological advances in the West. Both have faced resistance in trying to usher in new ideological values. On the political front, both are saddled with a party structure and hierarchy that is unwieldy inefficient and out of step with popular public opinion and current realities. Says former Indian ambassador in Moscow, Inder Gujral: "The difference this time is that Rajiv and Gorbachev are both new faces on the political horizon, they have established a strong personal rapport and both have launched popularly appealing international initiatives. Whatever their apparent ideological differences, they know they can do business together."

The rapport between Rajiv and Gorbachev, evident during their first meeting in May last year, has obviously been enhanced and elevated to a level that transcends the limited bilateral plane. Whatever the eventual nuts and bolts outcome of the visit, the second honeymoon between Moscow and New Delhi promises not only to be more mature and meaningful but also to alter the course of world events.

—DILIP BOBB and INDERJIT BADHWAR with DEV MURARKA in Moscow

DEFENCE AGREEMENT

A Buyer's Market

THROUGH two decades of Indo-Soviet defence courtship the mood had never been so amorous. With the paranoia over the arming of Pakistan peaking on the eve of Gorbachev's visit the intensity of the relationship was only predictable.

Even as the shopping list began taking shape *(see box)* the Russians offered solace for each of India's apprehensions. Said an Indian official: "They had done their homework. They knew our needs till the turn of the century."

When India expressed concern about Pakistan acquiring the Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS), the Russians offered their Tu-124 Moss, a less sophisticated AWACS or their cheaper high-streaking fighters capable of blowing hostile AWACS out of the sky. To counteract the F-16s, the USSR advanced the delivery of MiG-29s by four months. The Russians also offered India more Kilo and Tango class submarines and TU-142M maritime reconnaissance aircraft.

Similarly, both the air force and the army's new aviation corps can look forward to getting more Mi-24 combat helicopters, a deadly force multiplier in land battle, and the Mi-26, the world's biggest transport helicopter, which carries 70 fully-armed troops or two trucks.

The Soviets suggested that the AWACS threat could be knocked out by a fast, high-altitude fighter armed with medium-range missiles. The defence grapevine is abuzz with reports that, rather than offer India the new MiG-31, the Soviets have proposed to sell it a deadly missile which India's MiG-25s could carry to shoot the AWACS.

India, however, wants the latest Soviet AWACS (known within NATO as Mainstay), built on an Il-76 air-frame. The Soviets did not say no but pleaded that the system was still far from perfect.

Arun Singh with Akhroneyev in Delhi

K. RAMESH

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Even more than the Soviet willingness to sell, what marked a change from the recent past was the Indian inclination to buy. For the past few years, Indian defence planners have made a conscious effort to diversify their sources of arms supply by buying from the West. But since the Weinberger visit to the region in October when the AWACS was offered to Pakistan, India's return to the trusted ally, even if rather hasty, was only to be expected.

"When the needs are pressing and urgent we have no choice but to go to the Soviets for purely economic reasons," says retired Lieutenant-General P.N. Kathpalia. The late General A.S. Vaidya had once eloquently said: "Sir Liddel Hart said that it is only fire-power, and fire-power that arrives at the right time and place that counts in modern war. But in our situation, it must also come at the right price."

Which is what the Russians offer. Besides the fact that it comes on rupee payment, the Soviet equipment costs a fraction of the price of comparable western equivalents. Says BJP MP and military commentator Jaswant Singh: "A T-72 tank in semi-knocked-down condition comes for just Rs 90 lakh. The German Leopard would cost many times more."

Defence sources also say that, contrary to the western suppliers, the Soviets have a vested interest in indigenisation. "The Soviets are not selling arms for profit. So they do not want to indulge in the French bania trick of making their millions on spares and retrofits," explains a senior official. Soviet production lines are overburdened by the demands from their own and the Warsaw Pact forces. They would be happy if India produced its own hardware under licence.

To encourage Indian production, the Soviets are buying some of the avionics produced for transport aircraft at the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) factory in Hyderabad. The surprise Soviet decision to buy the light Allouette helicopter of French origin produced by HAL could also be part of the same drive.

Strategically, both the Soviet and Indian threat perceptions point in the same direction. The Soviets worry about being bled in Afghanistan by guerrillas armed in Pakistan and the US-Pakistan-China axis is India's bugbear. Similarly, if the Pakistan-based AWACS gives India sleepless nights, it also makes the Russians feel naked.

And most vitally, if India develops a true blue-water navy, prowling the Indian Ocean up to Sumatra, the doorstep of ASEAN, and reaching the African front-line states, it will fit in with the Soviet strategy. It doesn't matter if India joins a defence pact with them or not. An Indian vessel on the high seas is, after all, a friendly vessel for them. Not surprisingly, the Soviets have been keen to sell their Tu-142M naval reconnaissance aircraft which is acclaimed by Indian officers as "an aircraft which can fly right up to South Africa and back without refuelling".

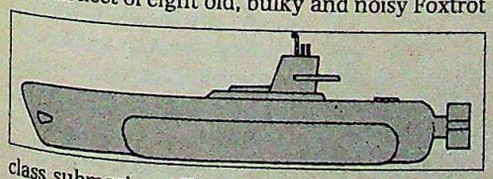
For the Soviets too, arms supply to India has another crucial purpose. India's use of Soviet arms has provided them vital reassurance, since they are not exactly enthused by the performance of their arms in the Middle East. Says K. Subrahmanyam, director of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses: "When the Soviets gave arms to Egypt they became a gift to Israel. The arms to Syria are also a gift to Israel. But we have used the same arms to defeat the same western equip-

SHOPPING LIST

India's current shopping list for the Soviet equipment contains these major items:

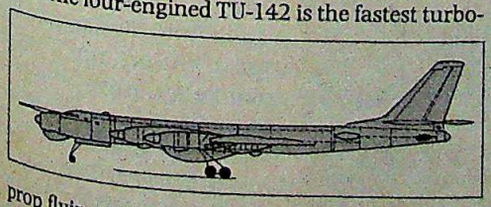
SAM-11 surface-to-air missiles: For the forward army units. The SAM-11 has a four-headed multiple launcher, a better radar, a good Identify Friend and Foe (IFF) system and a range of 15 km.

Tango and Kilo class submarines: To beef up the current fleet of eight old, bulky and noisy Foxtrot



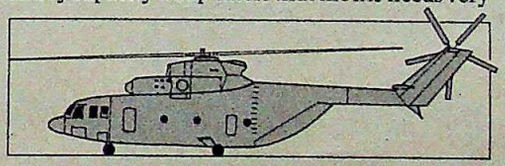
class submarines. They are quieter, have better range, detection ability and fire-power.

TU-142 Bear maritime reconnaissance aircraft: For the navy's overburdened fleet of three Soviet Il-38s. The four-engined TU-142 is the fastest turbo-



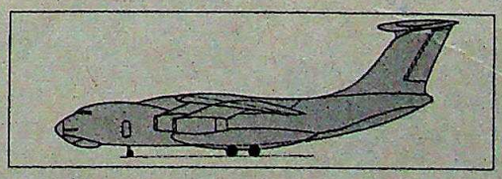
prop flying today. It has good electronics and an effective range of 13,000 km. It would be the navy's eyes and ears over the whole Indian Ocean.

Mi-17 and Mi-26 helicopters: The medium and heavy capacity troop-lifters that the IAF needs very



badly. Mi-26, which carries 70 fully-armed troops, is the largest transport helicopter in the world.

More Il-76 transports and Kamov Ka-25 helicopters: To strengthen the IAF's long-range troop lifting capacity. Its limited fleet has lately been



under pressure because of the frequent airlift of paramilitary forces in and out of the disturbed areas. The Kamovs will add to the navy's anti-submarine muscle.

New missiles and electronics: To help the IAF face the AWACS threat and enhance its electronic counter counter-measures (ECCM) capability.

"By vastly overplaying the friend-in-need theme in relation to the Soviets, we close our options elsewhere. Our failure to buy the TOW anti-tank missile from the US is an example."

LT.-GENERAL I.S. GILL
(retired)

"When the needs are pressing and urgent, we have no choice but to go to the Soviets for purely economic reasons."

LT.-GENERAL P.N. KATHPALIA
(retired)

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ment. It is a happy thought for the Russians." The Soviets also appreciate India's imaginative use of weapons. In the 1971 war, for example, the IAF used the AN-12 transport as an effective bomber and the navy used the defensive Osa class missile boats in a strike raid on Karachi.

On the negative side, the Soviets do not allow the export of arms produced under their licence. They also dislike the feverish Indian pitch to seek armament technology from the West. The ambitious Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) and Main Battle Tank (MBT) projects are seen as part of a breakaway effort. In fact, Indian success on the MBT coincided with the setting up of a T-72 factory at Medak. The Soviets had to be repeatedly reassured the T-72 project would go on as scheduled.

HOWEVER, by now, the Soviets have accepted the Indian quest for domestic production as a fact of life, something admitted by officials accompanying Gorbachev. So they have changed tactics. "They are no longer saying, do not design your own weapons. They are only saying, let us help you design," says a general. Obviously concerned about the reopening of Indo-US defence ties last month with the finalisation of the sale of 11 GE-404 engines for the LCA prototypes, the Soviets wanted to know why India did not come to them for a suitable engine.

Apart from such possessiveness, complications have often arisen with Soviet equipment in the field. Some of this is due to doctrinal differences. The Soviet weapons are sturdy, low on technology and high on fuel consumption. "They make their stuff heavy and strong because they have so much oil. We buy oil with dollars," complains an Indian officer.

On the operational side, the IAF has often felt that Soviet systems do not match up with what the US gives Pakistan. It has had problems with every new Soviet aircraft. When the first MiG-21 squadron was raised in 1963-64, the pilots hated it as it just carried two measly short-range missiles and no gun. But the Soviets accepted India's request to mount an external gun on the fuselage.

Similarly, problems cropped up with the next major Soviet acquisition by the IAF—the Sukhoi-7 fighter-bomber. The aircraft was bought as a post-1965 war replacement and accounted for a bulk of the Indian losses in the 1971 war with Pakistan. Though it was argued that India had tactically misused the aircraft in the more vulnerable ground support role, no further order for it was made.

The IAF's latest acquisitions, MiG-23 variants, have also had problems due to their high accident rate. Two new Soviet AN-32 transport aircraft crashed in March this year shortly after an Il-76 sold to India overshot the runway and was damaged in Tashkent. The incidents caused consternation as the Soviets blamed the accident on pilot error and the pro-West lobby in New Delhi took an I-told-you-so stance on Soviet technology. There was also mutual embarrassment in 1981 when one of the first MiG-25 reconnaissance aircraft bought by India crashed shortly after take-off. It was being flown by a Soviet pilot.

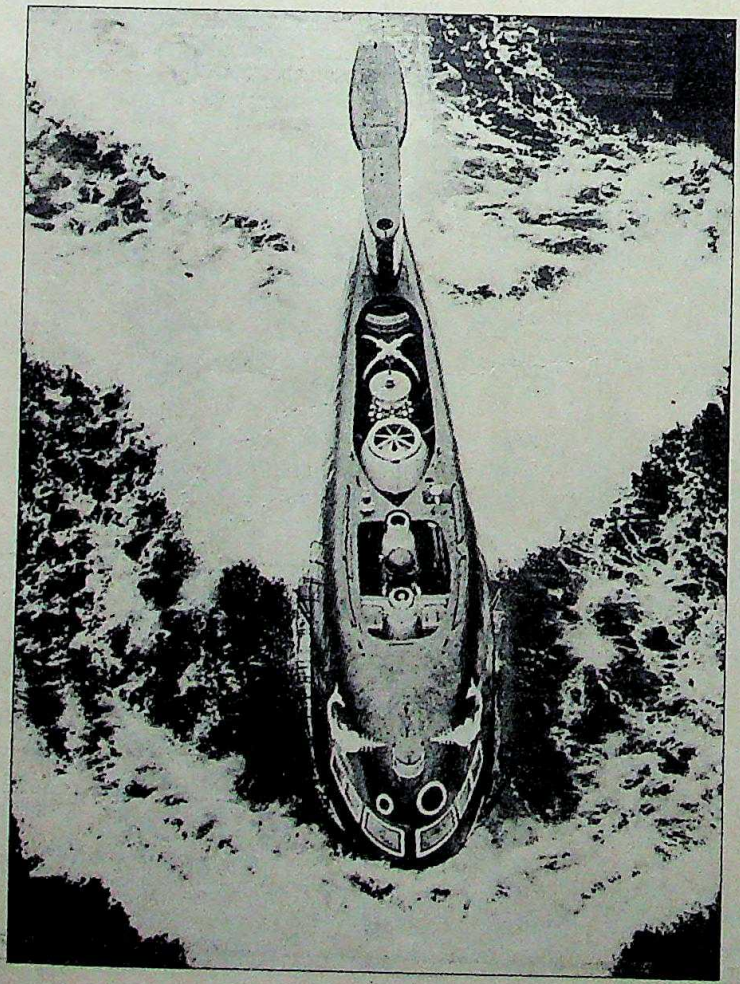
The army had a serious problem with surface-to-air missiles bought in 1977 to defend the air bases in the Punjab sector. Needed urgently, these took nine months to land at Cochin, and when they reached Ambala, the warranty period had lapsed. The deployment had to wait till a new protocol was signed. The Soviets said the Bering Sea froze after the ship's loading at Archangel but Indian officers pointed to carelessness. Ironically, the missiles were unusable for two more years due to their primitive radar and an Identify Friend and Foe (IFF) system which could have destroyed the IAF's own planes.

These are only a few of the instances quoted by the critics of Soviet equipment. Says retired Lieutenant-General I.S. Gill who, as the chief of the Western Command in 1979, wrote a controversial letter to *The Times of India* criticising Indian reliance on Russia: "By vastly overplaying the friend-in-need theme in relation to the Soviets, we close our options elsewhere. Our failure to buy the TOW anti-tank missile, which we needed, from the US, is an example of this." But he also says that the Russians exercise no influence in our defence decision-making. Gill was director of military operations in the 1971 war and recalls: "There was no interference in the Operations Room though they often passed phony intelligence predicting Pakistani attacks."

As long as the Soviets keep that vital distance, keep selling their arms cheap but without obvious preconditions and keep offering the best in their cupboard, there seems to be no stopping the Indo-Soviet arms relationship from growing stronger. And along with it, doubts will grow as to its likely impact on Indian foreign policy. It is widely accepted that, in international diplomacy, no dependence is as dangerous as the dependence on arms supply. Last week's deliberations are not exactly a step towards dependence. But these would certainly dampen the recent flirtation with western suppliers. Only if India manages to push its own arms development programme while retaining its options on western technology and, at the same time, fulfills its current needs with cheaper Soviet technology, would it be a bargain well-struck.

—SHEKHAR GUPTA

Indian Navy's Foxtrot submarines



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ECONOMIC TIES

Ambitious Plans

TILL weeks before the Gorbachev visit, Indo-Soviet economic relations seemed to have plateaued, and lost virtually all momentum. As a trading partner, the Soviet Union had been finding it increasingly difficult to offer goods acceptable to India. And its main export item, oil, had dropped sharply in value, leaving India with a large trade surplus. Financial credits extended when Leonid Brezhnev visited New Delhi in 1980 had still not been fully utilised. And with the Soviet Union falling behind in technology, numerous Indian public sector companies that had initially been set up with Soviet help—like Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd, Instrumentation Ltd, and the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC)—had turned to the West for new technical collaborations. Also, all the emerging areas of industrial growth—automobiles, electronics, petrochemicals—were aligned technologically with either the West or Japan. The Soviet Union had no role.

Now, suddenly, things are beginning to look different. Indeed, despite all the national security concerns uppermost in people's minds before the Gorbachev visit, it is trade and economic ties that have witnessed a major breakthrough. The Soviet Union has extended to India credits on a scale that is unprecedented, bilateral trade is now targeted to almost quadruple in just six years, and a beginning has quickly been made in tying up joint ventures between Soviet and Indian companies (including private firms).

The 1.5 billion-rouble credit, in addition to the billion roubles offered last year when Rajiv visited Moscow, make for a total of about Rs 3,000 crore in barely 20 months: twice the sum offered in the previous three decades. Said a senior official in the Ministry of External Affairs: "Their generosity took us completely by surprise, and we had to scramble around to find the projects that could be financed with this credit."

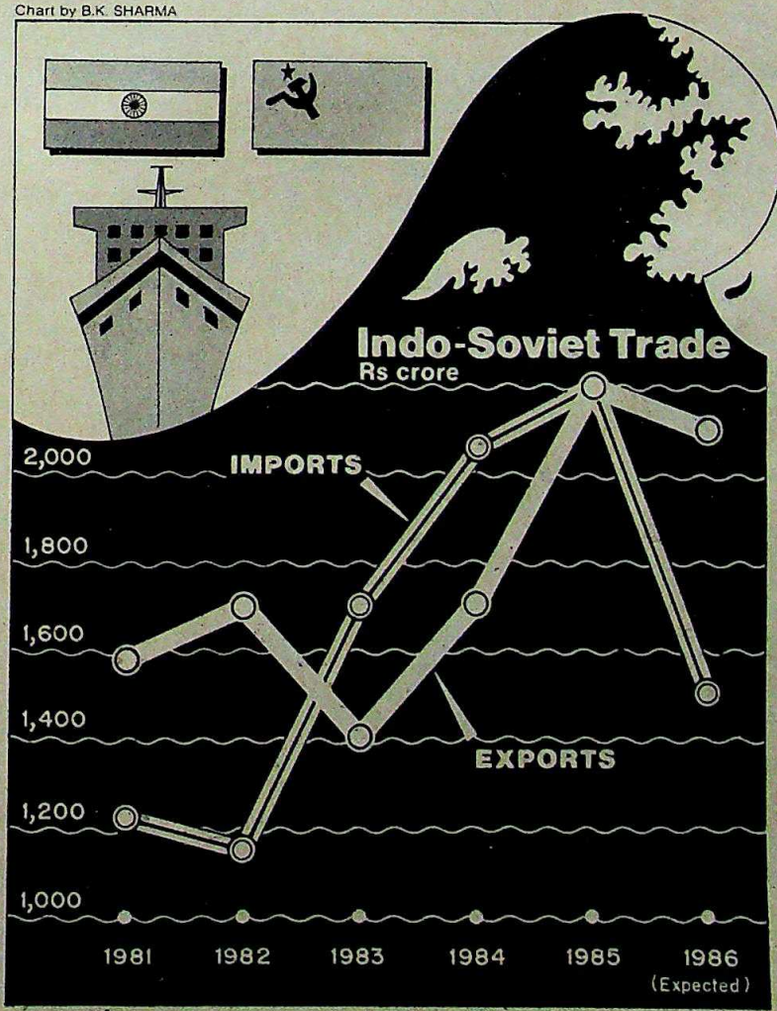
On the trade front, the Soviet problem of finding goods to sell to India had earlier meant that the trade target of Rs 7,000 crore for 1990 would be difficult to meet (mutual trade in 1986 is not expected to cross Rs 3,600 crore). Now, the 1990 target has not only been re-affirmed, but the new target for 1992 is Rs 13,000 crore. To achieve this, all manner of innovations are being considered: greater private sector involvement, co-production arrangements, and fresh Indo-Soviet cooperation in the areas of traditional Russian strength: coal, oil, power and steel. Indeed, five Indian companies have already finalised joint ventures with Soviet firms.

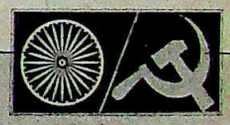
Even Finance Minister V.P. Singh stands to benefit. For, in an unusual decision, some of the Soviet project aid will be used to finance rupee-costs as well. On the one hand, this helps find money for the Tehri hydro-electric project (2,400 MW), which has been stuck for want of funds. On the other, the credit goes straight into the Central budget which has been faced with a burgeoning deficit problem.

So, far from questions being asked about the logic of continuing with the rupee trade arrangements that govern Indo-Soviet trade, and despite the Soviet delegation asking for still further devaluation of the rupee (which India resisted), the Gorbachev visit has resulted in economic ties between the two countries getting an enormous boost. Said an official in the Prime Minister's Secretariat: "This goes well beyond what we had anticipated." Added an official in the Commerce Ministry: "The Soviet Union is planning to step up exports world-wide of machinery and high-value items. We will buy more too."

In the next few years, following from the new agreements, several companies could expect to sign up joint ventures with the Soviet Union. Thus, Chinar Exports (one of the leading export houses dealing with the Soviet Union) now plans to launch a joint venture to make electronic guns for television tubes. Says Managing

Chart by B.K. SHARMA





"People think the Russians are unfriendly and a difficult country to deal with. But if you keep within the limits set down, everything goes like clockwork."

KISHOR JAIN
chief executive
Baboobhai Patel & Co.

"My experience with the Soviet Union has been good. They are very straightforward and will not let you down. Once you're in, you're in."

B.S. KALRA
general manager (exports)
Indian Reprographic Systems

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Director H.S. Sandhu: "The Soviet Government has shown interest. We will use their technology and our labour reservoir to mutual advantage."

Several such joint ventures are in the offing. The India-USSR Chamber of Commerce and Industry, set up earlier this year, has identified over 100 potential ventures. Neftechimpromexport, the Soviet organisation that has in the past helped set up oil refineries in India, has now written to the chamber suggesting that it "investigate the possibilities for setting up production of carbon black" with its collaboration. It has also offered assistance for petrochemical complexes, chemical and fertiliser plants, tyre factories, pulp and paper plants and cryogenic units. The Soviets are also offering commercial rouble loans. And leading Indian hotel chains have been invited to open hotels in the USSR.

The shift towards the private sector, while searching for joint ventures and co-production arrangements, follows an earlier shift towards it for trade purposes. And State Trading Corporation (STC) Chairman Sudhir Mulji confesses: "A great deal of STC business with the Soviet Union has been taken over by private parties in garments, coffee and fruit." This is ironic because STC was set up partly to trade with the Soviet bloc. Mulji now hopes to offer STC's services again: "I am not saying we would like to compete with the private parties to bring the business back to STC, but to look for new areas."

Dr Jayashekar of the Jawaharlal Nehru University points out that the real wooing of India's private sector began some two years ago, when large delegations from the private sector were invited to the Soviet Union. But he as well as other observers have their doubts about how far this process can go—because of the lack of proven Soviet technology in several areas, private sector bias in favour of the West, and the language problem. On the technology question, at least, the Gorbachev drive to modernise his economy may improve matters.

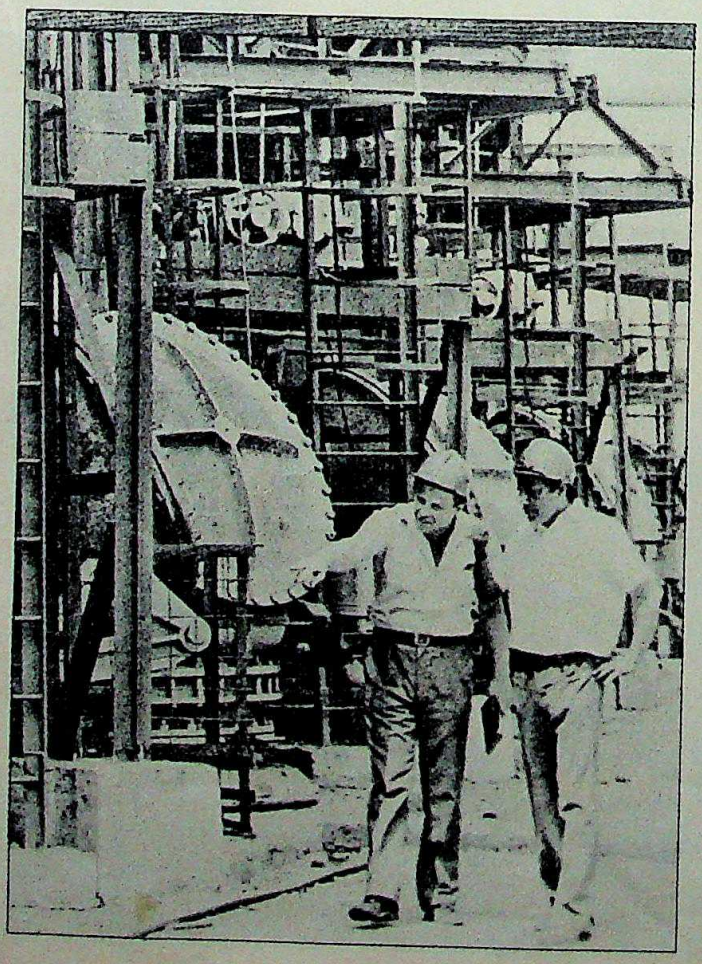
Critics also refer to the questionable nature of the rice trade with the Soviet Union, charging that it is used to channel money to friendly political parties in India, and point to numerous products in which the Soviet Union is alleged to have indulged in switch trade: bought from India against rupee payment and sold in the West in return for dollars. But these charges have never been proved.

Most of the growth in trade in the recent past has been because the Soviet Union has increasingly turned to Indian companies for cosmetics and other consumer goods. Dabur India, for instance, exports Helena Rubinstein eyebrow pencils and blushers, and is now setting up a factory near Delhi exclusively for exports. As much as 40 per cent of exports overseen by the Chemicals Export Promotion Council now go to the Soviet Union. As the Soviet Union gets more prosperous, this can be expected to increase still further. Even traditional exports like tea and coffee now have the Soviet Union as their biggest buyer (one-third of coffee exports go to the USSR). And in the manufacturing sector, entire projects are set up with the Soviet market in mind, a case in point being the Modi tie-up with Xerox.

Inevitably, because the Soviet buyers tend to completely shut off the tap every now and then, fears are expressed about the dangers of such dependence. Numerous units have had to close down in the past because Soviet orders stopped overnight. Said K. Ramani, executive director of the Plastics and Linoleums Export Promotion Council: "In spectacle frames, some Kandla units had to close down because the Russians got German technology and set up their own units." Added the director of an Indian drug firm that exports to the USSR: "The USSR should be willing to sign longer-term contracts, instead of just one-year deals."

The privatisation that has already taken place in Indo-Soviet trade has, meanwhile, built up a considerable business lobby in India that is in favour of expanded economic relations between the two countries. And quite clearly, if the new impetus resulting from the agreements reached during the Gorbachev visit leads to new collaborations and more trade, Indo-Soviet economic relations will be on a firmer footing than had seemed likely till the other day.

—T.N. NINAN with bureau reports



Soviet and Indian technicians at Bokaro steel plant: new deal

"The Soviets did a wonderful job. They had a very helpful attitude, and from the first day they made Indian engineers take the decisions."

S.P. SINGH
director, BHEL

"The biggest problem is that the Soviets don't buy the same items year after year. They bought Rs 30 crore of detergents in 1982–83, and none the next year. So many companies were caught flat-footed."

RAMU S. DEORA
chairman, Chemexil

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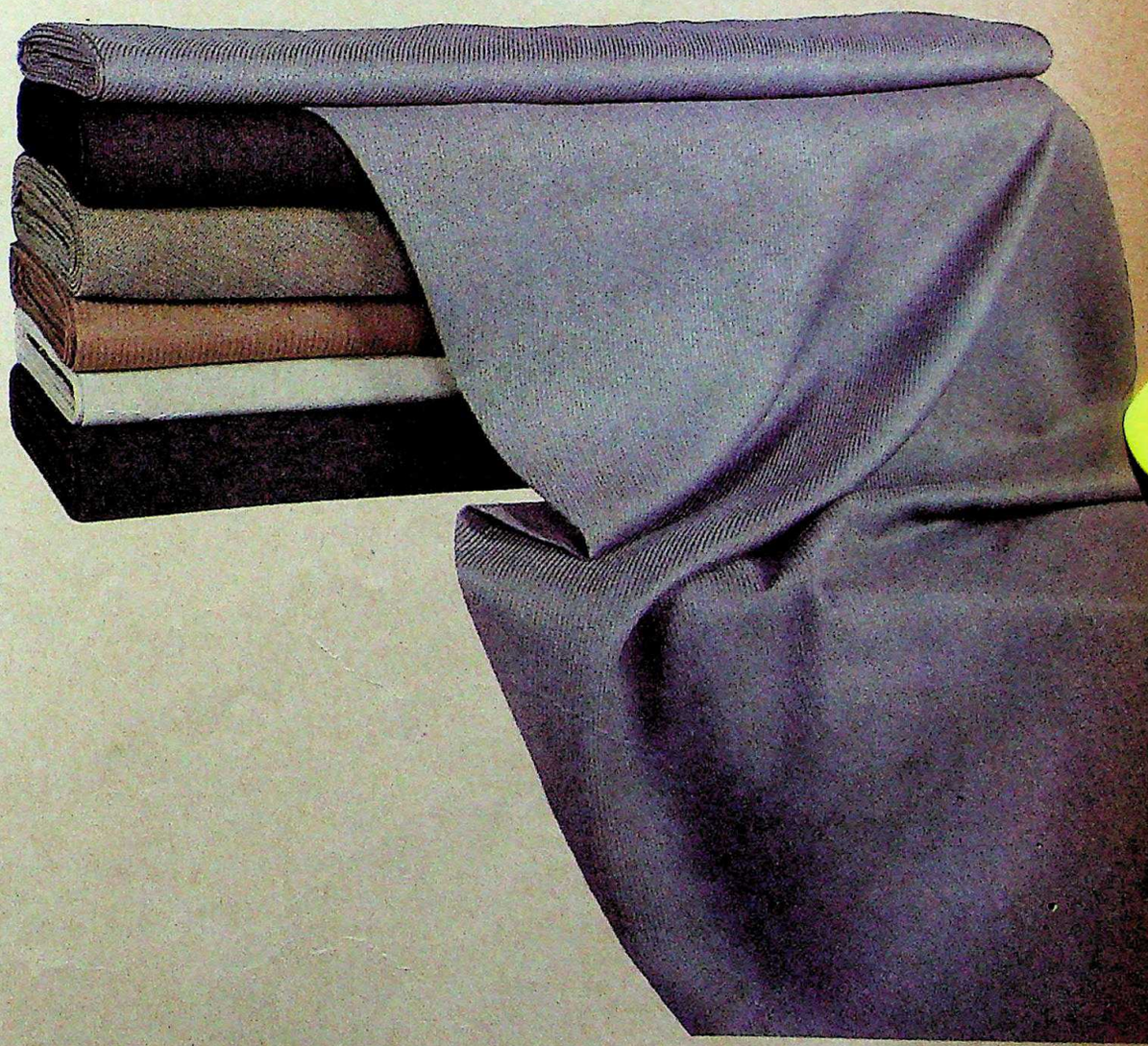

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ANDHRA PRADESH

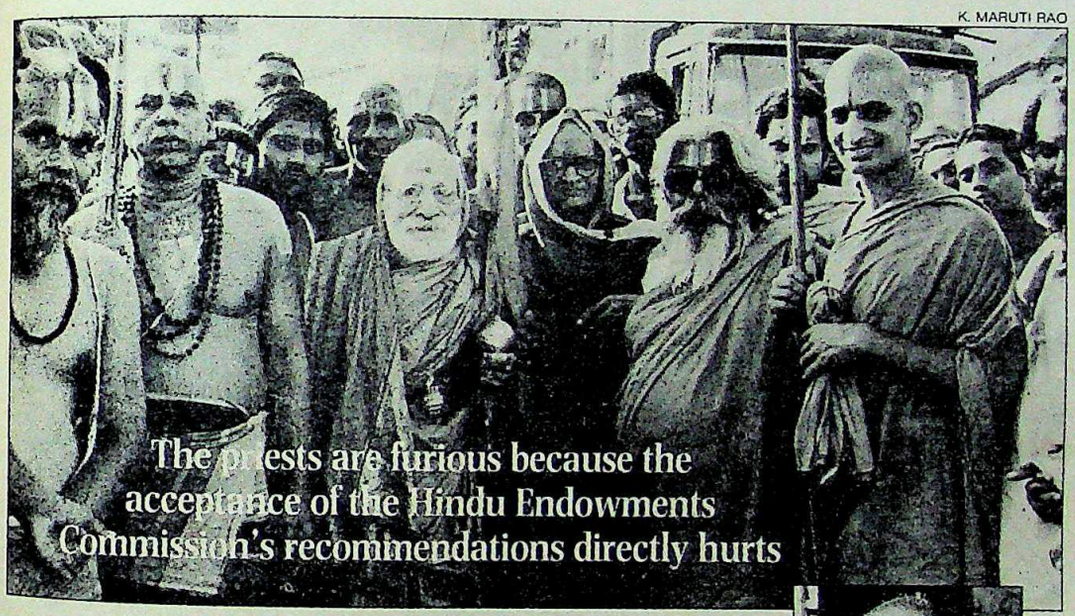
Priestly Protests

ANDHRA Pradesh's Hindu clergy had declared it as *atmavalokanam* day, or a day for soul-searching. November 16, however, saw not tranquillity but loud protestations. At several places, on that auspicious occasion of the full moon, they slammed doors in the face of devotees who were streaming in to worship. The priestly ire was sparked off by the state Government's decision to accept all the 276 recommendations of the Hindu Endowments Commission's report, made public in May 1986. The commission was headed by former chief justice Challa Kondaiah.

At a rally in Vijayawada, temple priests raged that the 1,200-page, three-volume report was a sacrilege and accused its authors of being ignorant of the basic tenets of the Hindu Shastras. The head of the recently-formed Sampradaya Parirakshana Samithi, Tridandi Chinna Srimanarayana Ramanuja Jeer, said: "The report reminds me of the so-called expert who remarked that the Mahabharata stated there was no God."

The three most unpopular recommendations were the abolition of hereditary rights to the post of priesthood and their share in offerings, auction of temple land to raise money for better maintenance, and amalgamation of the Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanom (TTD) with the Endowments Commissionerate. And even among these, the most hated suggestion was hereditary rights. At the Vijayawada conclave, religious heads felt that it was tantamount to the Government "meddling in the religious affairs of the Hindu community".

A new twist was also added when the secretaries of the Shankaracharya of Kanchi and Jagadguru Bharathi Theertha of the Sri Sharadapeetham issued statements denying that the two religious heads in their depositions before the commission had favoured abolition of hereditary system. They—along with others—complained that their statements were wrongly recorded, sometimes distorted and in one case omitted by the commission.



K. MARUTI RAO

The priests are furious because the acceptance of the Hindu Endowments Commission's recommendations directly hurts

Religious leaders at Vijayawada rally; and (inset) Yethiraja Roy: noisy row

Jagadguru Sri Trivikrama Ramananda Bharathi Swami of Coutrallam Peetham—a former member of the Kondaiah Commission who was later dropped—charged that several suggestions made by him at the second meeting of the commission were not even noted down. Indirectly referring to Chief Minister Rama Rao, whose guru he once was, he remarked: "People talk of the Vedas, Hindu religion and traditions facing dangers. It is like saying electricity is dangerous only if someone tampers with it out of ignorance." Rama Rao, refused to react to these comments.

The commission in its report had stated that the majority—2,190 of the 2,768 surveyed—favoured the abolition of the system of hereditary priesthood and was for the recruitment of priests through employment exchanges. However, Ramanuja Jeer argued that hereditary rights could be suspended only when the priest was unfit to perform his duties or had a bad reputation.

At present only 5,135 of the 32,153 temples in the state have hereditary priests. But it is the bigger and richer temples that stand to lose the most if the report is implemented. In the case of TTD temples, the loss to priestly families is estimated at around Rs 1.20 crore per annum.

State Endowment Minister N. Yethiraja Rao, in a bid to defuse the situation, held out the assurance that none of the priests would be removed but only be replaced by a qualified priest on retirement. Plans are also afoot to set up schools for priests to provide crash courses in order to equip them with the prescribed qualifications as laid down by the commission. Yethiraja Rao felt that the controversy was the handiwork of those who were against the posting of Harijans as priests. "If they say so openly they can be prosecuted under the civil rights laws," he remarked.

The state Bharatiya Janata Party General Secretary M. Venkaiah Naidu, however, blamed the Government for mishandling the situation. Said he: "To gain support, it has permitted an impression to grow that the reforms are aimed at one particular caste. It should have dealt with this socially sensitive issue with tact."

Meanwhile the *archakas* are planning to intensify their agitation with the support of the Shankaracharyas and Jagadgurus even as the Government is preparing a draft law on temple reforms in the light of the recommendations. Religious passions may be inflamed further when another commission set up to look into the charges of malpractices in the TTD submits its report next February.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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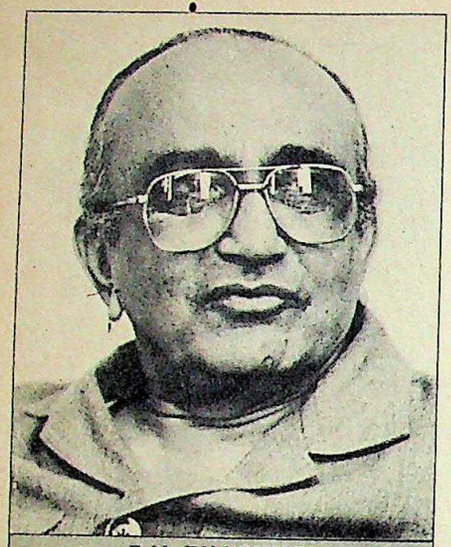
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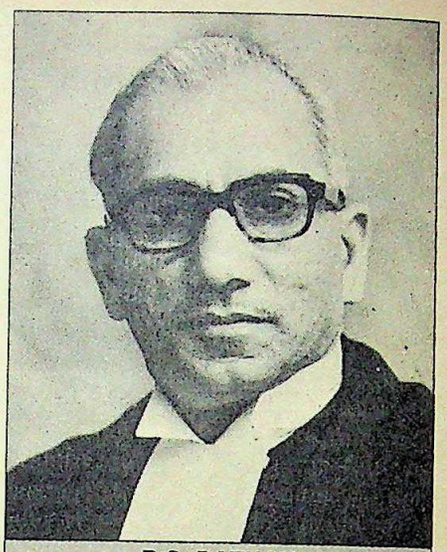
ZAIL SINGH


R.S. PATHAK

JUDICIARY

Presidential Tact

MOST members of the public are convinced that the role of the President is purely ceremonial, little realising that his handling—or mishandling—of delicate matters of state can cause considerable embarrassment to the ruling party. In fact, last fortnight, it was presidential intervention which not only salvaged the prestige of the judiciary and the office of the chief justice of India but also saved the Government from embarrassment.

In an unprecedented move, President Giani Zail Singh summoned Chief Justice P.N. Bhagwati to Rashtrapati Bhavan and consulted him on the Government's proposal to appoint Justice R.S. Pathak as the next chief justice of the Supreme Court—a statutory requirement that the Prime Minister's secretariat had incredibly overlooked. The presidential initiative was necessitated when the Secretariat sent the file for the chief justice's appointment to the President minus the recommendation of the outgoing chief justice of India. According to regulations, the Law Ministry sends the final suggestion to the President only after it has solicited the views of the retiring chief justice and the opinions of other senior sitting judges of the Supreme Court.

The process of choosing the new chief justice began in October when the Union Cabinet turned down a proposal to raise the retirement age of the chief justice from 65 to 68. For the last year, the Law Ministry and the Central Government have been examining a package of judicial reforms which included proposals to raise salaries and perks of high court and Supreme Court judges and also the retirement age of the chief justice. While the salary hike was agreed to, the proposal raising the age limit was put on the back burner since Rajiv felt that it would not be advisable to go through the whole exercise of a constitutional amendment required for raising the age limit. Also, it was believed in judicial circles that if the proposal came through then Bhagwati would automatically get an extension before he retired in December and the Government would be open to charges of favouritism.

The President summoned Bhagwati to consult him on the proposed appointment of Pathak—a statutory requirement that the Prime Minister's Secretariat had incredibly overlooked

With the proposal having being rejected, Law Minister Asoke Sen set the ball rolling for the appointment of Pathak, the senior-most judge in the Supreme Court as the next chief justice. On October 16, 1986, he wrote a confidential letter to Bhagwati stating that the Government proposed to elevate Pathak as the new chief justice. While Sen adhered to the procedure in the case of Bhagwati, he ignored Justice O. Chinappa Reddy the third senior-most Supreme Court justice in his consultations. Instead, he sought the opinion of Justice M.P. Thakkar, Justice E.S. Venkatramaiah and Justice Sabyasachi Mukherji, all three of whom concurred with Sen's suggestion that Pathak was an appropriate choice. But Bhagwati himself did not react to Sen's letter till November 12, almost a month later. Meanwhile, the Law Ministry, without bothering to remind Bhagwati or call him over for final discussions, chose to send the file to the prime minister for his approval. The Prime Minister's Secretariat forwarded it to the President.

The file landed in Rashtrapati Bhavan when the President was on a foreign trip. When the file was put up to him on November 12, he noticed the missing recommendation of the chief justice of India. Bhagwati was summoned to Rashtrapati Bhavan and during the half hour discussion, President Zail Singh urged Bhagwati to create a healthy practice by concurring with the Government's proposal which Bhagwati finally did. When he left Rashtrapati Bhavan, it was recorded on the file that the President had discussed the matter with the chief justice who had no objection to Pathak's appointment as his successor. The President then sent the appointment letter back to the Prime Minister's Secretariat with the added note, thus sparing the sight of a lot of red-faces in the Law Ministry and the Prime Minister's Secretariat who seemed to have forgotten the law.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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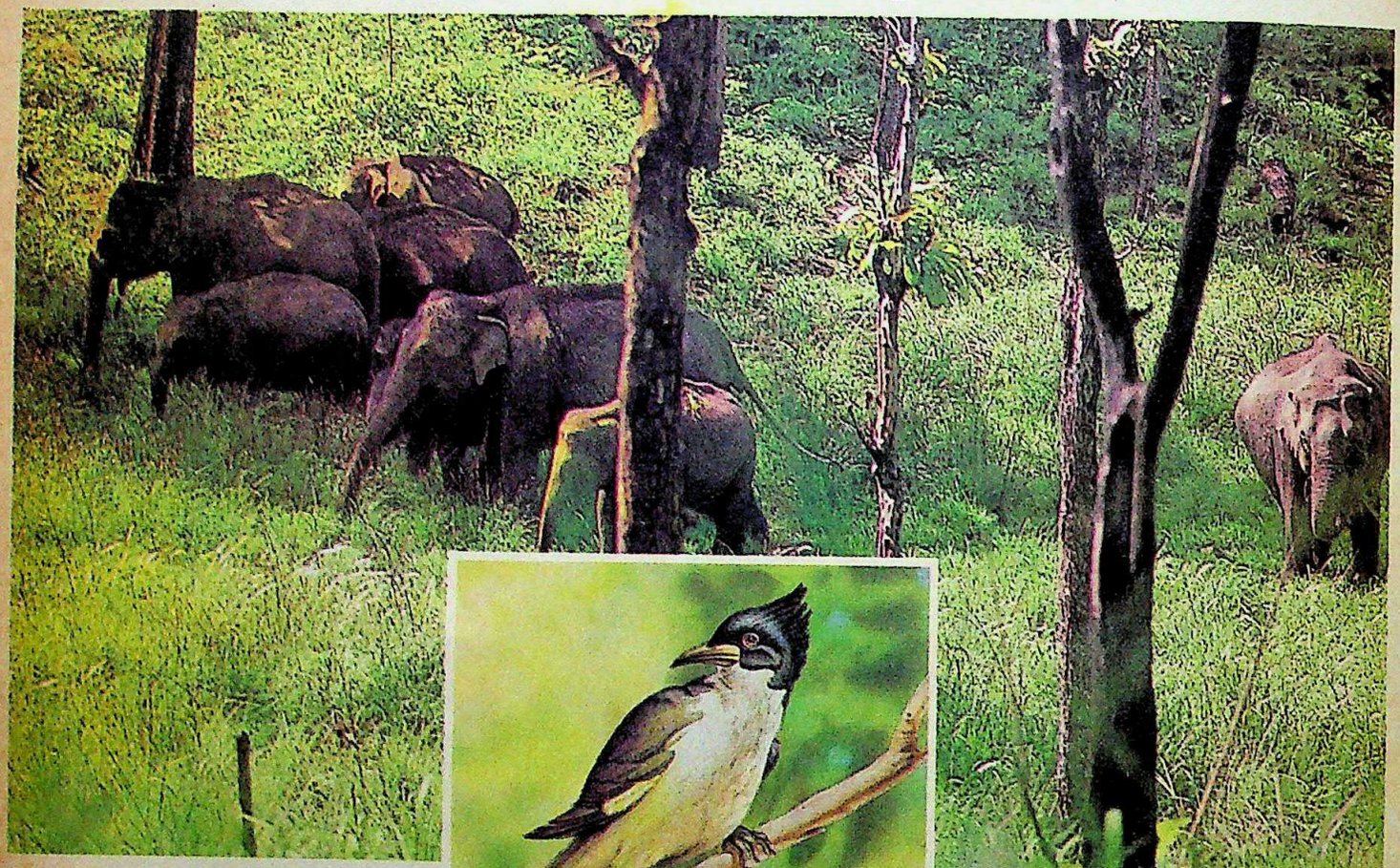
The frenzied bird-call starts again... what strange visions disturb the peace of the papiha?



Perhaps it dreams of the beautiful forests sunk fathoms deep beneath the spreading waters of the Periyar Lake. Maybe it fears the occasional glimpse of the elusive tiger as it stalks its prey... no one will ever know for sure. But the papiha calls unceasingly, while the world dismisses it as the "brain-fever" bird. All other inhabitants — the elephants, antelopes, bison, sambhar and the monkeys seem restful enough. Come, cruise around this lake and become a part of this peaceful co-existence.

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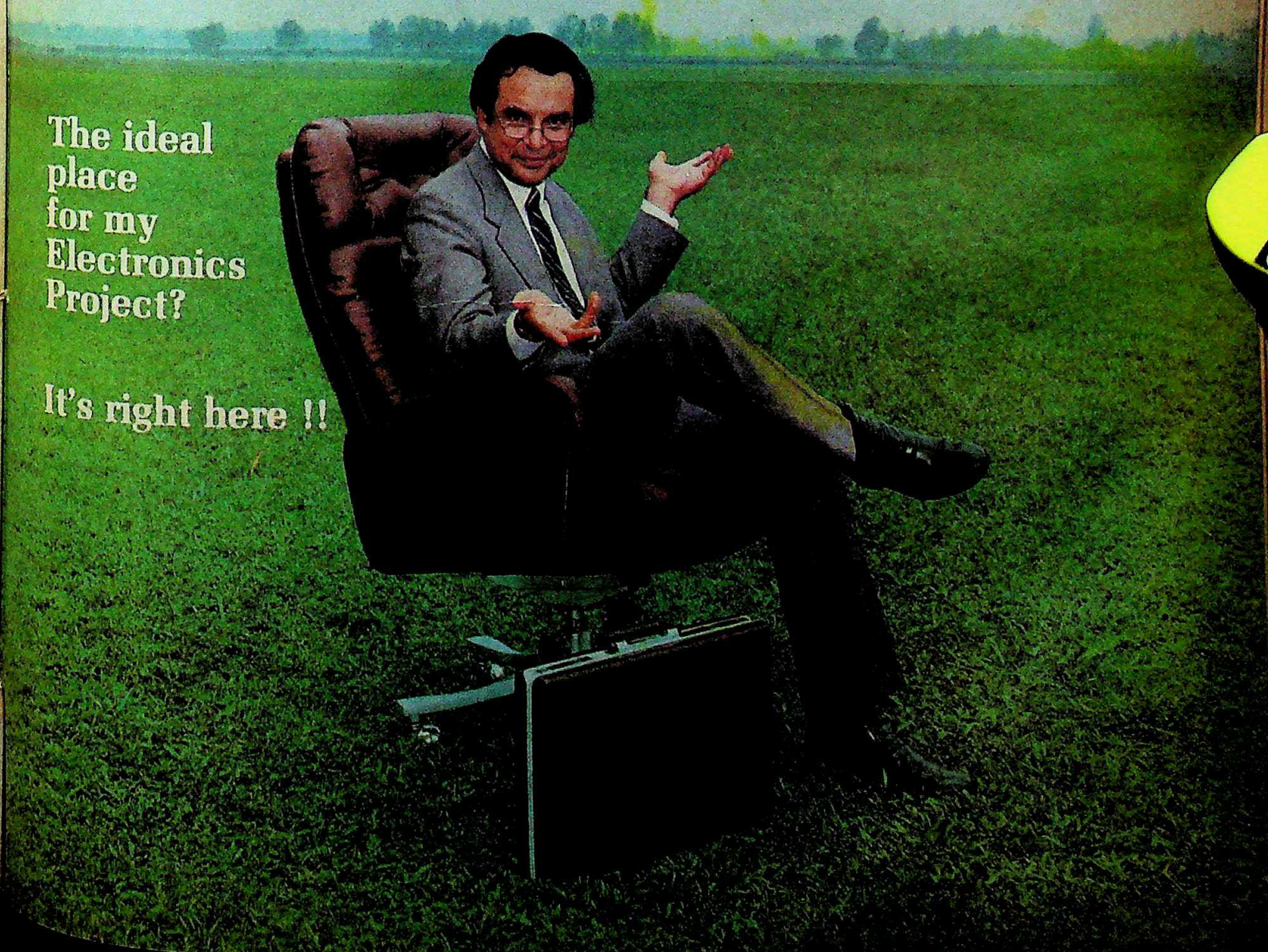

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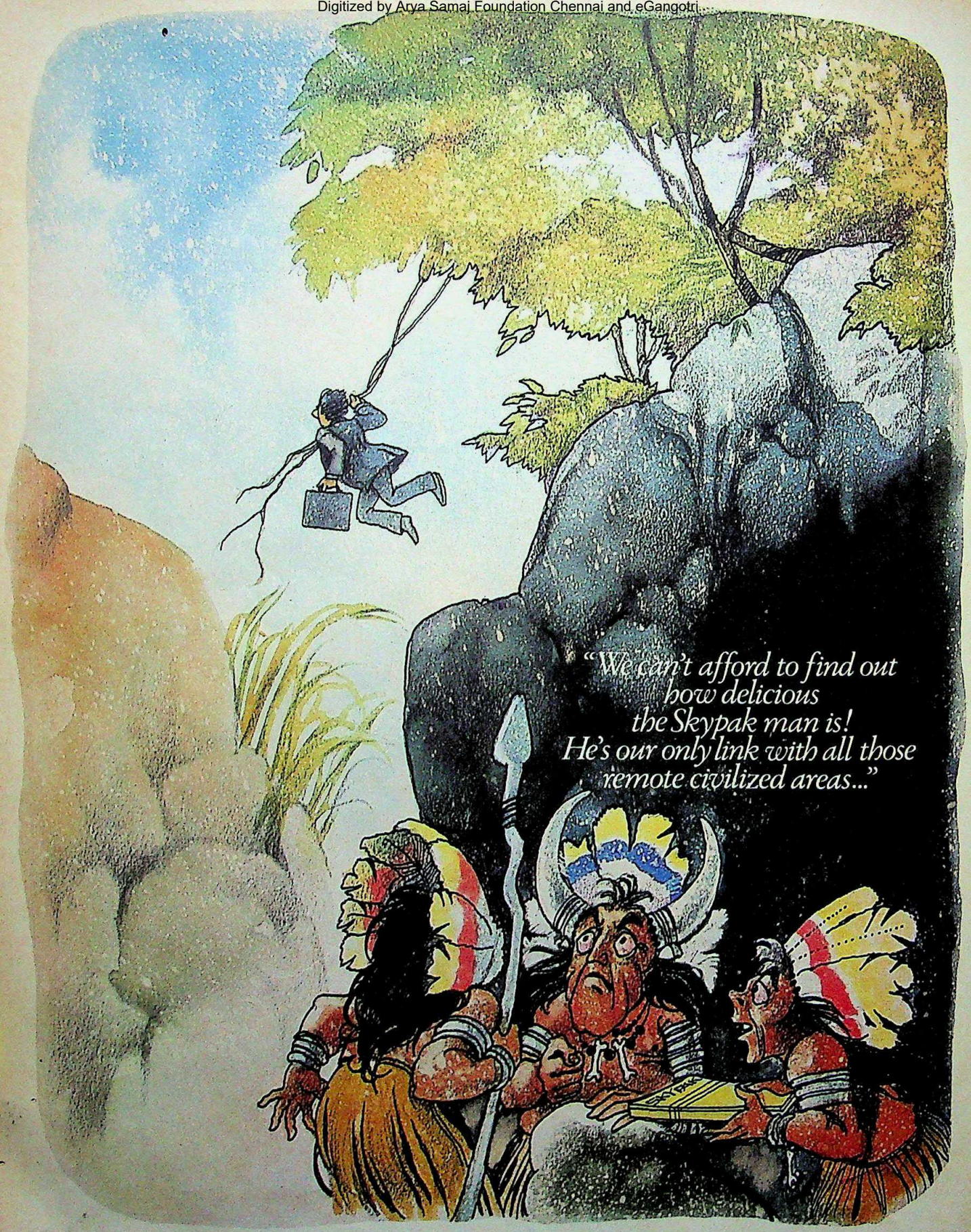

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Shady Shares

ABDUL Shamji, Raj Sethia, Mahmud Sipra, are all names of Asian millionaire businessmen who were in dire straits in Britain in recent times. One more name has now cropped up: that of 38-year-old Chander Singh, head of the controversial Ravendale share dealing enterprise.

His two share shops—one located strategically at New Bond Street—were forced to shut down last fortnight by investigating officials from Britain's Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). His share shops offered commission-free dealing in a variety of shares. The DTI's investigations were prompted by a combination of client complaints, late payments and the filing of wind-up petitions against other Ravendale companies. The fraud squad of the metropolitan police is also investigating complaints from dissatisfied clients of city investment centres and Ravendale securities, a former market maker founded by Singh some ten years ago, whilst a private investor is suing Singh's Ravendale group for £450,000 in connection with shares in British Telecom which he alleges that he never received.

THE OBSERVER

BUSINESS

Big bang for Singh's share shops

Singh: 'We'll pay in full'

DTI: Regulation in disarray

A local Sunday paper, *The Observer* has been campaigning for the last three years over the pitfalls of investing through licensed dealers and Singh's Ravendale share dealing enterprise had come in for special scrutiny. The paper has been served with at least four libel writs concerning Ravendale and its associates. The paper says it is now "vigorously defending the two writs that remain active".

Battle for Shiva

A fascinating courtroom battle concerning the ownership of a peerless Shiva Nataraja idol is currently unfolding at the Queen's bench division at the London High Court. The unlikely contestants for the exquisite mid-10th century Chola dynasty bronze statue valued at over £1 million are the Government of India and the Bumper Development Corporation (BDC), a Canadian oil company. The Union of India and the state of Tamil Nadu are arguing that the Shiva Nataraja statue was stolen from the Arul Thiru Vishwanatha Temple in Pathur (Thanjavur district in Tamil Nadu) in 1976 and allegedly smuggled out of Bombay. The BDC has claimed that they purchased the statue through mediators in London in 1982. The BDC had then sent the statue to the British Museum for cleaning but a lynx-eyed officer spotted it and reported to Scotland Yard. The latter impounded the statue and BDC filed a suit for its return. The Indian Government made a counter claim and is suing BDC and the metropolitan police.

Determined Indian officials are sparing no expense in their bid to win this landmark case that involves not just English law but invokes a complex range of traditions, Hindu law, worship, and Hindu mythology, Indian history and art and international conventions which bar "export and import of cultural property". Giving crucial evidence on behalf of the Union of India is Dr Nagaswamy, acknowledged as one of the foremost authorities on bronzes. People from Pathur village allegedly involved in the theft have been flown in along with numerous idols. A verdict is anticipated next fortnight.

Issue of Verse

A journal devoted to poetry and fiction rarely makes news but an exception was the recent London launch of the *Delhi-London Poetry Quarterly* (DLPQ) which was attended by luminaries from the rarefied world of poetry and literature. Its imaginatively conceived inaugural issue contains besides established poets from India like Keki Daruwalla, P. Lal and Shiv Kumar, unknowns from across the country like Ameen Merchant, K. Venkatramanan and Suman Kapoor. Its editor and publisher is Gopi Warrier, a management consultant with Macalpine, Thorpe and Warrier(MTW). As with the philosophy of the poetry journal, MTW says it has a genuine social and spiritual concern that commerce and art, industry and individual self were drifting too far apart at a "tremendous loss to the environment and the human beings who lived in it". Warrier points out that the name of the magazine DLPQ, is an "astrological choice"—London ruled by Gemini and Delhi by Sagittarius which have an instinctive natural affinity. They presage the aquarian age. Although this might come as a revelation to the mandarins at the foreign office here and at South Block, the publishers need to be applauded when they say spunkily that they have no interest in making money. What interests them are genuine spiritual movements—Buddhism, Advaita, Tantra and all those writers "whose madness lies in the creative invocation of the ultimate".

Soldiers' Party

RELIGIOUS festivals, traditional weddings, political rallies and Sikh separatist activity—are all fairly routine events in Southall—Britain's best-known Indian stronghold. But next fortnight the west London suburb is hosting an unusual event: a reunion of soldiers of the old Indian Army now living in Britain. Several hundred men who served in Sikh regiments, the Punjab frontier forces and other units will get together with their old mates including British officers for the first time in 40 years. More than 4 million people from India contributed to the war effort in the Second World War, with 2.7 million of them fighting in all theatres in the army, navy and air force. The event is being organised by a special steering group at the request of Indian ex-servicemen; amongst the day's entertainment will be a local high school band which will play tunes like "*Bonny Dundee*" and the "*Lincolnshire Poacher*" which the Indian Army later made its own.

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HONG KONG INDIANS

The Coming Crunch

A majority of Hong Kong's six million residents find it depressing to contemplate their post-1997 future after Britain transfers it to the People's Republic of China, particularly the 6,000-strong community of Indians holding British passports. Under the impending change, they will be given new British passports but not the right to citizenship, or even the right to reside permanently anywhere else in the world. The transfer of power will leave them stateless. Fears also haunt the 10,000 Indian passport holders who do not fancy living under Chinese rule. The situation could result in an exodus as Special Correspondent SHEKHAR GUPTA *discovered on his visit to the colony. His report:*

WHEN Great Britain took over the island of Hong Kong on January 26, 1841, the first "British" troops to set foot on Possession Point were Indians. And as the Union Jack went up there were also four adventurous Indian businessmen in the audience.

Hari Harilela, believed to be the richest Indian trader and one of Hong Kong's influential Tai Pans, is heading the legal offensive in London.

They started the first modern business ventures in Hong Kong. Dorabjee Naoroji built up the Star Ferry Company, Oriental Bank introduced banking while three Indians dominated the first governing body of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation.

Now, as the British administration begins the process of packing up to leave the island colony in 1997, the descendants of these Indian pioneers, as well as later migrants face a grim irony. The original entrepreneurs of Hong Kong will be the first to flee. "Nobody is saying it as nobody wants to rock the boat. But an exodus is in the making as far as we Indians are concerned," says K. Sital, vice-president of the Council of Hong Kong Indian Associations. Adds Kulwant Kumar, a bank employee: "In a decade, we will become the unwanted children of the world, like the Vietnamese boat people or Palestinians."

Such fears may be exaggerated. But the future beckons darkly to the 17,000-strong community of Indian origin. While the community, working under one of the most liberal economic laws in the world, shares a fear of the communist controls which could be enforced in 1997, the 6,000 who hold British Dependent Territory Citizenship have a special problem. Under the Sino-British accord on the transfer, all the ethnic Chinese in Hong Kong will be granted Chinese citizenship. But the ethnic minorities—the Indians, Pakistanis and Portugese—will be registered as British Nationals Overseas on July 1, 1997 and given a new passport.

The new passport will give the holder the right to travel as a British citizen but no right to abode anywhere. In Hong Kong too, they will stay at the mercy of the Chinese administration. Even this citizenship would cease to exist after two generations, leaving the third generation to seek a nationality for themselves. "People may say it is too far away to bother me. But the very thought that my grandson would be a stateless, rootless refugee gives me the creeps," says a Pakistani executive.

The sense of insecurity has already begun to take its toll. Members of the Indian Chamber of Commerce admit that many Indian businessmen have already begun to transfer their resources outside Hong Kong. A diamond trader invested a million US dollars in the Australian gold-mining business and a Sikh trader moved out leaving just a shell of his export business. "It is reasonable to understand why people are leaving or disinvesting," says Sital. "But they are doing it quietly for fear of annoying the Chinese."

The list of businessmen planning a pull-out includes Indian expatriates like Ashok Sehajwani, owner of a tailoring establishment in Kowloon. He asked: "Though the Chinese have promised not to disturb the economic structure of the colony for 50 years, how can one trust them? They made similar promises in Shanghai but Indians were driven out." He points out that the fear of living under a communist government is so strong that many amongst the ethnic Chinese are planning to pull out. In a survey of ethnic Chinese, conducted by the district board in the Wanchai locality, 63 per cent of the respondents felt the Chinese would not

Growing insecurity and the steady exodus of Indian businessmen, led Sital to seek help from New Delhi but nothing concrete emerged.

keep their promises on Hong Kong. "When even the Chinese don't trust them how can we?" asks Sahejwani.

On the other hand, the 5,500-strong Sikh community faces an entirely different problem. Their community leaders have been frequently staging anti-Indian demonstrations, resulting in a situation where it will be hard for several of even the Indian passport holding Sikhs to return to India. Already, the Indian High Commission has impounded the passports of 10 of the more vocal militants while several others have been given six-monthly pass-

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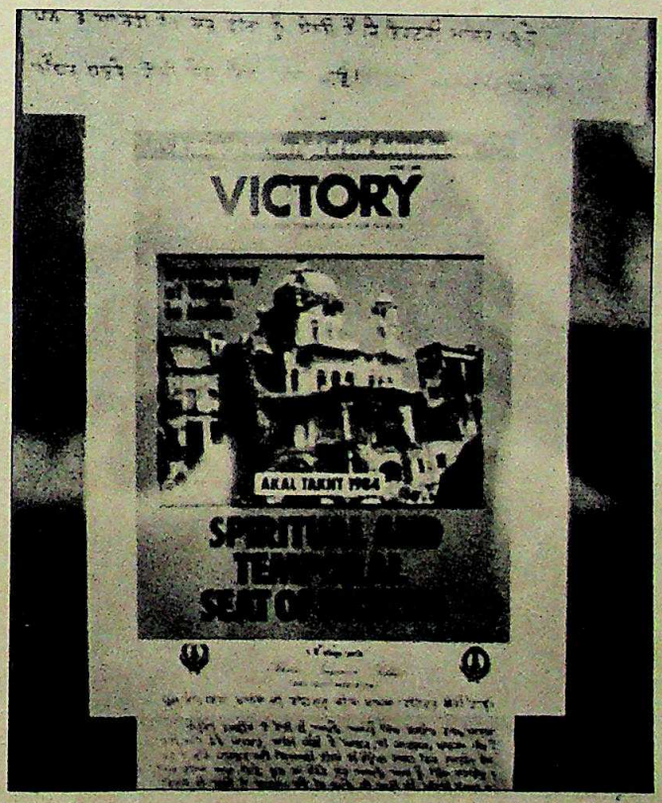
port extensions, a ploy meant to keep them on good behaviour. Several Hong Kong Sikhs find their names on the intelligence agencies' wanted lists in India. Said Khalsa Naujawan Sabha Secretary Amarjit Singh: "Impounding passports is the worst they could do. What could they have done if we had British passports instead? We are just paying for being Indian nationals." But whatever he says, a majority of the Sikhs accept the fact that as the curtain is drawn in 1997, they will have no choice but to return to their native villages in Punjab.

Yet a total pull-out is not such a happy prospect for the Indians. "There is no place like Hong Kong for making money and, no matter how much noise people make, not many of them will finally run away," says Ashok Datwani, a garment exporter. Many others are convinced that the Chinese are too shrewd to slay the golden goose. Fears, however, remain. "The local Chinese do not love Indian businessmen", said an electronics dealer, adding, "and once they have their own government, discrimination could begin." Similar fear is expressed by Raghbir Singh Sehrai, owner of Kowloon's Sher-e-Punjab hotel: "We do not mind staying under the Chinese. But the moment we see any assimilation or intermarrying we will run away to India."

BUT those who cannot run away have been waging a relentless battle to avoid statelessness. Leaders of the Indian community have been lobbying from all possible platforms. And both the legislative council and the press have supported their cause: Martin Lee and Conrad Lam, two influential council members, have been speaking on their behalf. "We want justice done to everybody, particularly the minorities. I hope the Indians are given fair treatment," says Lam. The Indian cause has also found support in the British House of Lords. But the problem is in the House of Commons where the Tories have passed a legislation on Hong Kong's future.

The Indian community has also been contesting the case at the legal and administrative levels. Hari Harilela, the richest Indian trader and one of Hong Kong's influential Tai Pans, is heading the legal offensive in London while the Council of Hong Kong Indian Associations is corresponding with the Government. But so far the British Government has not relented except for an assurance by Home Secretary Douglas Hurd, saying that "if circumstances were to change and any British national came under pressure to leave Hong Kong," the Government of the day would "sympathetically" consider whether they can be admitted to the UK.

Similarly, in a letter to Sital, Margaret Thatcher, the British prime minister, responded only with platitudes. "The arrangements we are making will fully honour the undertaking we have given that no British Dependent Territories Citizens in Hong Kong, nor their children, nor grandchildren should fear statelessness, and they will have a place to call home," she wrote. British officials say this should suffice. "The problem with the Indians is that they only want for a home a place that is forever England. That the Tories can't give," said a British official.



Militant poster at a Gurudwara

The British Government argues that the Hong Kong Indians' right to stay where they are is implicit in the Sino-British accord and that any concession to Indians would amount to an expression of distrust in the Chinese. To clarify this the Indian community leaders met Wu Jiatun, the head of the Xinhua office. He stated that the post-1997 fate of the ethnic minorities was purely a British concern. "How can we feel secure in such a situation? We suspect racism behind the denial of citizenship to us while this has been done for people in Gibraltar and Falkland islands?" said K.B. Rathi, general secretary of the Council of Indian Associations.

In desperation, the Hong Kong Indians have turned to New Delhi for support. Sital has apprised Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of their plight. But, while expressing his sympathy, the Government has said that the British passport holders are a responsibility of the UK. Said a Ministry of External Affairs spokesman: "We are still studying the new British laws that affect Hong Kong Indians and the final policy is yet to take shape. But we are not sure what we can do about them."

British passport holders have mooted the plan to develop the Andaman islands as a free port which will attract both Indians and other businessmen who wish to flee a communist Hong Kong. Sital is the main backer of the idea of turning the Andamans into "the Bahamas of the Bay of Bengal". He promises that much of the investment would come from overseas Indians. "Following East Africa, rich Indians have had problems all over the world. They will welcome this kind of return home," he says, adding for emphasis: "The potential is enormous. 30,000 Malayalees are returning from the Gulf every year and you need a new entrepreneurial haven like the Andamans to absorb them and their savings". He points out that the Andamans, astride one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, could leave other tax havens in the world behind.

In New Delhi, the idea apparently has the sympathy of Rajiv. But officials foresee daunting infrastructural and environmental problems (INDIA TODAY, November 15, 1985). A project of this magnitude is hardly likely to become a reality in a decade. Also it is unlikely that bureaucratic controls would allow the emergence of anything resembling Hong Kong on Indian territory.

But the Hong Kong Indians' only hope lies in London. The Council of Indian Associations is planning to appeal to the European Commission on Human Rights. For the moment the only visible silver lining is a possible Tory defeat in the forthcoming elections. And their fate is thus linked to the political fortunes of Labour's Neil Kinnock, who has announced support for their cause.

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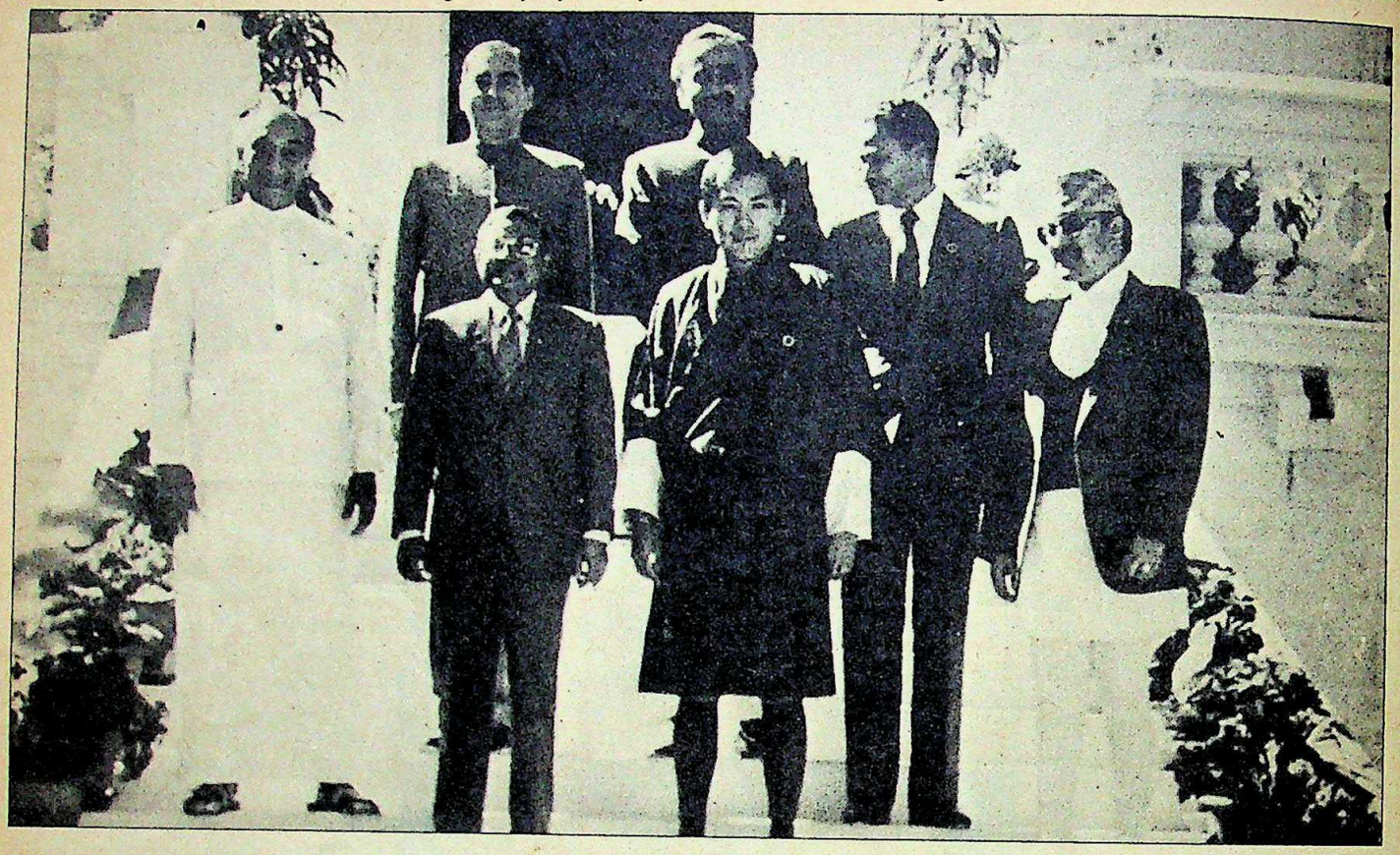

The seven SAARC leaders at Nandi Hills

SAARC

Painful Progress

IF there was one stark symbol of the evolutionary problems facing the fledgling South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) at their second summit in Bangalore last fortnight, it was to be found atop the famed Nandi Hills where the seven leaders retired for the traditional retreat. Facing the entrance to Cubbon Hall, the venue of the retreat, was a newly-built tennis court and, in one corner, neatly arranged in a row, were seven pairs of brand-new tennis shoes. The court had been prepared just in case any of the heads of state and governments felt like the extra exercise. In the event, the shoes went unused but served to symbolise the fact that the seven members of SAARC were still not ready to play ball with each other.

The road to SAARC summits are paved with good intentions, but it is the permanent pot-holes that succeed in ensuring that any progress gets bone-jarring and painfully slow. Collectively, the seven-nation body (India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal and the Maldives) constitutes the single most populous (997.85 million) and poorest (average per capita income: US $241) grouping in the international community. With two dictatorships, two monarchies and three democracies, it is also the most politically divergent. More important, the two most prominent and powerful members, India and Pakistan, with their ingrained attitude of mutual mistrust and hostility, cannot resist the temptation to use SAARC as a stage for political one-upmanship which does much to dilute the organisation's credibility and long-term effectiveness.

Added to all this is India's current relations with Sri Lanka vis-a-vis the Tamil militants which casts its own shadow across SAARC confabulations and tends to give the impression that the organisation's main appeal lies in the bilateral side dishes rather than the main course. But that, paradoxically, is perhaps SAARC's greatest asset, that it provides an annual opportunity for regional leaders to meet eyeball to eyeball and tackle bilateral differences even though the charter officially discourages such trade-offs.

The fragile balance of regional cooperation will always rest on one hypersensitive fulcrum—the state of Indo-Pakistan relations.

Thus, viewed objectively, the Bangalore summit did emerge with some positive developments apart from the areas designated for enlarging the scope of SAARC. The setting up of a permanent secretariat in Kathmandu means that the organisation is now institutionalised and will perforce have to get down to formal business. Remarked India's Foreign Secretary A.P. Venkateswaran: "As SAARC evolves, it has to add to its activities. In that sense, the Bangalore summit went as well as anybody could have expected." Added his Pakistani counterpart Abdus Sattar: "Within the short time since its inception, SAARC has made impressive progress."

There was also the added drama of the efforts to untangle Sri Lanka's ethnic knot with Indian Air-Force aircraft secretly

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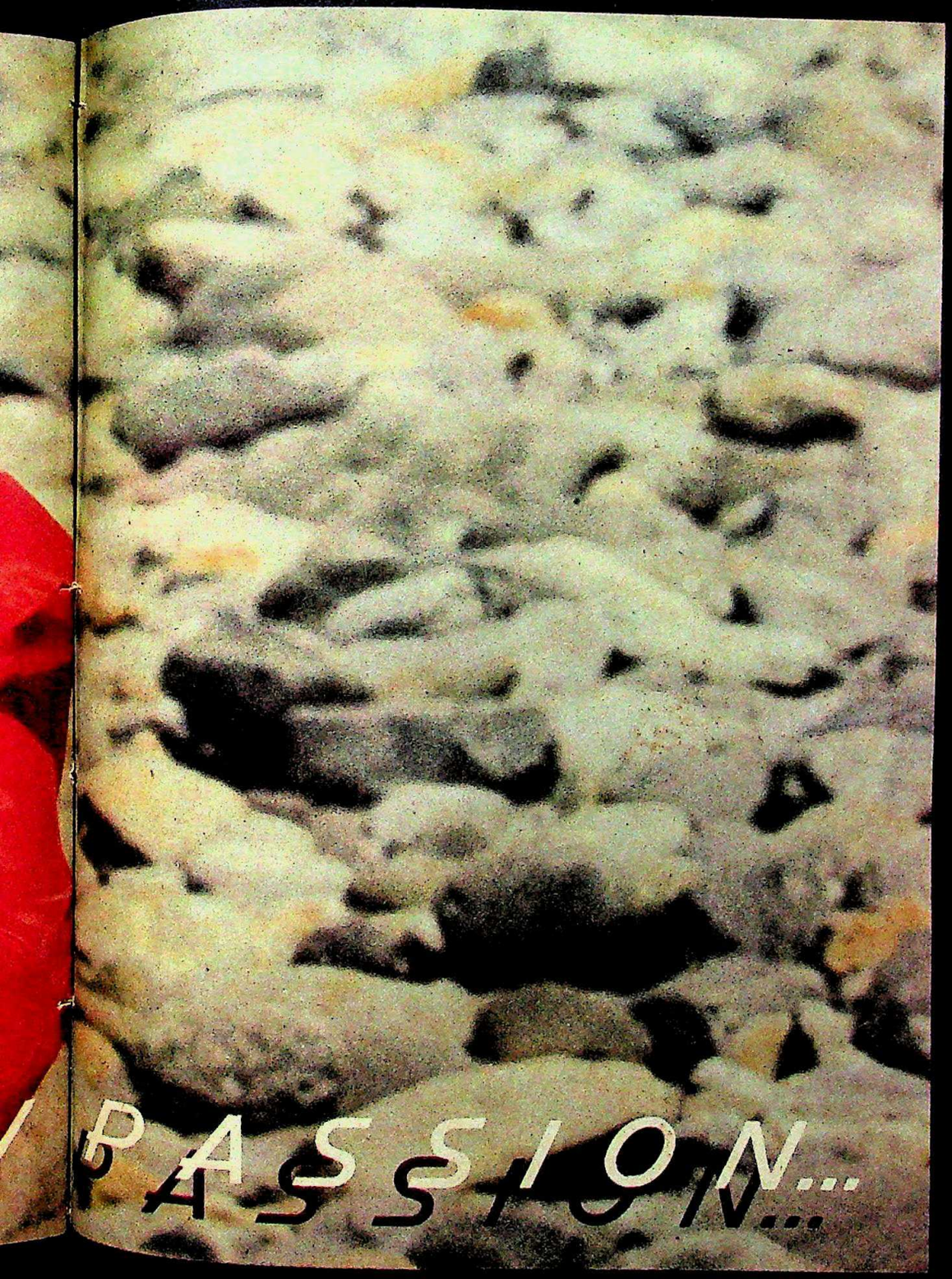

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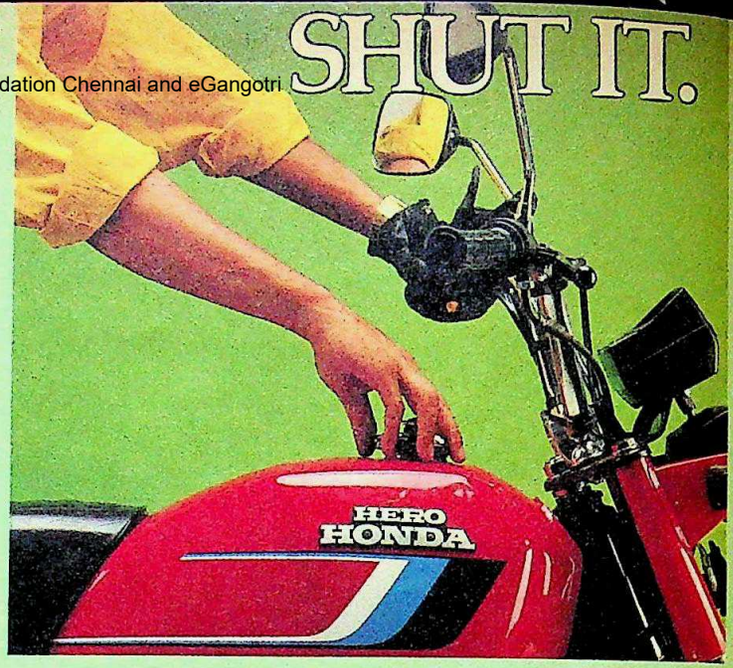

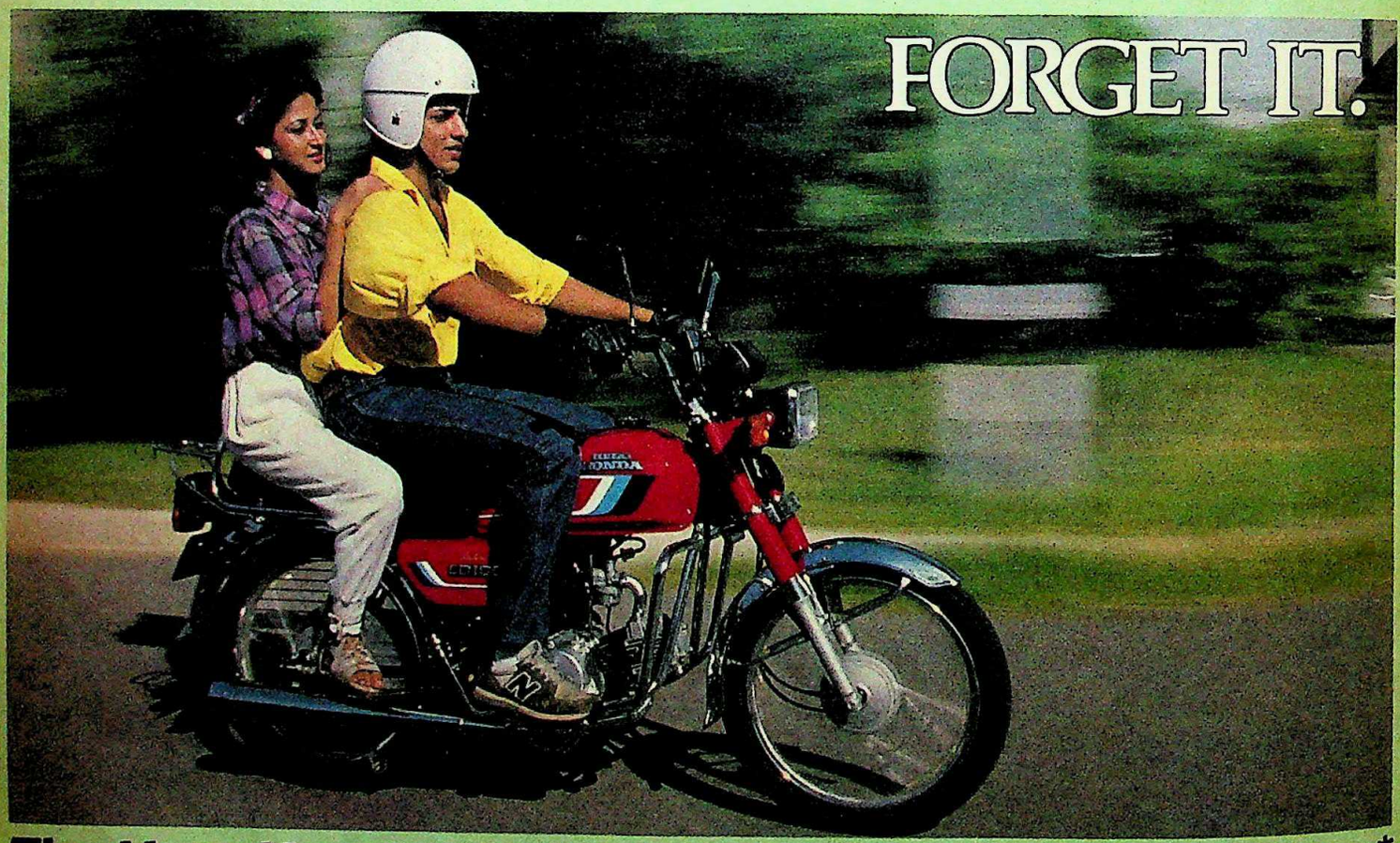

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ferrying in the key players, and, if no solution was found, at least the two sides now know exactly where they stand. In addition, there was also the unexpected bonus from the meeting between Rajiv Gandhi and Pakistani Prime Minister Mohammed Khan Junejo which, if nothing else, at least led to an agreement for the resumption of talks between the two sides on the thorny terrorism issue and, at a higher level, on normalisation of relations. Another positive development was the agreement to evolve a joint strategy on global economic issues at international forums.

But for all that, SAARC is still very much in the experimental stage. The organisation is barely a year old and there is still a conscious attempt on the part of the leaders and the back room boys to skirt around any controversial issues. As at the Dhaka summit, the Bangalore meeting failed to come up with an unanimous definition of terrorism, mainly because of India's stand on Pakistan's alleged training of Sikh terrorists and Sri Lanka's stand on the Tamil militants. Similarly, India's strong appeal for the inclusion of economic, trade and industrial cooperation—a key factor for the eventual growth of SAARC—met with little success because of strong opposition by Pakistan which harbours fears that India's superior industrial and technological know-how will give it an unfair advantage.

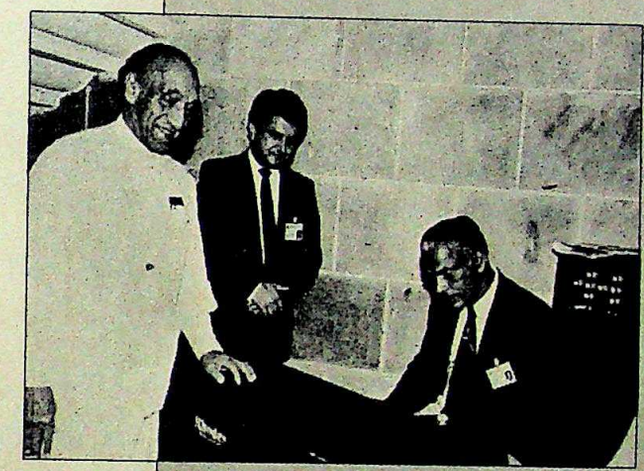
Consequently, the summit in Bangalore did not succeed in scaling any great heights in terms of forging tighter bonds of friendship and mutual cooperation—an impression which was further strengthened by the bilateral side-shows that stole the SAARC limelight. But by the end of the day, there was enough evidence to indicate that, with added experience and encouragement, the seven players could eventually get their act together in transforming the organisation into a vital—and viable—entity. The bad news is that the fragile balance of regional cooperation will always rest on one hypersensitive fulcrum—the state of Indo-Pakistan relations.

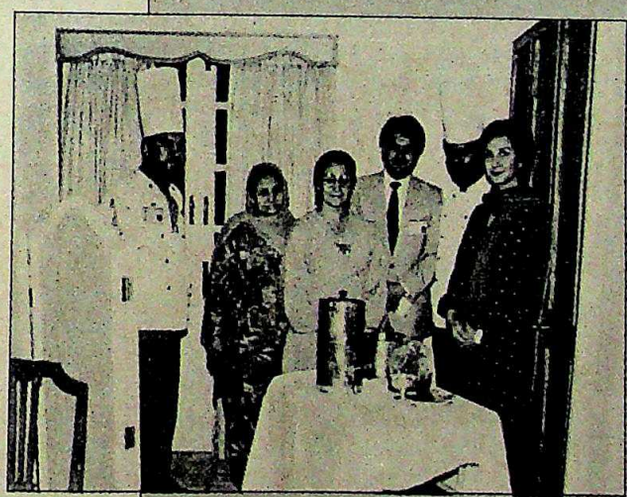
—DILIP BOBB and SRINIVASA PRASAD in Bangalore

Saarclights

Bangalore had its fair share of interesting sidelights during the SAARC *meet. Samples:*

■ Accommodating the seven heads of state and governments posed some tricky initial problems for the hosts, the Government of India, and for Welcomgroup's Windsor Manor where the leaders stayed. The hotel has six deluxe suites. And since seven into six won't go, the Ministry of External Affairs first suggested to Welcomgroup that one way out of the dilemma was to break down a wall so that one of the smaller luxury suites could be upgraded to a deluxe suite for Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi. After much discussion, the problem was solved by Rajiv himself who agreed to stay in the Trafalgar Suite, one of the luxury suites, and leave the deluxe ones for the other six.





Jayewardene with pianist (top); and Begum Yakub Khan with percolator

■ At Windsor Manor every entrance had a metal detector which worked fine except when the cultural troupe arrived to perform for Rajiv's banquet. One of the musicians had packed his instruments in a steel trunk which sent the detector's alarm crazy. Immediately, hordes of beady-eyed security guards, ignoring the poor musician's protests, started to take apart the *dholaks*. It was only when a senior official suggested that they pass the instruments through the detector minus the steel trunk that the alarm bells stopped pealing.

■ The menu for Rajiv's five-course banquet was cleared by Sonia who approved the rest but wanted the main course changed to something more Indian. So in between the more exotic avacados and mousse was served Murgh Mussalam and Biryani.

■ Begum Yakub Khan, the Pakistan foreign minister's wife, found the south Indian coffee made from freshly-ground coffee beans so delicious that she requested the chef to demonstrate exactly how it was made. Welcomgroup, not one to miss any opportunity, presented her with a coffee percolator and enough coffee beans to last her till her next visit.

■ The most popular head of state at Windsor Manor was Sri Lanka's Jayewardene. On his arrival, he was greeted by a doorman sporting a luxurious, flowing moustache. "I envy your moustache," Jayewardene told the stunned doorman. "I wish I could have been so lucky." Jayewardene, 81, then found a soul-mate in the hotel pianist who had a repertoire of tunes from the '30s and '40s. From then on it was nostalgia time as he had the pianist play old-time tunes at every opportunity. Even when he was leaving, the pianist was brought old to play favourites one last time.

■ It can now be revealed what Rajiv's weakness is—chocolates. The prime minister just can't resist chocolates and his eyes lit up when he saw the basket laid out in his suite. "Look at the chocolates," he told Sonia, who promptly warned him not to over-indulge. His other favourite food, as Welcomgroup sources reveal, is kababs of any kind, as long as they are soft and spicy.

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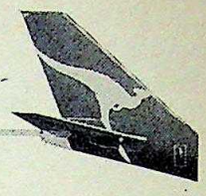

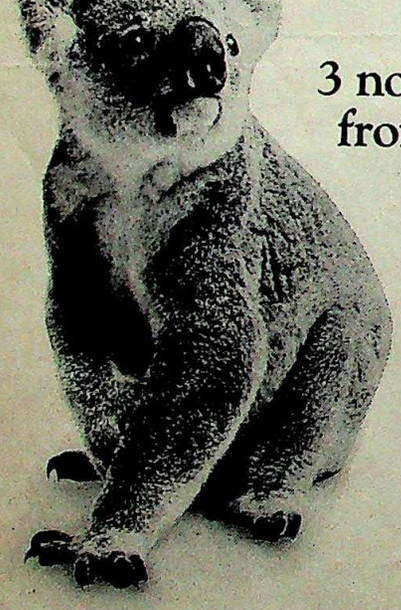

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Articulating a Change

ECONOMIC policy has been sufficiently changed under Rajiv Gandhi for it to be described as the "new economic policy". But we have been so conditioned by the notion that India can reform only by stealth that a clear and forceful articulation of the goals, the rationale and the structure of the new policy is still lacking. Without it, the new policy is vulnerable to the frequently-heard charges of incoherence, ad hocism, vacillation and backsliding. Equally, it becomes susceptible to unwarranted ideological barbs that the new policy betrays the objectives and values that animated the old.

In fact, the new policy does not depart from the old in objectives or in broad strategy. Rather, it seeks to change the policy framework deployed to implement the strategy so as to better achieve these objectives.

The principal objective of our planned efforts has been, and continues to be, the removal of abject poverty to achieve minimum living standards for all. The pervasive nature of poverty meant that we had to proceed on two fronts. A direct attack through fiscal expenditures targeted at the poor (on health and education, for example) obviously had its place. But a preponderant reliance had to be placed on the indirect instrumentality of rapid growth to pull even more of the poor into gainful employment. Growth alone could create a substantial impact on the poor; even the direct expenditures could not be continued, leave alone expanded, without the resources that growth must generate.

Attacking poverty through growth, with policies in place to select and influence the process towards greater impact on the poor, thus constituted an activist, government-led "pull-up" strategy, wholly different from the passive, hands-off "trickle-down" strategy with which it is foolishly confused.

The strategy should have worked. Indeed there is much evidence from India's green revolution itself that growth helps the poor. But the evidence is far more dramatic for the rapidly-growing countries of the Far East where the magic of compound arithmetic has produced significant improvements in the real incomes of the poor within two decades. Indeed the astonishing success of these economies prompted Swedish economist Staffan Linder to christen the present the pacific century and to remark that India and China, the two countries that economists had picked as winners and rivals in the '50s, had shrunk by contrast into 'giant insignificance'. What went wrong?

> "The constraints have created a rentier, rather than an entrepreneurial, mentality with this regime of "don'ts", forgetting that the effect of shielding men from the consequences of their folly is to fill the world with fools."

The clue lies in the fact that, while India doubled its savings and investment rates between 1950 and now to well over 20 per cent, the growth rate remained virtually stagnant. The productivity of investments, reflecting the policy framework, was abysmal. A little reflection, buttressed by abundant evidence and analysis, assigns much of the blame to two crippling components of the old policy framework: excessive controls and neglect of foreign trade.

It is nonsensical to monitor and constrain diversification and capacity expansion and to rule out entry by new producers—yet that is what was practised to excess. The constraints have created a rentier, rather than an entrepreneurial, mentality with this regime of "don'ts", forgetting Herbert Spencer's remark that the effect of shielding men from the consequences of their folly is to fill the world with fools. Resources were diverted into directly-unproductive profit-seeking activities where you make a buck by chasing licences rather than by producing, replacing production by what Pareto called "predation". Productivity and innovation cannot be expected to flourish in this sheltered paradise; and they did not.

Closely allied to this folly was the neglect of export markets and their amply-documented benefits for economic performance. India slipped from a leading exporter of manufactured goods from developing countries to having a negligible share by the '80s. South Korea had four times India's exports by 1980 while its value-added in manufactures rose to 60 per cent of ours. Fortunately, the new policy is aimed precisely at cutting these cancers from the body economic. In essence, it seeks extensive liberalisation, internal and external, of the economy so as to secure higher returns on investments, thus reducing poverty faster.

The policy runs against vested interests spawned by the old policy: defunct economists, bureaucrats, politicians, businessmen. It is carried largely by a remarkable leadership that has an intuitive grasp of what needs to be done. Clear and visible victories are therefore the essence of this war of transition. From this viewpoint, the early emphasis on tax reform, not central to the new policy but totally consonant with its preference for pragmatic efficiency over rhetoric, was just right: it yielded increased tax revenues, demonstrating quickly and strikingly that the new policies had a big pay-off.

The credibility so gained will aid in the more difficult task of dismantling controls and opening the economy to regain its traditional role in world commerce. A coherently articulated policy will also permit credibility, so necessary to be retained in the commitment to the transition as the Government must perforce accommodate from time to time to realities by temporary strategic reversals. The alternative is the stark one of continuing our steady decline into comparative economic insignificance on the world stage.

Dr Jagdish Bhagwati, 52, is an internationally-known economist. He is a professor at Columbia University since 1980 and has authored a number of articles and books on the economies of underdeveloped nations.

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ROUGH RIDE

THE Modi bid to manufacture 2000 cc cars in collaboration with Volvo of Sweden has run into rough weather. The Government has indicated to the Modis that the 20,000 cars per annum venture will be cleared only if the car is indigenised much faster than proposed and if the Modis accept a 30 per cent export obligation. While the Modis are busy figuring out ways to meet these conditions, Escorts has requested the Government to take a decision on its Citroen proposal before the year-end. The French company has indicated that it would have to consider setting up shop in China if the decision is delayed beyond December. Escorts has also scaled down its annual production programme from one lakh to 50,000 and said that it will sell the car for Rs 50,000, Rs 5,000 more than the price initially proposed, because the value of the French franc has climbed. The Government is expected to decide on clearing these projects only after it announces its new automobile policy in a few weeks.

PROBLEM PLANT

THE Rs 75-crore-turnover Union Carbide India Ltd's (UCIL) unit in Bombay, which has been closed for seven months, seems destined to spend some more time in limbo. With a Union Carbide Corporation team expressing unhappiness with the plant's safety precautions, its scheduled December reopening has been put off further. And though the plant's workers have been getting their salaries, totalling Rs 18 lakh per month, they fear it may be closed down for good. The workers contend that the management is studying a Maharashtra Government circular—sent to many other units also—asking the company to shift out of town. UCIL's homework showed that this could cost Rs 60 crore. Now, a group of plant-level managers has offered an employee takeover. The UCIL's response to the offer remains to be seen.

PUFFING UP TIES

TOBACCO giant Rothmans of the US and Godfrey Phillips India (GPI) have been negotiating a tie-up to launch new cigarette brands. Rothmans already has an agreement with New Tobacco Company (NTC), permitting it to produce cigarettes under the Rothmans and Oxford brand names. GPI, however, has a line to Rothmans through its collaborator Phillip Morris, which has a 30 per cent equity stake in Rothmans. Meanwhile, competition in the cigarette market is hotting up. NTC recently introduced Cambridge and World Cup, while GPI kicked off a brand called Philips in Bombay and testmarketed Action Filter Kings in Hyderabad.

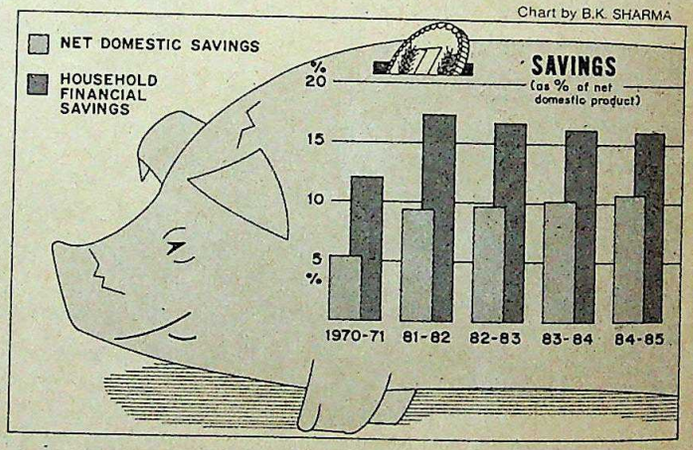
PEGGING PRICES

FERTILISER companies have reacted sharply to an official committee's recommendations that domestic fertiliser prices be pegged at international levels and that the 12 per cent post-tax return on net worth which the industry is entitled to, be lowered. Though the report was sent to the industry some months ago, it recently responded by arguing that the first proposal didn't make sense: input costs are five times higher in India than abroad. Also, foreign suppliers dump fertilisers in India while charging their own farmers up to four times the international price. The industry contended that lowering the officially-fixed rate of return would discourage fresh investment as the opportunity cost of capital is over 12 per cent. The Government's decision is awaited.

SAVINGS SHIFT

MORE and more of national savings are being held in private hands. While the net domestic savings declined as a percentage of the net domestic product (from 17.5 per cent in 1981-82 to 16.1 per cent in 1984-85), the savings of the household sector kept rising: from 9.3 per cent of

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



the net domestic product in 1981-82 to 10.8 per cent in 1984-85. This contrasts sharply with 1970-71, when household savings were 5.6 per cent of the net domestic product—less than half the net domestic savings at 12 per cent.

SHARE SALE

HINDUSTAN Aluminium's (HINDALCO) long-time American collaborator, Kaiser Aluminium and Chemicals Corporation, is pulling out of the Aditya Birla-run company by selling its 27 per cent shareholding. The 20-year collaboration agreement with Kaiser ended a few years ago. The US firm had thought of pulling out then but it was stymied by conditions that the Government placed on the share sale. One of these conditions related to the US company deducting the dividend for the previous year from its sale price, which made the net price unattractive for Kaiser. The US company now plans to offer its 27 per cent equity in HINDALCO to the company's shareholders and has applied to the Government and the Reserve Bank for permission. The Birlas own some 26 per cent of HINDALCO stock, while the public, the financial institutions and the banks hold the rest. Exactly how much they will be entitled to buy is yet to be determined because the Government will have to arrive at an appropriate formula.

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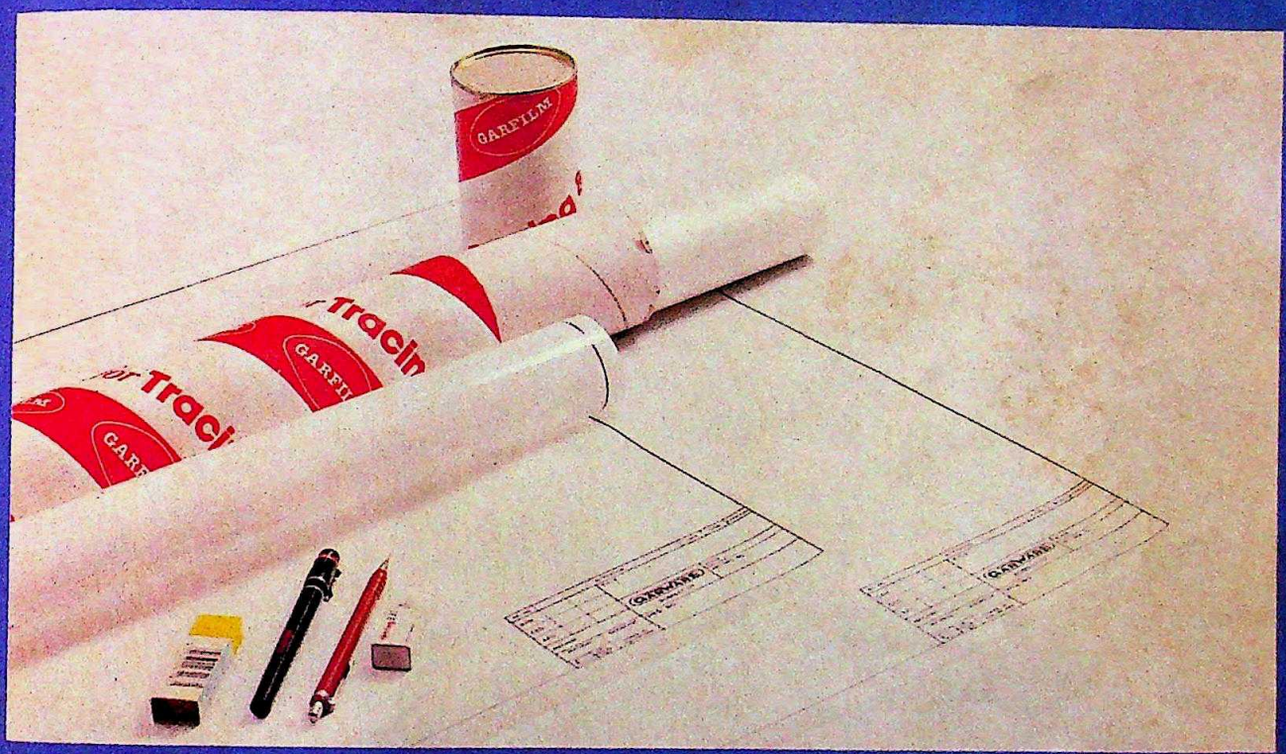

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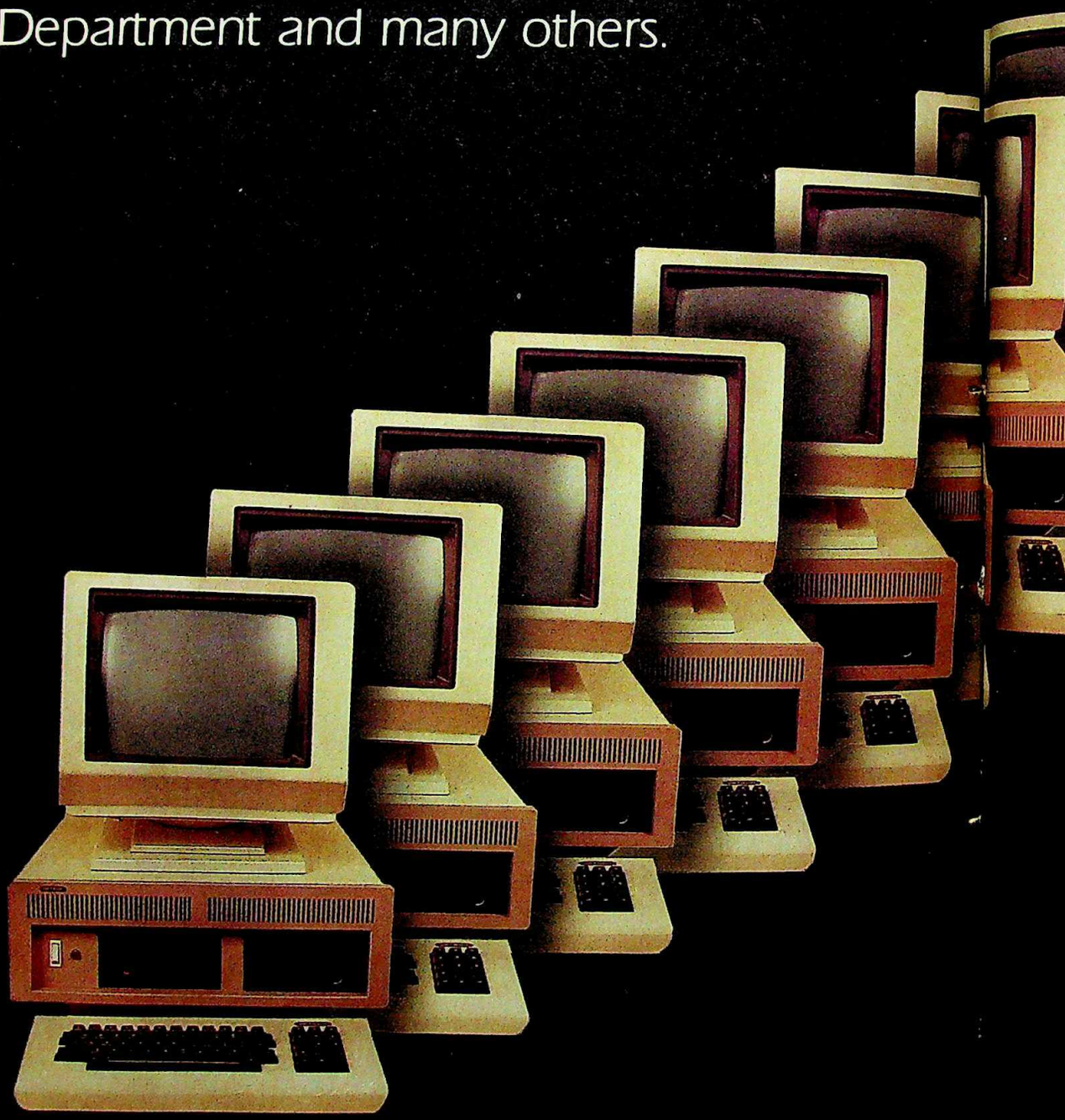

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SHAW WALLACE

Institutional Muscle

IF high drama was expected, it was missing. To be sure, voices were raised, and charges of foul play were aired. But events moved swiftly as one resolution after another was put to vote, and the truckload of policemen who maintained vigil outside the venue of the three-day Shaw Wallace shareholders' meetings was soon sent packing.

The sensation was to follow. Last fortnight, retired justice B.C. Mitra, who had been appointed by the Supreme Court to preside over the meetings, announced the dramatic poll outcome at Wallace House in Calcutta. Exercising their crucial 33 per cent equity muscle, the financial institutions and banks had ousted chairman and managing director Senapur Panduranga Acharya and three of his colleagues from the company's eight-member board, abstained from voting on a resolution seeking approval for Acharya's remuneration (thereby ensuring that it would be defeated), voted in two more of their representatives on to the board—and kept the Gulf-based Chhabrias and their nominees out.

The institutions' decision could have widespread ramifications. There are several companies with large blocks of foreign shareholdings, and companies have changed hands in the past through the acquisition of overseas shares. But such buyers will now think twice because of the institutional factor, and the fight that can be put up by a defiant local management. Also, companies across the country have been reminded once again of the constant presence of institutional shareholding muscle.

The institutions must have weighed all this in voting the way they did. And the Chhabria brothers could not neutralise their voting power. They had rustled up proxies for 6 per cent of the equity along with the 38.7 per cent they had acquired overseas, but 45 per cent could not carry the day. For the institutions teamed up with Acharya's 16 per cent shareholder support to keep the Chhabrias at bay. Simultaneously, they backed the Chhabrias to oust Acharya and his three colleagues—a strategy that put them at the Shaw Wallace helm. As one observer wryly put it: "It's like the fable of the monkey and the two fighting cats."

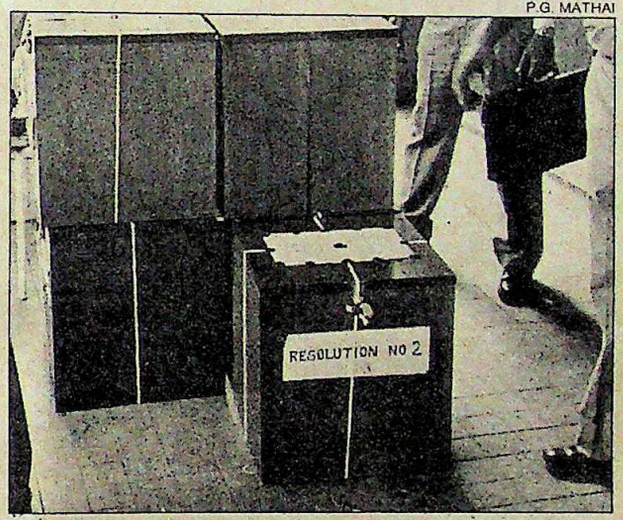
The results have to be posted to the Supreme Court and are subject to the court's decision in a case before it, and Acharya and his men will continue on the board till the case is decided. Nevertheless, the outcome of the polling has one clear meaning: the institutions with their four directors have a majority because the board's strength has been trimmed to six. They will do the backseat driving at Shaw Wallace for the moment. Last fortnight, a senior government official maintained that the institutions would be failing in their duty if they had not already decided on a new managing director, but the chairman of one financial institution said that no one had been selected as yet: "There is still time for that. The present board is there till the Supreme Court decides on the case."

The election results also raised another hairy side issue: would Acharya have to repay his salary to the company with retrospective effect from July 1, 1985, when he was reappointed managing director, because the company's shareholders have not sanctioned the remuneration? Explains tax lawyer O.P. Vaish: "Under the Companies Act, he's not entitled to remuneration unless shareholders approve it. So he's technically liable to

SUNIL KUMAR DUTT

Acharya: neutralised

P.G. MATHAI



Sealed ballot boxes after meeting

Exercising their crucial 33 per cent equity muscle, the financial institutions ousted Acharya and kept out the Gulf-based Chhabrias from the company's board.

SUNIL KUMAR DUTT

Manu Chhabria: fighting to the finish

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refund it. But on the general principles of contract, he cannot be deprived of reasonable compensation." If the denouement to the two-year-long battle to control the country's second largest liquor company caught the Shaw Wallace management napping (one company official had confidently predicted victory) Acharya wasn't available for comment. The 60-year-old Shaw Wallace supremo went on leave, presumably after the election results were announced. But at a press conference in Calcutta on the eve of the meetings, Acharya said: "It's the prerogative of the institutions to do what they like."

The Chhabrias, however, had their ears to the ground. They had predicted that the institutional vote would go against them. Said Kishore Chhabria: "This was expected. We had a one-point programme of removing Acharya. Our stand has been vindicated. The financial institutions have acted in a judicious manner."

"I don't think we lost. There can't be two losers. If there had been one ballot-paper, the institutions would have voted for us."

KISHORE CHHABRIA

Certainly, the institutions had agreed days before the meetings began to keep both sides out of the company. "In a situation where you had two warring groups, the company needed stability," explained a government official. He also implied that investigations of the company's affairs had proved damaging to Acharya, while Chhabrias had no manufacturing record worth mentioning in the country. In any event, they faced Enforcement Directorate charges in Bangalore of having violated the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act by colluding with Vijay Mallya of United Breweries in acquiring Shaw Wallace's overseas shares.

Chhabria, of course, has ready responses to this. He says that the two brothers left the country in the 1970s with their pockets virtually empty but now run a Rs 500-crore company in the Gulf. Adds he: "I am only hurt that the financial institutions have punished me before I have been convicted. There is nothing else than the Bangalore complaint against me. The law says that you are innocent until proven guilty." Finally, Chhabria made the apparently astonishing claim that "I don't think we have lost. There can't be two losers. If there had been one ballot-paper, the institutions would have voted for us."

And there hangs a tale. The meetings were called to more than double the company's share capital so that bonus shares could be issued, and to vote on resolutions seeking the ouster of Acharya and his men and their replacement by the Chhabrias and their nominees. When the resolutions pitting Kishore's brother Manohar and a Chhabria nominee against two retiring directors came up for consideration, the meeting's chairman ruled that the retiring director's election would be voted on first; only if he was not elected would the case of the Chhabria nominee be taken up. The judge later reversed his ruling and permitted voting on both the names.

Still, that effectively split the ballot instead of providing a direct face-off between the candidates—and sparked off a controversy on the propriety of the decision. While lawyers argue that a meeting's chairman has a right to regulate its proceedings and that the law requires voting on each director to take place independently, they also aver that polling on a sitting director can only take place after the vote on the challenger is taken. Whatever the merits of these contentions, the Chhabrias could challenge the ruling in the Supreme Court.

The Chhabrias have other options open to them. For one, they can mark time till the next shareholders' meeting which has to be held by the month-end. A more effective proxy hunt could then put them over the magic 50 per cent hump.

A fresh proxy hunt is therefore an attractive proposition, but the Chhabrias may not go down that route. Kishore Chhabria has time and again declared that he will not fight the Government, come what may.

He and brother Manohar could also hawk their equity. There were reports that a foreign multinational had approached them once more to unload their holding, and that the Chhabrias had spurned the offer, partly because they believed that the offer was not seriously made and was meant to test their intentions. Says Kishore: "We won't quit, unless we have to fight the Government." What is clear, however, is that there will be no dearth of offers if the Chhabrias wish to sell, because the Rs 240-crore company is a money-spinner.

Finally, astonishing as it may seem, the Chhabrias could patch up with Acharya. "Why not? I've nothing personal against him. He thinks he's fighting for a cause. We are fighting for our rights. We have to have a coalition management; we can't run the company on our own. I would like to talk to Acharya."

A more likely scenario is the Chhabrias suing for peace with the Government. As they are the first to admit, the Bangalore case could go on for years. The brothers have so far received paltry returns on their Rs 28 crore investment in the Shaw Wallace shares but have had to fork out an estimated Rs 1.5 lakh a day in interest costs alone, and petitioning the Government may be the only realistic course open to them. The Government too may not be able to ignore a 38 per cent block for long and could take any overtures into account while deciding the final fate of the 100-year-old company. If that happens, the Chhabrias could have lost a battle only to win the war.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI in Calcutta

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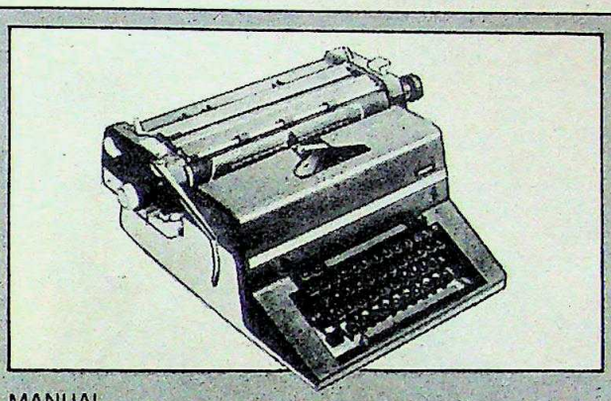
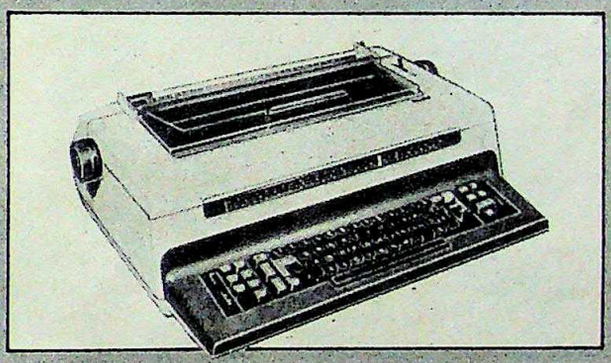


MANUAL



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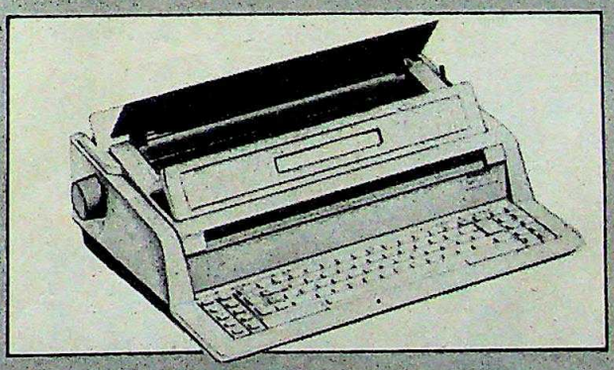

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CAPITAL GOODS IMPORTS

Growing Controversy

IT has a familiar ring to it. A local industry claims that it is being squeezed by cheap imports, the media latches on to the charge and runs a series of horror stories. Finally, the Government appoints a committee to probe into the matter. If that were all, the snowballing controversy over the steep climb in capital goods imports could be dismissed as yet another successful lobbying effort.

But there's more to the drama. In the eye of the storm are key players in the economy—the capital goods industry itself, represented by the Confederation of Engineering Industry (CEI), and the fertiliser industry. And the stakes are high: business worth well over Rs 1,000 crore for manufacturers of capital goods, and the possibility of the bill for six new fertiliser plants that are now coming up along the Hazira-Bijaypur-Jagdishpur route burgeoning by an estimated Rs 240-crore.

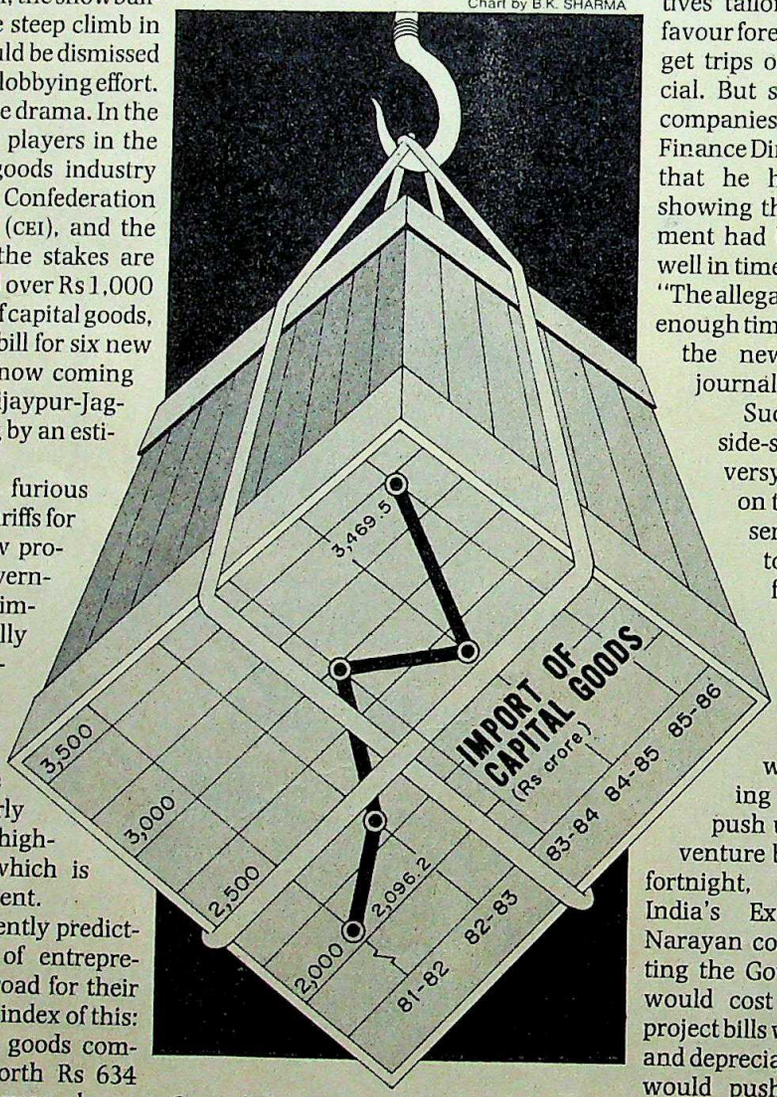
At the heart of the furious debate is the low import tariffs for equipment meant for new projects. Last year, the Government kicked off a liberal import regime by drastically slashing the duty on machinery for power projects to 25 per cent and eliminating it altogether from fertiliser equipment. The official intention was clearly to provide competition to a high-cost domestic industry which is widely regarded as inefficient.

The results were eminently predictable. Growing numbers of entrepreneurs began shopping abroad for their machinery (*see chart*). One index of this: the Government's capital goods committee cleared imports worth Rs 634 crore in the first half of this year, almost 85 per cent of the Rs 747-crore sanctioned throughout the whole of last year. The growth in imports could be much higher because the committee is responsible only for a fraction of the imports.

Predictably, domestic machinery manufacturers are quick to attribute their plight to the mounting imports. Last year, the capital goods industry grew by just 3.5 per cent, almost half the industrial growth rate of 6.6 per cent.

Backing these contentions is a recently released report on the fertiliser and power industries. The CEI-commissioned study suggests that if local capital goods produced for the fertiliser industry are 25 to 189 per cent more costly than foreign wares, the culprit is input prices.

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



Says the report: "If Indian producers could get inputs at the cheapest international prices, then they would generally be as cost efficient as foreign firms."

What is more, alleges the report, domestic equipment buyers tailor their tenders so as to favour foreign firms. As an example they mention that while inviting bids for certain equipment, the state-owned Engineers India Ltd (EIL) specified a length of experience in building the equipment that no Indian firm possessed.

The press, in turn, speedily picked up the charge and fired some salvos of its own. A financial daily alleged last month that companies such as Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) and the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) met the statutory requirement of advertising in government journals without providing adequate time to Indian suppliers to respond to the tenders.

Some of these allegations are true and some are not. An EIL official privately admitted that company executives tailored advertisements so as to favour foreign suppliers. "They can then get trips overseas," explained the official. But spokesmen of the other two companies dismissed the charge. HAL's Finance Director C.V. Nagendra claimed that he had documentary evidence showing that his company's advertisement had been available to the public well in time. Added an NTPC spokesman: "The allegation that bidders did not have enough time is not true. We advertised in the newspapers as well as the journal."

Such matters are, of course, a side-show to the fierce controversy, and the CEI report homed in on the principal problem by presenting a case for higher customs duties (25 per cent for fertiliser equipment). But the case has not gone unchallenged. The fertiliser industry, the chief beneficiary of low customs duties, quickly lobbied with the Government, pointing out that a duty hike would push up the cost of each fertiliser venture by around Rs 40 crore. Last fortnight, Fertiliser Association of India's Executive Director Pratap Narayan contended that far from netting the Government revenue, a tariff would cost it dearly because bigger project bills would lead to higher interest and depreciation charges. In turn, these would push up fertiliser production costs. Since the Government fixes the industry's profits using a complex formula that takes such costs into account, the Government would have to fork out fatter subsidies to fertiliser manufacturers. B.N. Puranmalka, managing director of the Birla-run Indo-Gulf Fertilisers and Chemicals, which is putting up one of the six new fertiliser plants, echoes the point when he argues: "The suggestion to impose a duty is very dangerous. If the cost of equipment goes up, the subsidy will go up."

"If heavy imports of capital goods

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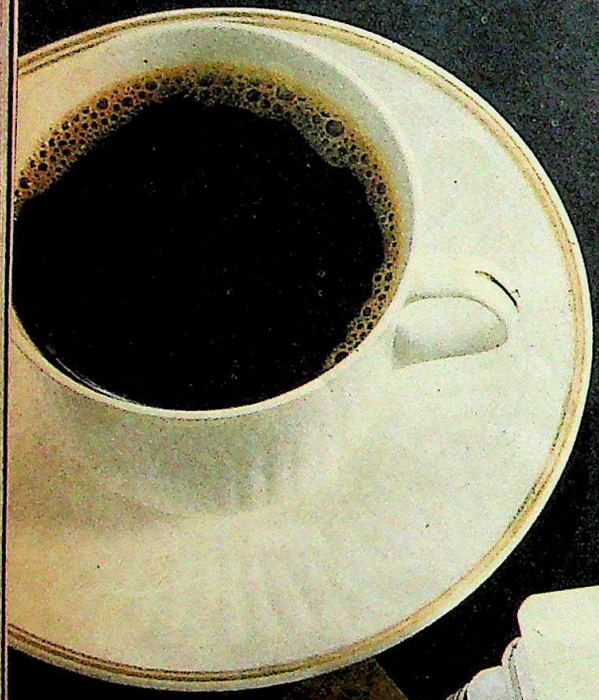

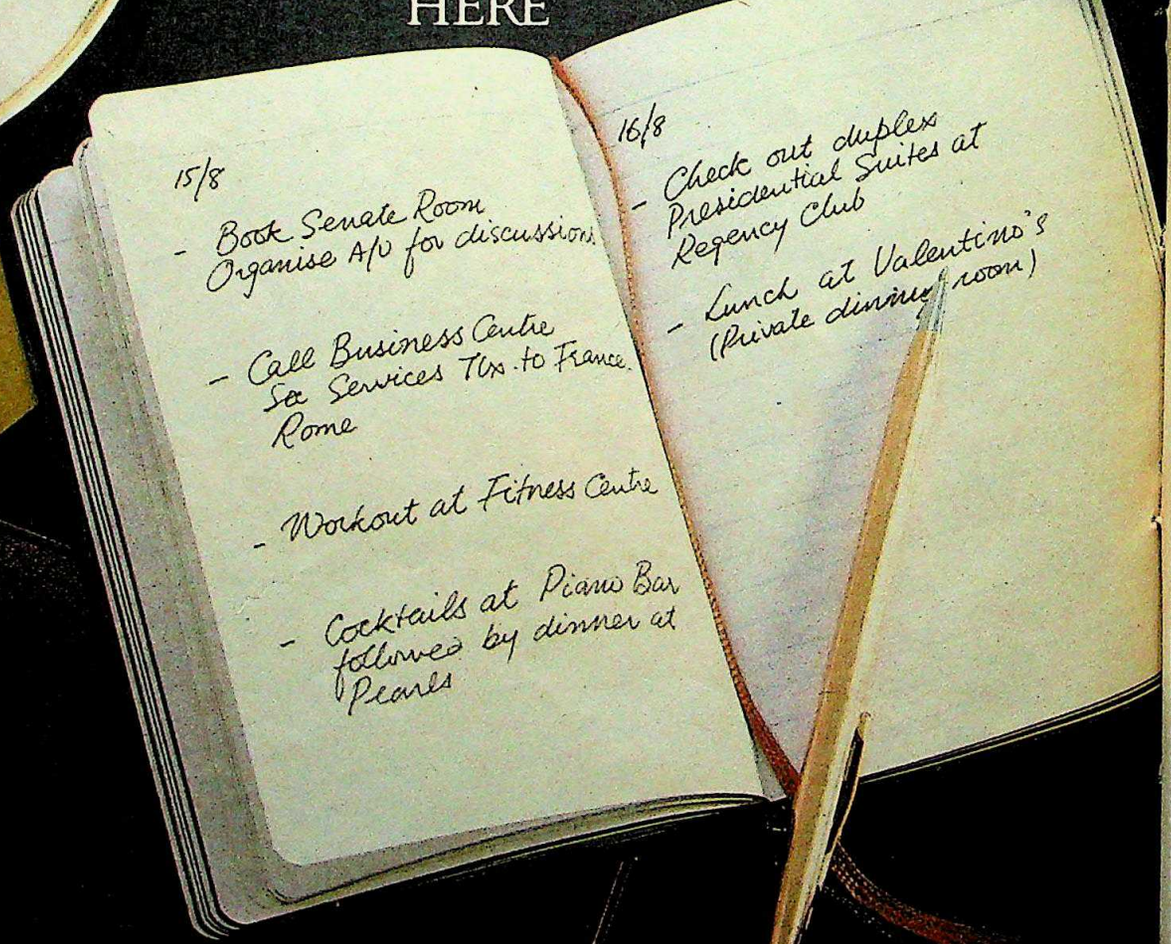

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have taken place, it is not due to the removal of customs duty but for other reasons. It is either the capital goods industry's delivery schedules or the technical specifications that are inadequate," says Narayan. Further, fertiliser industry professionals claim that proposals to import various types of equipment are thoroughly vetted by government committees which take the indigenous supply position into account before clearing them, and that removing the excise on local machinery would do more to place them on an equal footing than slapping an import duty.

The Government, however, buys only some of these arguments. A senior government functionary said last fortnight that imports had surged not because of the duty structure but because foreign bilateral aid was tied to the import of capital goods. The official further added that the rise in imports indicated that companies were investing more, and that loopholes existed in official import clearance procedures. "We are thinking of closing the loopholes. But the capital goods industry has operated in a protected environment till now. It should have some protection, but the protection should not be open ended," said the official.

He also confidently asserted that the controversy would be happily resolved in the next few months. If so, come budget time, both the fertiliser and engineering industries may be in for a capital surprise.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI

MAHANAGAR TELEPHONE NIGAM

Public Call

THERE'S good news ahead for telephone subscribers in Delhi and Bombay: push-button telephones are round the corner; so are bills that list the duration and time of calls, and perhaps even improved services. Better still, the telephone waiting list of 3.7 lakh in the two cities could disappear by 1990—if the whopping Rs 1,200 crore needed for the hefty investments is forthcoming.

Last fortnight, Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL), the telephone corporation which the Government launched last April for Bombay and Delhi, was readying to raise Rs 150 crore from the public, the first in a series of ambitious fund-raising drives. The money is meant for revamping the telephone system and buying new equipment.

For starters, orders have been placed for push-button instruments that will replace rotary dialling telephones from next March. Initially, only 30 per cent of the 10 lakh subscribers in the two metropolises will get the new telephones because production is a constraint. And the fortunate few will be the big companies and those living in areas where the traffic density is high. But all the old telephones will be eventually phased out on the ground of inefficiency. Argues M.P. Shukla, MTNL managing director: "Push-button instruments will help eliminate wrong calls because people often do not dial properly with rotary dial telephones."

Also in the pipeline are Rs 15 crore worth of detailed billing systems, which are to be imported. Likely to be installed at telephone exchanges before the middle of next year, they are meant to cut the spate of complaints about wrong billing.

Calls could be put through more quickly: over the next three years the two cities will have only digital electronic exchanges. To usher in fault-free lines, cables are to be protected from the ubiquitous digging by enclosing them in concrete ducts. Better material is to be used in line joints, usually a potential trouble spot, and some exchanges at least will be connected by optical fibres.

Closer home, attention is finally being paid to MTNL's own shortcomings. It has hired four consultants to recommend steps to revamp the telephone agency, provide incentives to employees, trim redundant operations, and improve its public image. "We asked the consultants to implement their reports and accept a penalty of 1 per cent of their fee for delays. One of them demurred but finally came round," says Shukla.

These are certainly ambitious plans, and the financial outlays to implement them are equally ambitious. MTNL proposes to more than double this year's Rs 176 crore investment to Rs 450 crore in the next two years. Where will the money come from? The Government has before it a proposal to jack up telephone rentals and tariffs, and telecommunication department officials argue that the rise in tariffs has not kept pace with soaring costs. The present tariff rates bring in returns of around 13 per cent on the capital invested, and officialdom would obviously like to see this go up.

Even as the Government ponders on whether to hike rates, MTNL is banking on its public issue being heavily oversubscribed. The corporation has the telephone department's past image to contend with, and its big plans plainly hinge on its ability to convince the public that it intends to ring in new times. Whether it can, eventually, is of course the big question.

—PALAKUNNATHU G. MATHAI

Ambitious plans to improve telephone services in Bombay and Delhi are to be financed through higher tariffs and a public bond issue.

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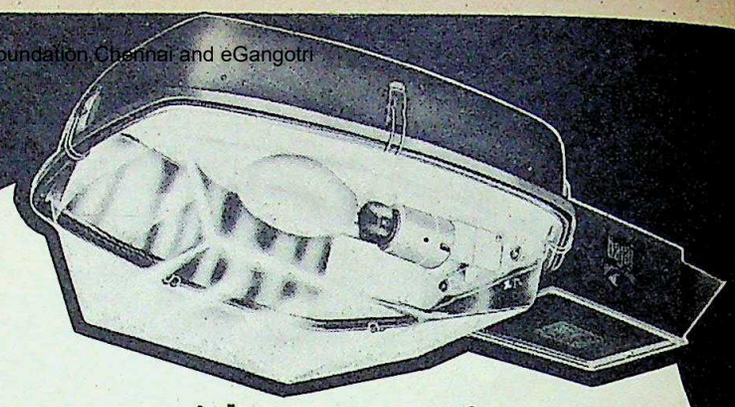

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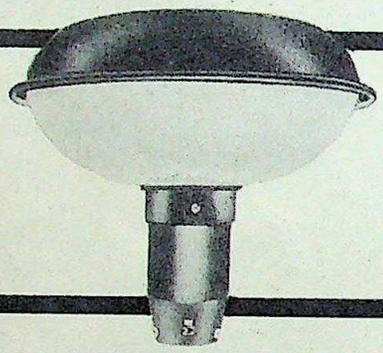

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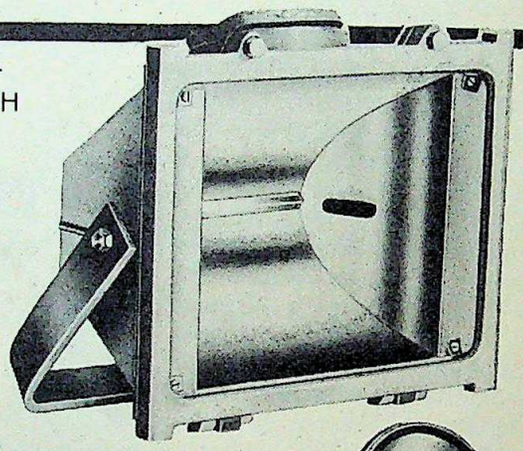

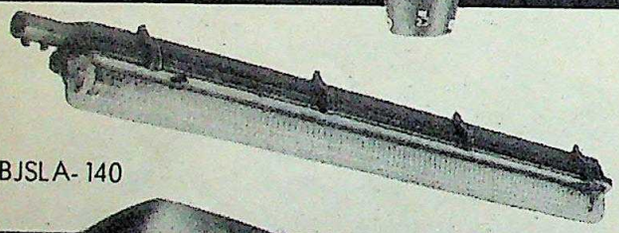

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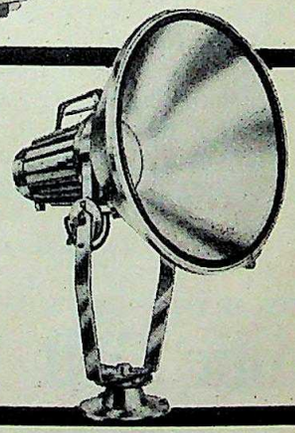

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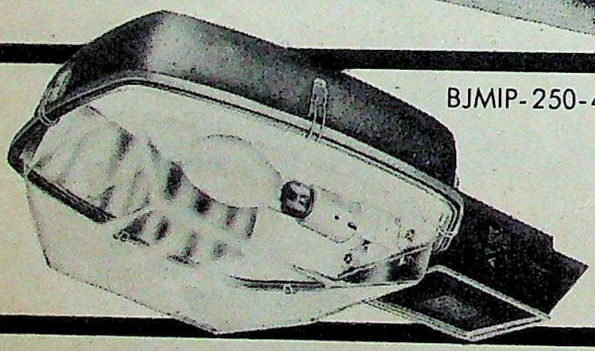

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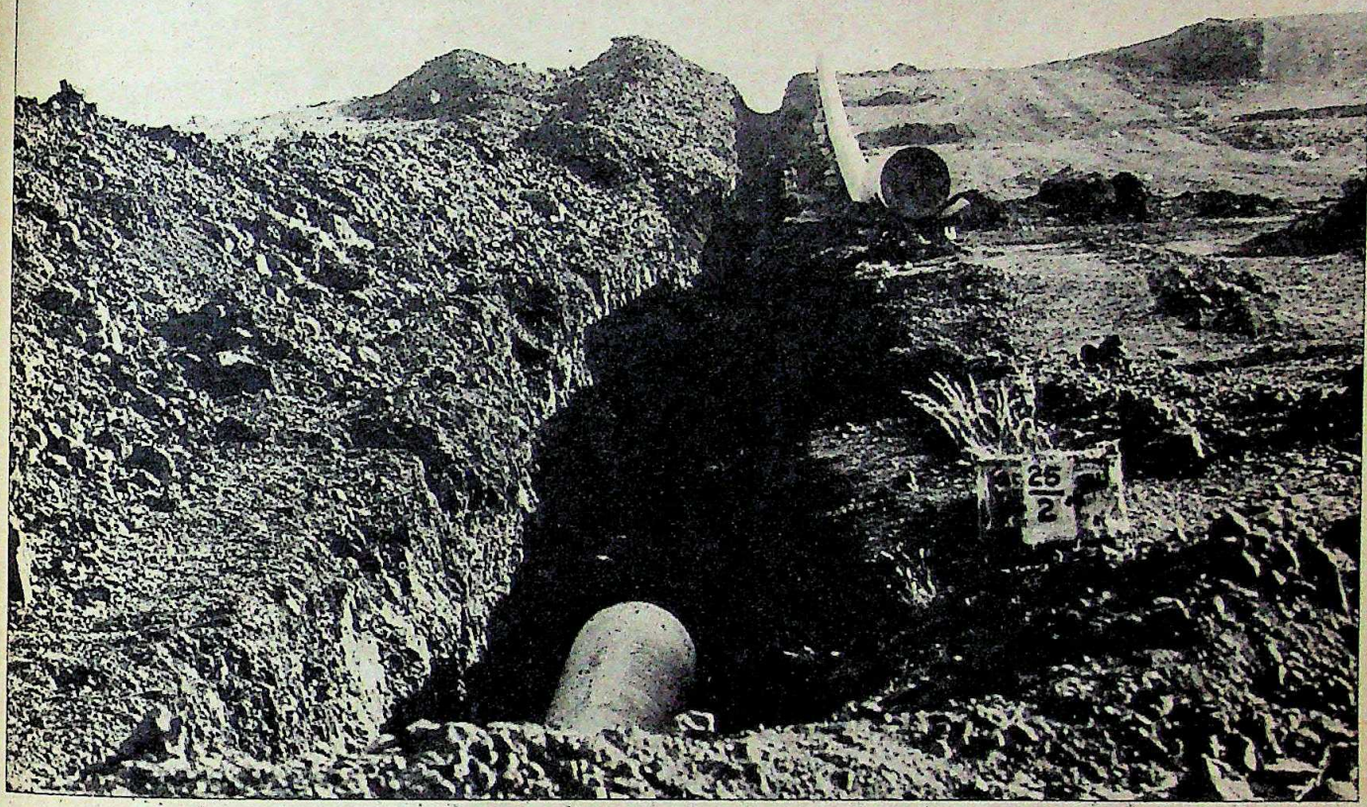
PRASHANT PANJIAR

GAIL

Problems in the Pipeline



The pipeline near Jhabua

WHEN the Government formed the Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) in August 1984 and entrusted to it the management of the ambitious Rs 1,700-crore Hazira-Bijaipur-Jagdishpur (HBJ) gas pipeline, the Petroleum Ministry must have heaved a sigh of relief for it was killing two birds with one stone: creating an independent body to take charge of all gas supplies produced from the country's oil and gas fields, while also making one agency responsible for the largest national gas pipeline project. But even after two years of shouldering this responsibility, GAIL has drifted into the unenviable position of not being able to deliver the goods on either front. Its first major assignment—overseeing the construction of the 1,758-km-long pipeline—is way behind schedule. And all the signs point to continuing delays.

The pipeline project received renewed media attention on October 17 when the then industry minister Narain Dutt Tewari visited Petlavad, a tiny hamlet near Jhabua in Madhya Pradesh to inaugurate the pipe laying. According to the Government's own figures, about 150 km of the pipeline should have been laid since then. But now two months later all that is in place so far is the less than 200 metres of pipeline which was lowered into the trench at the time of the inauguration.

Notwithstanding the hoopla accompanying its creation, the stark fact is that GAIL, which has already spent about Rs 700 crore on the HBJ project, continues to remain virtually a paper organisation with no senior identifiable person responsible for calling the shots. It has been without a full-time chairman or managing director for the last couple of months when H.S. Cheema, who had worn both hats, was moved out. Even though the Government has been looking for a replacement there have been no takers so far. As one senior official put it: "The project spells trouble and no one seems to want to put his career on the line." In addition, GAIL has no director of personnel, and the finance director is serving on a three-month extension.

GAIL, rudderless and adrift, could play havoc with the economies of multi-thousand-crore fertiliser and power projects expected to depend on the pipeline as their prime source of energy. According to the original contract with the Franco-Japanese consortium led by Spie Capag, the first fertiliser unit—National Fertilisers Ltd at Bijaipur—is scheduled to receive gas from the pipeline by March next year. But if the concern expressed by some of GAIL's senior officers, including

"The initial problems are over and work is going ahead full steam."

PIERRE C. CAPO
vice-president, Spie Capag

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General Manager R.P. Madhekar at a recent closed-door meeting about the lack of progress on the project is any gauge, it is unlikely that the deadline will be met. The last confidential monthly progress report prepared by GAIL paints a dismal picture about welding activities. The first phase of the schedule calls for the completion of welding and coating on about 641 km of pipe by March. So far, only about 15 km is complete.

Nonetheless, spokesmen for Spie Capag express the confidence that they can meet the target dates for the completion of the first phase. Says Christian Pellet, area construction manager posted at Baroda: "We shall put everything at our disposal to complete the job in time and we will do it by all means." Echoing him is W.M. Drope, assistant construction manager of pipelines at Ujjain in charge of the last 320 km of the first phase: "Spie Capag has no intention of going back on the contract." He argues that what matters are the final date of completion.

BUT this same confidence is not shared by others involved in the work. Says an official of Dodsals—the largest subcontractor for Spie Capag responsible for laying the pipeline in over half of the distance to be covered during the first phase: "We have not been able to get customs clearance for certain key equipment and it will be a little tricky to comment on the realistic date of completion." Vital equipment such as welding machines, and even camping gear is stuck at Kandla and Bombay ports. As a result, more than 100 French and Japanese technicians, "are still stranded in Baroda while they should have been in the fields". But Pierre C. Capo, vice-president of Spie Capag, emphasises that the initial problems are over and work is "going ahead full steam".

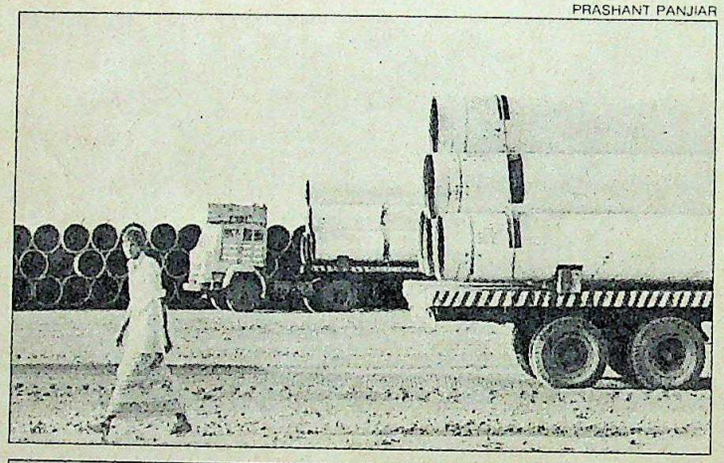
Customs delays, however, are not the only impediment in the path of the incipient scheme. The project has also been crippled by the slow acquisition of heavy machinery needed for earth-moving as well as highly complex coating and welding jobs. This is because the purchase contracts for most of this equipment, to be procured from abroad, have been delayed. The laying of the pipes in itself is not the end of the journey. After the pipes are put into the ground, they have to undergo a series of scientific tests in order to determine their strength and use worthiness. With the initial work so far behind, the testing—which is a must—is expected to lead to even further delays.

Concerned over the delay and the heavy penalty clauses involved in the agreement with the Government, the consortium is now moving ahead with a part of the job without having the approved drawings and blueprints from GAIL. It is also seeking permission to waive certain checks and balances stipulated in the original contract, in order to speed things up. Some waivers have already been granted. For example, GAIL engineers have already granted a temporary waiver for the stress-testing of pipe joints which is a time-consuming process. Project officials admit that while this would quicken the pace of the pipe laying it would certainly compromise the safe and effective working of the system. But it reflects the desperation of some of the project managers who feel that if they are unable to complete the first phase by the onset of the monsoon there will be another built-in three-month delay to tide over the monsoon period when all work is expected to come to a standstill.

There are other indicators that the project will be hopelessly behind schedule. In order to operate the pipeline, a massive amount of civil construction work has to be undertaken to house various operating units like compressor stations, telecommunications operations, and safety control monitors. These projects, internal government documents show, have not even come off the drawing-boards. One senior civil engineer of GAIL pointed out that it will take at least eight months to a year to complete the construction after final approval of drawings, and another three to four months for the installation of the equipment.

Unused pipes stacked at site

PRASHANT PANJIAR



While the tardy progress of the pipe laying has become cause for grave concern, the readiness of GAIL to operate it also raises an equally important question.

While the tardy progress of the pipe laying has become cause for grave concern, the readiness of GAIL to operate it also raises an equally important question. Laments a member of the GAIL Officers' Association (GOA) which enjoys near-total membership of all the technical and administrative officers in the organisation: "We expect that the senior management will try to commission the project as early as possible to earn mileage for themselves but that will eventually be at the cost of safety, security and efficiency."

GAIL records reveal that as against the required manpower of 868 in the month of August it is still continuing with only half of that strength. Of these, about 260 are Class I officers making the organisation top-heavy. The field staff is still negligible. The personnel frustration and low morale within GAIL is evident from the fact that, since its inception, about 50 officers—one-fifth of the staff—have quit the organisation. Currently, while GAIL has been recruiting trainees, it has not hired any junior level staff to perform lower level supervisory and field duties.

"We are aware of the situation and the matter is under consideration by senior authorities," comments an official spokesman for GAIL. But with all the problems the project is facing and no adequate preparatory measures still in sight to meet them headlong, it is becoming frighteningly apparent that the nation's first major gasline project may wind up becoming a costly pipe-dream.

—SHEKHAR KUMAR JHA

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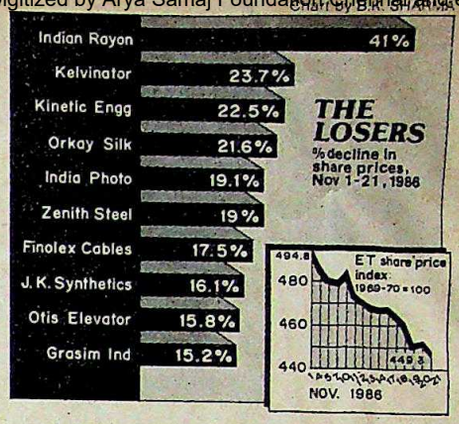
THE MARKETS

Low Point

THE bottom virtually dropped out of the market last fortnight, even as confusion reigned following fresh raids by tax authorities, and the market remained closed for several days. Virtually every index of share prices showed dramatic falls, registering the lowest levels of the year, and there were few buyers left on the market.

The official Bombay stock exchange index of equity prices lost 20 points in a single day, dropping to a new low of 519.99. *The Economic Times* index crashed in the first three weeks of November, coming down from 494.8 to 449.3, well below the previous low-point of the year (466 shortly after the budget).

Leading shares lost heavily. Bajaj Auto, a high-flying scrip in recent weeks, lost Rs 425 and slumped to Rs 4,325. Numerous shares were at—or close to—their lowest points in the year. Tata Steel touched a new low at Rs 972, Larsen & Toubro was at Rs 90, Ingersoll Rand at Rs 245, Hindustan Dorr-Oliver



at Rs 280 and Mahindra & Mahindra at Rs 40. In the downbeat commercial vehicle sector Telco lost further ground to close at Rs 525, only marginally higher than its low-point for the year. Only few shares gained ground.

Inspite of the dismal losses there were no signs of any possible bail-out by the financial institutions. And while a technical correction because the market is now over-sold could signal a slight recovery, there is little reason to hope for an improvement in the over-all mood of the market. The Government, while clearing a host of applications for fresh share and debenture issues, seems unconcerned about what the present state of depression could do to the capital market as a whole. With several newly issued scrips available at a discount, it remains to be seen what fate will meet the scores of companies now asking investors to cough up cash.

The biggest two new issues this month are by Reliance Industries (Rs 400 crore in convertible debentures at an attractive conversion ratio) and Indo-Gulf Fertiliser (a total of Rs 280 crore in debentures and shares). With both companies approaching investors simultaneously, the question is which company will do better. Reliance offers more attractive prospects of immediate gains, while Indo-Gulf makes sense as a long-term investment. But it remains to be seen whether there is enough cash going around for both companies to rake in as much as they would like to. There are several smaller issues too on offer, some attractive (like Vareli) and others not so attractive. If current form holds true, several of these companies may fail to raise the money which the Government has allowed them to. If that does happen, the capital market boom will have been well and truly punctured.

ACTIVE STOCKS

	1986 HIGH	1986 LOW	CLOSE 21.11.86	Change in Fortnight	
Ashok Leyland	45.00	23.00	33.00	4.50	–
Associated Cement	389.00	186.00	233.00	2.00	–
Atlas Copco	138.00	64.00	111.00	5.00	–
Asian Paints	280.00	130.00	200.00	20.00	–
Avery India	163.00	100.00	143.00	20.00	–
Bajaj Auto	4800.00	1950.00	4325.00	425.00	–
Baroda Rayon	490.00	210.00	220.00	25.00	–
Bata India	131.50	54.00	114.00	16.50	–
Bayer	680.00	445.00	630.00	20.00	–
Bharat Forge	86.00	48.00	65.00	1.00	–
Britania Ind.	186.00	85.00	154.00	22.25	–
Blue Star	120.50	75.00	100.00	5.00	–
Bombay Dyeing	123.00	77.00	88.00	3.00	–
Brooke Bond	96.75	56.00	75.75	5.75	–
Ceat Tyres	560.00	240.00	480.00	15.00	–
Century Spinning	1690.00	710.00	750.00	45.00	–
Chloride India	146.00	86.00	128.50	17.50	–
Colgate	385.00	200.00	340.00	27.50	–
DCM	58.50	26.25	35.75	1.75	+
Dunlop	75.50	49.75	73.25	2.75	+
Elecon	127.00	80.00	95.00	7.50	–
Escorts	117.00	69.00	84.00	8.00	–
Finolex Cables	125.00	36.00	99.00	21.00	–
Food Specialities	375.00	164.00	173.00	22.50	–
Garware Nylon	61.50	27.50	27.50	3.00	–
G.E. Shipping	36.00	13.00	15.00	2.00	–
Gujarat St. Fertilisers	182.00	92.50	145.00	11.00	–
Grasim Ind.	102.00	59.00	86.50	11.50	–
Hind. Cocoa	250.00	97.50	228.50	21.50	–
Hindustan Lever	192.00	124.00	166.00	18.00	–
Hindustan Motors	128.50	37.75	39.50	4.60	–
Hind. Dorr	660.00	280.00	280.00	30.00	–
IEL	84.50	49.00	50.25	6.75	–
Indian Hotels	157.00	80.00	85.00	5.00	–
Indian Organic	97.00	63.00	69.00	5.50	–
Indian Rayon	151.00	72.00	72.00*	11.50	–
Indrol	515.00	200.00	446.25	63.75	–
Ingersoll-Rand	505.00	245.00	245.00	35.00	–
ITC	86.50	53.00	75.25	7.75	–
J.K. Synthetics	132.00	78.00	78.00	14.50	–
Kinetic Engineering	385.00	220.00	275.00	60.00	–
Kirloskar Cummins	775.00	505.00	760.00	15.00	–
Lakme	195.00	110.00	112.50	12.50	–
Larson & Toubro	204.00	89.00	90.00	14.50	–
Lipton	69.00	46.50	60.00	5.50	–
Lohia Machines	70.00	21.00	26.00	5.00	–
Madura Coats	92.00	51.00	65.50	7.00	–
Mahindra & Mahindra	86.00	39.00	40.00	4.00	–
Motor Industries	1000.00	375.00	380.00	20.00	–
National Organic	840.00	512.50	525.00	40.00	–
Nirlon	77.00	25.00	27.50	1.50	–
Orkay Silk Mills	192.00	111.00	120.00	14.00	–
OTIS Elevator	200.00	88.00	166.00	24.00	–
Peico Electronics	104.50	48.00	56.50	12.00	–
Ponds	390.00	200.00	317.50	37.50	–
Premier Auto	990.00	555.00	625.00	62.50	–
Ranbaxy	160.00	105.00	120.00	12.50	–
Raymond	97.00	61.00	62.50	1.50	–
Reckitt & Colman	171.00	81.25	150.00	20.00	–
Reliance Industries	392.00	212.00	222.00	5.00	–
Shriram Fibres	88.00	30.00	32.50	2.75	–
Sandoz	135.00	62.00	105.00	9.00	–
SPIC	184.00	45.50	46.50	1.50	–
Tata Steel	1610.00	967.50	972.50	87.50	–
Telco	910.00	510.00	525.00	30.00	–
Vulcan Laval	162.50	45.00	53.75	nil	

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
Australia	Dollar	1	8.5276	8.4472
Austria	Schilling	100	92.5947	91.6752
Bahrain	Dinar	1	34.2782	34.1662
Bangladesh	Taka	100	42.9999	42.8732
Canada	Dollar	1	9.4766	9.3950
Denmark	Kroner	1	1.7216	1.7076
Egypt	Pound	1	9.5760	9.5220
France	Franc	1	1.9900	1.9762
Hong Kong	Dollar	1	1.6944	1.6818
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.0786	0.0698
Iran	Rial	100	16.7932	16.6670
Italy	Lira	100	0.9439	0.9330
Japan	Yen	100	7.9996	7.9357
Kenya	Shilling	1	0.7860	0.7550
Kuwait	Dinar	1	44.1060	43.9990
Malaysia	Dollar	1	5.0698	5.0253
Mauritius	Rupee	1	0.9552	0.9490
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6220	0.6190
Netherlands	Guilder	1	5.7623	5.7143
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.7620	0.7490
Singapore	Dollar	1	6.0333	5.9815
Spain	Peseta	1	0.0960	0.0900
Sri Lanka	Rupee	1	0.4499	0.4330
Sweden	Kroner	1	1.8854	1.8692
Switzerland	Franc	1	7.7533	7.7355
Tanzania	Shilling	1	0.2740	0.2700
Thailand	Baht	100	49.9900	48.3000
UK	Pound	1	18.6871	18.5459
USA	Dollar	1	13.1925	13.0975
UAE	Dirham	1	3.5000	3.4990
USSR	Rouble	1	19.1000	18.8332
W. Germany	Deutschmark	1	6.5189	6.4683

These rates were applied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 24.11.86.

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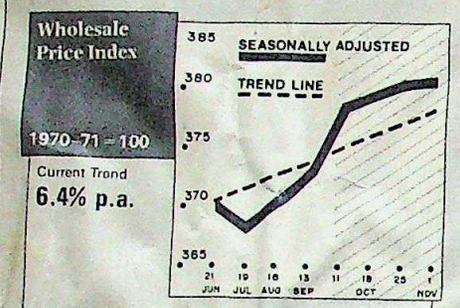
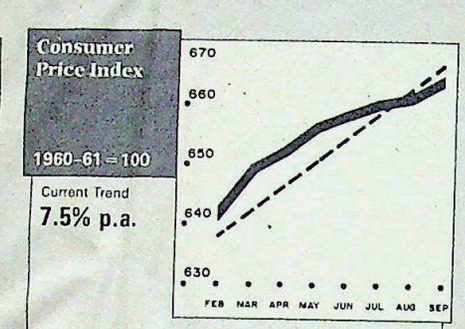
ALL infrastructural indicators, besides cement and crude petroleum, are showing double digit growth. This suggests that 1986-87 should be a good year for growth. Prices have also begun to decelerate. The stock-market is not reflecting the economy's health because of its institutional problems.

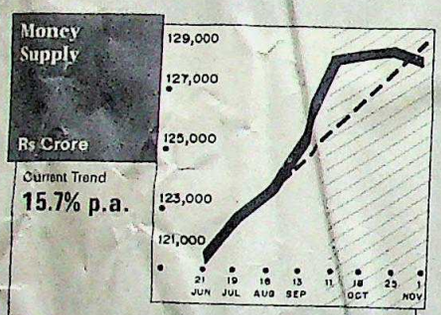
All data are seasonally adjusted. The current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or two-years' (monthly data) figures. Quarters in text refer to the calendar year quarters.



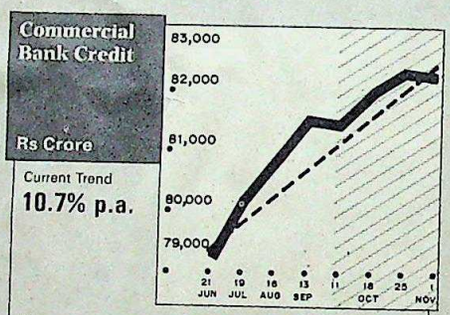
The last few weeks have shown a healthy deceleration in the rate of inflation. 1986 should end with around 5 per cent inflation.



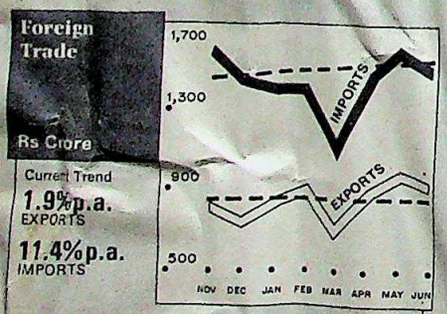
Signs of deceleration are present in consumer prices as well. The third quarter had an inflation rate of less than 4.5 per cent (annual).



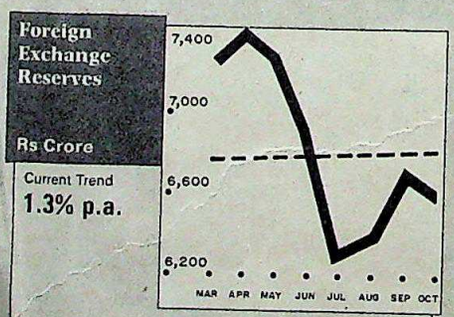
Steadiness is the hall mark of the present monetary policy. This should increase prospects of growth, with reasonable price stability.



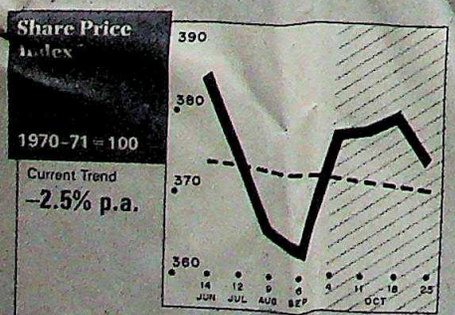
The stinginess towards the private sector may have deleterious effects. Credit has been lagging behind the growth in money supply.



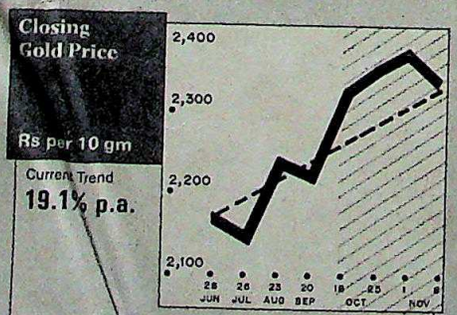
The export trend rate does not adequately reflect the pick-up in exports. The export promotion policy may be begining to show results.



Foreign exchange reserves are holding reasonably steady at a level sufficient to pay for over four months of imports.



Share prices are still in the doldrums, reflecting not the prospects of the economy but institutional problems pertaining to the share market.



Gold prices may now have entered a bullish consolidation phase. However, they show a respectful growth since end-June 1986.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of Items in October, 1986

	% Growth
Oranges	26.5
Fish	16.17
Cotton Seed	14.6
Turmeric	13.35
Copra	11.00
Linseed Oil	9.75
Coconut Oil	9.71
Onions	9.25
Tea	8.11
Mustard Oilcake	7.86
Rape & Mustard Seed	7.82
Maize	7.78
Iron Ore	6.5
Linseed	6.4
Rubber	6.24
Barley	5.7
Cashew-Nuts	5.68
Mustard Oil	5.45
Gingelly Seed	5.38
Bajra	4.56
Arhar	4.42
Gur	4.27
Butter	3.89
Boilers	3.66
Sugar	3.64
Cotton Yarn	3.51
Cotton Raw	2.91
Rice	2.78
Ghee	2.59
Hides Raw	2.58
Gingelly Oil	2.49
Moong	2.42
Logs Timber Bamboo	2.39
Steel Furniture	2.35
Wheat	2.32
Chillies	2.29
Eggs	2.29
Electricity	1.72
Atta	1.5
Art Silk & Artificial Yarn	1.37
Maida	1.28
Furnace Oil	1.24
Cement	1.23
Groundnut Seeds	1.2
Lubricating Oil	1.18
Mining Machinery	1.16
Formulations	1.13

Of the 139 series considered, 98 of them with a total weight of 65.487 had a positive growth and 40 of them with a total weight of 20.542 had a negative growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	1986	1985
Coal Thousand Tonnes, October	13001	11864
Saleable Steel Thousand Tonnes, October	741.2	640.3
Cement Thousand Tonnes, October	2925	2867
Crude Petroleum Thousand Tonnes, October	2584	2547
Petroleum Refinery Products Million Tonnes, October	4047	3590

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MILESTONES/MOT/56b

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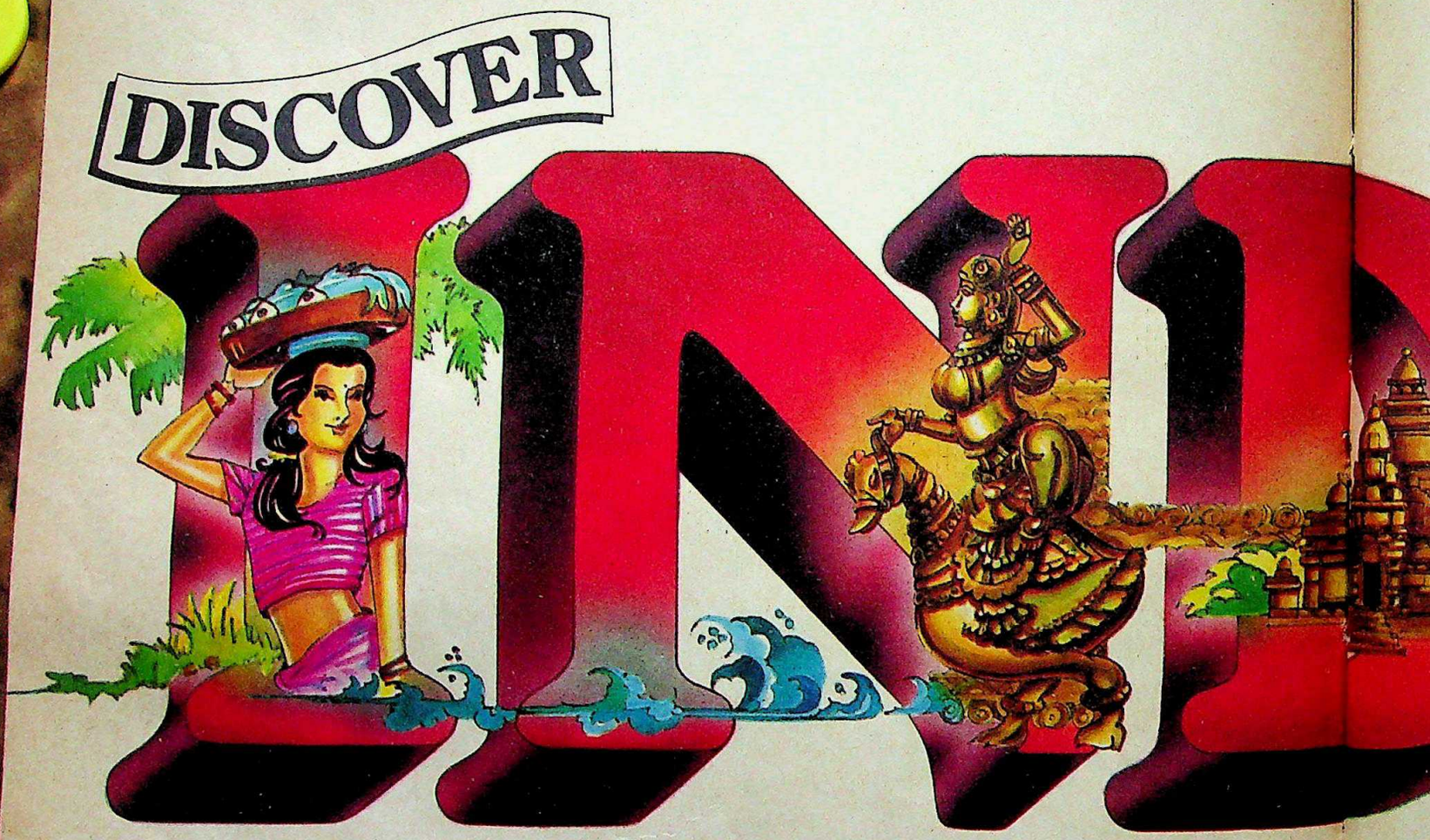
Let your pen take you around the wonder that's India.



GRAND 1st PRIZE OF Rs. 50,000 PLUS A VACATION!

It's the contest to beat all contests!
The contest that will win you the most sought after prizes and open your eyes to a wonderland that would make a fairy tale seem plain. India!
Join the 'Discover India' Contest.
And discover the riches you have inherited by being born Indian.

What's it all about!

The Discover India Contest is in two stages and is open to all Indians aged 15-30 years.

Stage One is a questionnaire of 50 intriguing questions. The Entry Form with the questions can be found in leading newspapers or selected schools and colleges. Each question is a power-house of information that challenges, prods and whets your appetite for more.

Stage Two will be on television. The top 48 winners of Stage One will qualify to compete on the national hook-up in a series of 13 television quiz programmes.

T.V. FAME AND FORTUNE!

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A Prize-studded Trail of Discovery

● The grand Ist Prize, at the end of Stage Two, will be Rs. 50,000/- plus a fabulous all-expenses-paid vacation for a week.For two! Choose from a select list of destinations in India.

YOUTH PASSPORTS GALORE!

● Three 2nd Prizes for the three losing finalists of Stage Two will include Rs. 15,000/- each and a memorable week for two at a destination of their choice in India (from a select list).

● All those answering a minimum of 40 questions correctly in Stage One will be awarded a Youth Passport. A Youth Passport entitles you to unheard of discounts for accommodation at selected destinations.

Hurry!
Everyone's joining the trip!
The last date is 31.12.86!

Get moving! Discover India.
Fill your heart with pride.
And your pockets with cash!

Discover India
Discover yourself

Ministry of Tourism
Government of India

MILESTONES/MOT/57b

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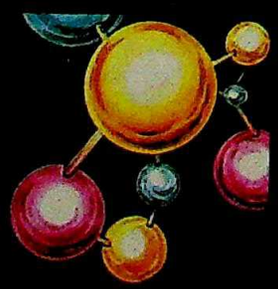
A couple of words to sum up the future of the Indian paint industry.

NEROLAC 関西

Nerolac and Kansai. Names that can only mean that the paint technology of the future will soon be here. The Cathodic electro-deposition process. Water-based primers and paints. New synthetic resins. And research on the very behaviour of paints. The kind of research and development that keeps Kansai ahead...



Together with Kansai, Goodlass Nerolac will soon change the course of the Indian paint industry.

Because, at Goodlass, we believe there's always room for improvement.

GOODLASS **NEROLAC** PAINTS LTD.
KANSAI PAINT CO. LTD.

ULKA-GNP-4-86

Kansai Paints, now a partner in Goodlass Nerolac

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Celebrity Advertising

MARSHALL Mcluhan once remarked: "A celebrity is not famous for something he has done, but famous for being famous." This is specially true when we focus on the current advertising arena. We have with us today a host of celebrities who will, after half a decade, be remembered for the television commercials that they made and very little else.

When I joined advertising in the late '50s one of the very few major brand products that rode on 'Celebrity Advertising' was called 'The beauty soap of the Film Stars'. That line is older than anyone in advertising today and Lux Toilet soap is the longest running, most consistently successful case of celebrity advertising in India. For a long time it was the only one.

We have come a long way since that age of innocence. In the '70s the great cricket explosion began with live telecasts of Test matches and the shot-gun excitement of one-day internationals. The cricket star became an overnight celebrity and photographs of Gavaskar, Kapil Dev and Sandeep Patil blossomed in middle class living-rooms like so many household gods. The '80s witnessed the unprecedented spread of the celebrity into every field of life. Singers, dancers, film directors, journalists, actors, editors, stage directors, society women, writers, fashionable restaurant owners regularly and indiscriminately peddling anything that pays them: from tea and ceiling fans to pan masalas and mosquito repellents. The phenomenon of the celebrity rat-pack can be looked at under three heads:

Relevance: One can see both context and relevance in a health drink (Viva) using a sportsman's endorsement (Srikkanth) or for that matter an Oxbridge educated Nawab (Pataudi) whose refinement and impeccability of taste make him vouch for a suiting as 'a way of life' (Gwalior). Such correspondences are accurate and verifiable. The essential characteristics of the spokesperson are meaningful by way of an exact match with product type and quality. But what can be the added value of Shafi Inamdar selling vests or say 'Khopdi' (the lush in *Nukkad*) promoting a brand of tea?

There appears to be little available data on the effectiveness of celebrity advertising in India. But there is an accumulation of data abroad. In a paper published in the *Harvard Business Review*, David Ogilvy who has considerable experience in this area, writes: "On the average, commercials built around celebrities were not notably successful in changing brand preference. Twenty one per cent fewer customers reported a change in brand preference influenced by celebrity commercials, compared with the average change for all commercials studied. However, when measured for viewer's ability to recall a commercial 24 hours after seeing it, celebrity commercials scored well above average: 22 per cent more respondents. Why this difference of 21 to 22 between brand preference and recall? We suspect it is because many such messages focus attention on the celebrity rather than on the product." One suspects that a similar situation is not unlikely to exist in the Indian context today.

> "In celebrity advertising, the practitioner goes beyond the legitimate creation of wants and ambitions which leads to human growth, and presents instead a dangerous, vapid day-dream of instant success."

Credibility: A related issue is the question of the credibility of celebrities. Writing in *Ogilvy on Advertising*, Ogilvy says: "Viewers guess that the celebrity has been bought and they are right." The exception is when experts endorse a product, that is, when there is a reason for consumers to believe that the person is qualified in some way to speak about a particular product. As might be expected, a study (Hershy H. Friedman and Linda Friedman in the US) clearly shows that there is significant product-endorser interaction. Obviously then, a housewife is likely to believe Tarla Dalal talking about a cooking medium but there is not much she is likely to do after watching Sridevi plugging CEMA bulbs.

Selectivity: One great reason for failure in brand recall is the current overuse of certain celebrities. Did I see Gavaskar in the commercial for Lipton Tea? Was it Cherry Blossom Liquid? Or Dinesh Suitings? Thums Up? Silver Plus?... A single spokesman endorsing just one product can, if correctly positioned, produce fantastic brand identity and result in the creation of a celebrity where none such exists. The first recorded case of good advertising at heavy pressure giving birth to a celebrity can be seen in the triumphant march of Lalitaji endorsing Surf. In sizeable sections of north and especially north east India today, nobody believes her to be an advertising agency 'creation'. She is taken to be a real flesh and blood person who embodies Wisdom and Authority. Letters are written to her and her advice sought on matters as diverse as family, marriages and local politics.

Advertising is often accused of creating unnecessary wants, increasing consumption which erodes precious natural and environmental resources and of corrupting the public taste. In the case of the 'nine days wonder' celebrity, such criticism runs dangerously close to the truth. For, in celebrity advertising, the practitioner goes beyond the legitimate creation of wants and ambitions which leads to human growth, and presents instead a dangerous, vapid day-dream of instant success. This is neither implied nor stated, it is there and proved. The presence of the instant celebrity bears mute testimony to the possibility of 'rags to riches' in months. At this point advertising skirts dangerously close to the kind of moral degradation produced by the worst commercial cinema. Advertising never corrupted anyone, at any rate nobody who was not already eager and waiting to be corrupted. But some advertising may bring a man to the brink of deluding and therefore, ultimately of corrupting himself.

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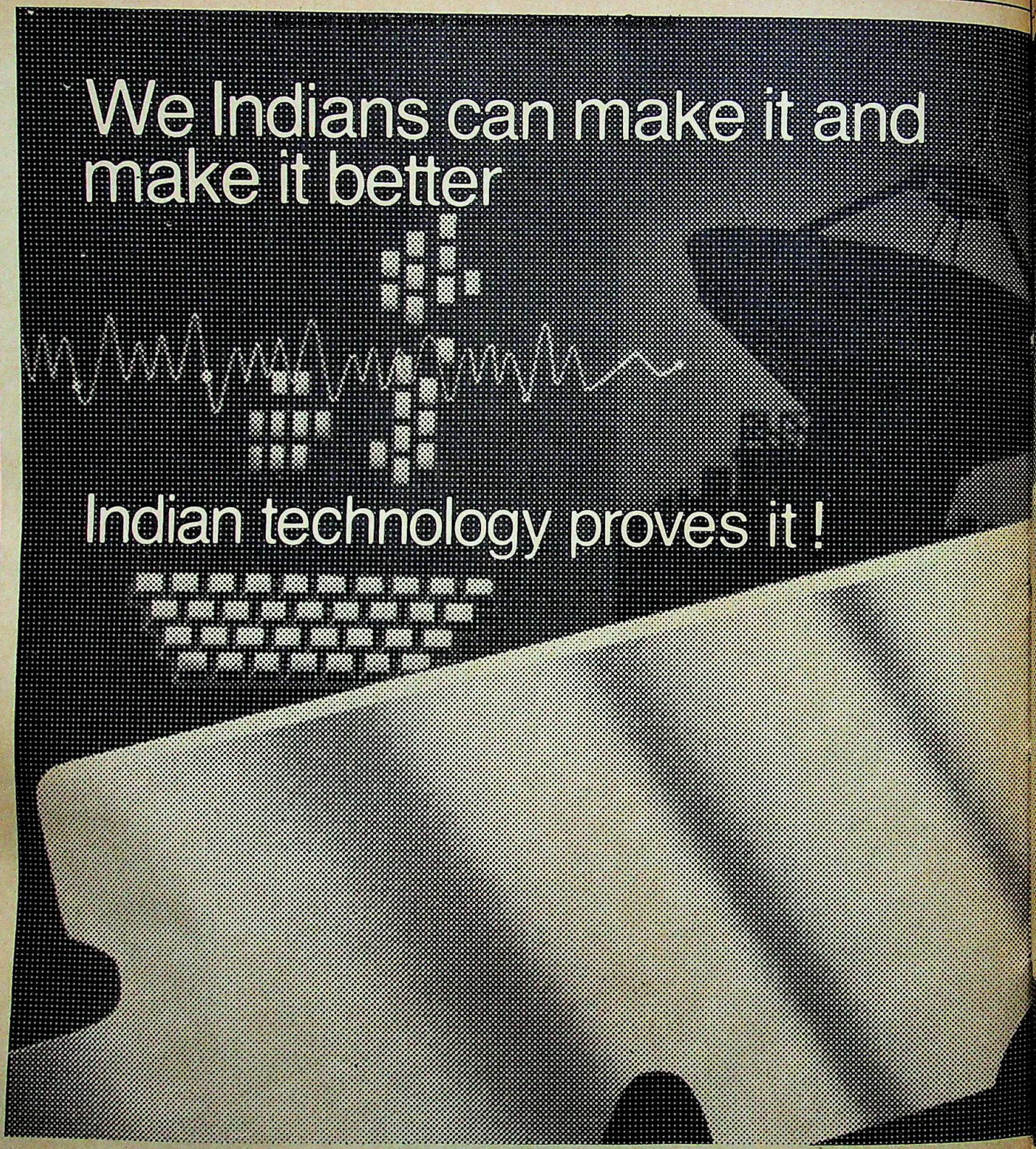

'TOPAZ' ends the imported myth.

India meets the international challenge from the spinning wheel to the spacecraft, satellites, rockets, computers. All milestones of Indian technology! And TOPAZ continues the Indian tradition of self-reliance. TOPAZ has made incredible strides in blade manufacturing technology. TOPAZ blades' instant recognition the world over is an established fact, proving once again that India can make it and make it better. TOPAZ remains the blade with a STAINLESS reputation. The reason why more and more people choose TOPAZ.

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TOPAZ STAINLESS

The National blade with an International edge

MALHOTRAS

The blade technologists.

Concept-MI-9176

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KUMAON AND GARHWAL

The Male Migration

PERHAPS it had once seemed a passing phase, this moving from the mountains to the plains in search of work. But today it is an established tradition in Uttar Pradesh's hill regions of Kumaon and Garhwal. Particularly after Independence, the stream of migrants has grown so forceful that it has clearly begun to alter the economic and social face of these mountainous regions.

Principal Correspondent SREEKANT KHANDEKAR and Chief Photographer BHAWAN SINGH recently spent more than a week meeting villagers, officials and academicians in five of the state's eight hill districts to find out why people desert their homes in such numbers. His report:

THIRTY-four-year-old Raghubir Singh looks out of place. With his leather shoes, terrycot trousers and waistcoat, he stands out among the villagers who huddle around him to say goodbye. His mother is in tears as she alternately hugs her son, daughter-in-law Godambari and their two kids. She is not sure when she will see them again.

Raghubir first left his village in 1968, when he was 16. Today he is an electrician in Delhi. But even after 18 years in the capital, his heart is still in his village in Pauri Garhwal district. "I was forced to leave. After all, what other option did I have? But I will return one day," promises Raghubir, who talks like a city man.

It is a tearful scene that is repeated in innumerable places every day across Kumaon and Garhwal (50,000 sq km of mountainous territory with a population of 5.5 million). There are no precise estimates, but there is no disputing the fact that no other area in India has seen such a large-scale emptying out of males in recent times as Uttar Pradesh's increasingly barren hills. The area's agriculture stopped supporting the growing population long ago, jobs are scarce in the hills, and the region in any case has a tradition of enrolling in the army and police forces in large numbers. So the migration continues.

The census figures do not entirely reflect this picture: the 1981 census said there were 1,000 males to every 962 women in Kumaon. But another survey says the outflow of men is so great that in the age group 15 to 50, women outnumber men 1,404 to 1,000.

In places, the ratio may be even more lopsided, as in the case of Kanduli village in Pauri Garhwal, 8 km from the nearest road: 16 entire families have left the village and many of the remaining 60 families have their menfolk working in the plains. The result: among the 325 people that remain, there are only 26 able-bodied men. The rest are either elders, women or children. Says Gyan Singh, a local shopkeeper: "The truth is that all the smart and hard-working people choose to leave this place."

It is the local variation of the brain drain. Harinder Kumar Joshi, bright, 17, and the village's only resident now in the 12th standard, for instance, intends to learn shorthand and leave as early as he can. Out of 14 students in his class in a nearby village, half a dozen already talk in terms of going out.

The situation is not much better elsewhere. Says Trilok Singh, 80, a compara-

Women folk in Garhwal: altered social patterns

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"I was forced to leave the village. After all, what other option did I have?" asks Raghubir, who is now employed in Delhi.

vely well-off farmer from Sasbhira village in Almora dis-rict: "I didn't have to leave my illage because there was no eed to. My family of 10 could ve off our fields." Today his ur sons and their families are Delhi. Three of his four sons-law also work in the plains. et he adds: "We in Kumaon e lucky: the terrain in Garh-al is much harsher."

Pithoragarh district pro-des the most graphic statis-s of the extent of this migra-n. Here, as elsewhere in the hills, a job the armed forces is perhaps the most ught after. Says a district official oudly: "As many as 387 local boys have ed fighting for the country; 52 of them ave been awarded for bravery so far, and at includes one Mahavir Chakra and 24 ir Chakras. How many districts in India n rival that record?"

Today, the district—with a popula-n of just over five lakh—has 20,000 en serving in the armed forces; over a ousand get recruited annually. An-her 12,000 men are with the state police nd paramilitary units, the second most opular place of employment. For good easure, Pithoragarh has 28,000 pen-oners, while another 3,000 women get idows' pension. Probably every second third family in the district lives on onthly money orders.

And as time has gone by, the people have become increasingly dependent on what is known as the money order economy. Just how much of a difference having a family member outside makes has been brought out in a study of 200 households made by S.S. Khanka, a lecturer in Kumaon University. Khanka found that in 66 households with one migrant each, the per capita income excluding remittances was a mere Rs417. But when remittances were included, the per capita figure shot up by 64 per cent to Rs686. In households with more than one migrant, the jump was dramatic.

The figures of remittances are mind-boggling especially if one considers the backwardness of hill territories. Mukul Sanwal, director of the Administrative Training Institute at Nainital, recalls that even as early as 1973-74, remittances—including pensions—brought in about Rs 4.50 crore annually to Almora district. In Pithoragarh district the annual remittances from army, paramilitary and police personnel amount to Rs 10 crore. Pensions bring in another Rs 5 crore. In addition, what people in the private sector send home is anybody's guess.

Migration has been accentuated by two other reasons. One is the demonstration effect—youngsters look up to those who live outside and come home with money, dressed well: that they may be night watchmen living in congested city quarters does not matter. Growing education—the literacy rate in the eight districts is 40 per cent—has increased awareness of the outside world.

The flight of men has created an extraordinary—and contradictory—si-

Nepalese labour at road works: filling the vacuum

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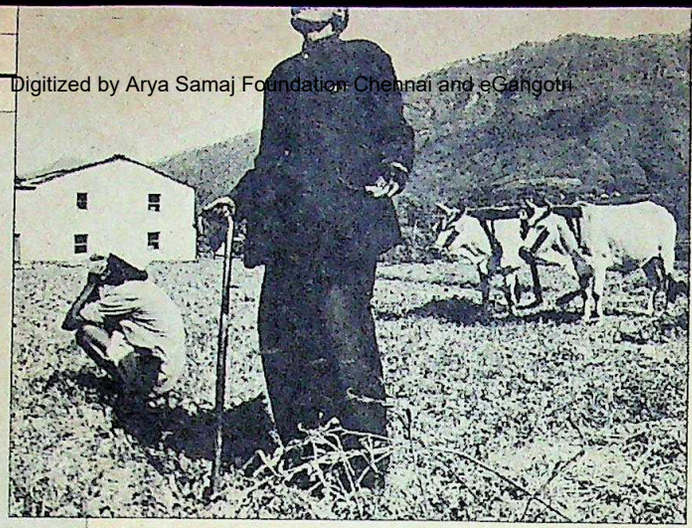

In his youth, Trilok Singh and his family could live off the fields. But times have changed: his four sons and their families reside in the plains.

tuation. Labour rates have shot up and range from Rs 15 per day in some pockets to Rs 20 in other places for unskilled workers—and yet, there is often a shortage of workers in a region where unemployment is commonplace.

Retired Brigadier Parmanand laments that skilled workers—tanners, masons, blacksmiths, carpenters, among others—are impossible to find. He says that his son, a civil contractor, recently had to get masons from Bareilly, 250 km away, at the rate of Rs 55 per day, higher than in many cities.

THE truth is that manual labour has come to be looked down upon so that people are embarrassed to be seen at it even when the wages are good. Madhavanand, 36, sabhapati of Almora's village Gwalpajena, explains why: "Life here is hard. If a young educated man has to fight the soil, his heart is not in it. They want to make their future in the city: that they may end up washing dishes is irrelevant. At least the city gives them hope of great things they could do."

The real brunt of the hardship that the migration of men has brought, ironically, is borne by the women left behind. The few men left behind aren't really of much help, as they themselves admit without much shame. Their work normally ends after ploughing the fields.

For women it is a constant grind in a day that will begin at six in the morning and may well end at dusk. A woman of Kanduli describes her routine in October: she wakes up at six to attend to the cattle; comes home to cook food; from eight to two she helps her husband in the fields with the ploughing; from two to six she harvests the standing crop; then it is back home to cooking and minding the children. In fact, there is such an acute shortage of hands that in rare cases Garhwal even sees the extraordinary sight of a woman tilling the fields.

But there is little anger or frustration evident among women at the merciless toil they are subjected to—and the fact that their men folk don't help out as much as they could. Kheema Devi of village Maregaon talks without emotion about bringing up the children and managing the household while her husband Ganga Singh was away in the army for two decades. She says that she has to walk four to eight kilometres one way to get a back-breaking load of fuel wood but is surprised at the idea that her husband—now retired—could perhaps help with this heavy job. Similarly Kamla Devi, a young woman from Kanduli simply says: "All this has always been the woman's work. How can I ask my husband to do it?"

The reason for this apparently indifferent response can only be that, over the decades, women have simply become resigned to their lot. So much so that they no longer even question it.

Interestingly, the vacuum left in the work force has now led to another migration, that of Nepalese into Garhwal and Kumaon. They have traditionally always come after Diwali, but their numbers are rapidly increasing though there are no estimates. K.S. Dhariyal, additional district magistrate, Pauri Garhwal, confirms this trend. Indeed, across the region most of the labour seen working on roads is Nepalese. He says that in many government projects it is so hard to find Garhwalis willing to work that very often, it is the Nepalese who end up benefiting

Woman ploughing: unconventional role

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n rural employment sc-
mes of the Government.
"We put up notices in vil-
ges saying we want people. If
en that doesn't get a re-
nse, there is very little else
can do," he adds. Dhariyal,
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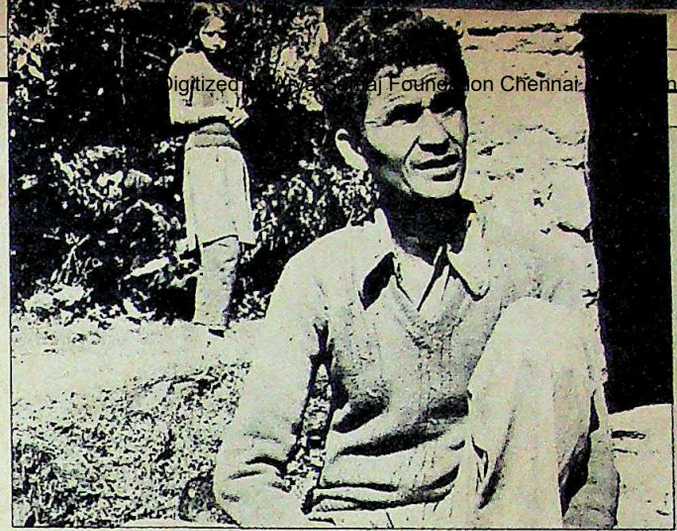

Madhavanand of Gwalpajena says: "Youngsters want to make their future in the city: that they may end up washing dishes is irrelevant."

MOST soldiers make it a point to keep in touch with the village: this helps them when y retire and return, often decades after y first left home. Soban Singh, who put 24 years in the army and lives in a age on the Nepal border, says he never lly forgot his roots because he came ularly to visit his wife and children o had stayed back.

But not everyone is so fortunate. hawan Singh, of village Dalwadi in amoli district, was out most of his life. not only fought in Africa in World War ut also joined Azad Hind Fauj and later the Uttar Pradesh police and the Central Reserve Police. Sitting at a tea shop he said that "the village has changed totally in the years that I was away".

An official describes the problem: "For years they have followed their officers' orders, led a regimented life. Now, suddenly, they have to issue orders themselves. They are too straight in their dealings for civilian life!"

According to Sanwal, who has had several postings in the hills, more than 80 per cent of the land holdings are of less than two hectares and the density of population per hectare of cultivable land is four times that in the plains. Worse, irrigation covers less than 10 per cent of farming land which itself is often none-too-productive.

It isn't as if funds haven't been forthcoming: in the Sixth Five Year Plan alone about Rs 1,000 crore were set aside for the hill districts. But the bureaucracy has tended to spend it on projects in comparatively developed areas as against places that really need it.

Admits an official in Nainital: "In inaccessible areas spending the budget actually becomes a headache because of the topography and transportation problems. So, to prevent funds from lapsing, the standard shortcut is to spend the money instead in an already developed area."

Besides, all projects haven't necessarily helped everyone. For instance, the region is peppered with drinking water projects that have turned into white elephants. Even roads haven't been an unqualified boon: they have brought goods from the plains and killed the market for local craftsmen.

In village Maregaon, near Pithoragarh, for instance, 35 Harijan families—mostly cobblers—have few buyers for their traditional leather shoes because rubber slippers have beaten them out of the market. Similarly, in Pauri Garhwal district's village Timli, tailor Saatan, a patient of asthma, lives in abject penury because mass produced readymade clothes from outside have taken away most of his traditional clientele.

At what point will this flight of men stop? There are no clear answers. The only thing that emerges clearly is that the model of planning adopted hasn't worked entirely. The state Government needs to reassess its strategy instead of thoughtlessly pumping funds into the hills in the name of development.

Receiving a money order: vital role

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DOORDARSHAN

Too Much to Swallow

IT is the hour of the sundowner. The scene: a verandah. A woman and three men waiting. In walks a perky Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose—more stocky and jocular than the textbook Netaji. He announces the recognition of the Indian National Army (INA) by Japan, Italy and Germany, the handing over of the Andamans to the INA and the addition of Rs 20-crore to the Azad Hind Fauj Fund. Then Netaji calls out: "Abid bhai, drinks..."

The camera cuts to Colonel Dhillon picking up a glass of orange juice. An incredulous Netaji turns to him: "Santre ka..?" Dhillon replies: "Maine kasam khai hai ki jab tak Hindustan Azad nahi hoga, mein sharab nahin peeyoonga." (I have vowed not to drink until India attains independence.) Netaji pats him on the back: "Bravo." The camera focuses on the tray of long-stemmed glasses with red, orange and hazy yellow liquids. Netaji waves the waiter towards Captain Lakshmi Sehgal (etiquette oblige). She picks up a glass of the yellow stuff. So does Netaji.

THIS was just a flash: Netaji picking up a glass and sipping from it. But those 20 seconds in the abruptly terminated *Raj Se Swaraj* TV series—on the INA court trials—may have altered the course of Doordarshan's bumpy history. It certainly led to the baptism by fire of Ajit Panja, the new minister of state for information and broadcasting.

The minister—who is ironically from the land of Netaji, as is Director-General of Doordarshan Bhaskar Ghosh—had to tender an apology in Parliament. So contrite was Panja towards irate West Bengal politicians that not only was the series yanked off the air after the fourth episode, he also promised to remove for eternity all traces of the offending scene. A video tape showing Netaji with a glass could not now even be kept in the archives of Doordarshan's Mandi House.

The Doordarshan top brass has obviously been given draconian guidelines. Says Ghosh: "The utmost care will have to be taken in portraying any national public figure. The minister has said that the director-general shall personally satisfy himself that no distortion or disrespect creeps into the telecasting."

The hullabaloo was actually nothing but a storm in a glass of juice. Apple to be precise. It would all have been quite funny had the implications not been so sobering. Had the actors picked up glasses with tomato juice, had the series been in black and white, there would not have been this absurd reaction. It was the tricky colour yellow that did it.

But apples have led to many a fall; things were never the same for Adam after that bite. And things won't be the same for the makers of the series, noted theatre personality Amal Allana and her producer-husband Nissar Allana, who are reluctant to be drawn into the controversy. The fates of the fifth episode of the INA trials and the Bhagat Singh trial are now uncertain.

In the hysterical reactions following the telecast, there was the inevitable mixing of emotion with fact. Most of the vociferous MP's had not even seen the offending episode. Those 20 seconds had been retold with such imagination that many MP's believed that drunken scenes had followed, with Netaji putting his arm around Lakshmi Sehgal and leading her to the dance floor. Opposition to the series snowballed to the extent that some newspapers in Bengal demanded Ghose's resignation.

Interestingly, a Calcutta newspaper opinion poll showed that while 90 per cent of the respondents felt the episode should not have been telecast, only 8 per cent had actually seen it. Also, most felt that even if Netaji did drink, he should not have been shown as doing so.

So the real question is not whether Netaji drank or not. Doordarshan will now have to project not what is the truth but what is perceived as the truth. Although Prem Sehgal, one of the INA accused, writes: 'Netaji always joined in for toasts on official occasions,' the INA leader can never be shown drinking.

Offending scene from *Raj Se Swaraj*; Ghosh (far left) and Panja: contrite

Bipin Chandra, historian at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University says that in all this controversy what Netaji stood for has been forgotten. "We know for certain that Motilal Nehru drank, but that did not mean he was any less a leader. No good historian would want to know whether a historical personage drank, ate beef, prayed or had women friends. To me Netaji's greatness lies in his patriotism and sacrifices."

Doordarshan, however, will now take a tiny U-turn: even the approved series will now be brought back and re-examined with nit-picking care. Inevitably, living personalities will be put in cold storage and any depiction of modern heroes like Jayprakash Narayan, Sardar Patel and Annadurai will have to be put through mental detectors of sorts.

—MADHU JAIN

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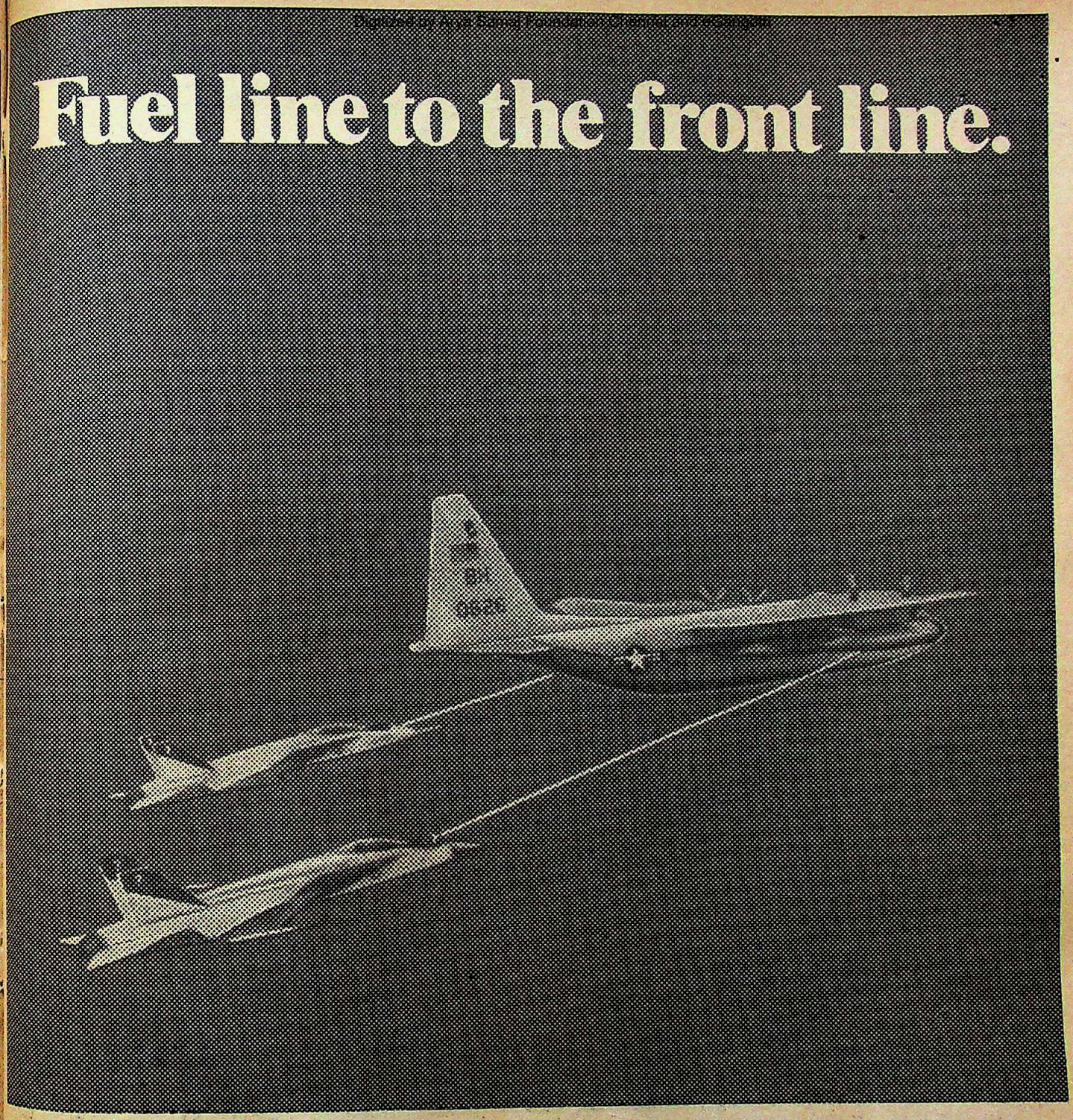
Fuel line to the front line.



Mid-air refueling may be the most demanding mission a pilot—or a plane—can take on. When one plane has to refuel different types of aircraft at different speeds, the demands multiply.

Which may explain why there are so many C-130 Hercules tankers in service around the world.

The KC-130's four turboprops give it the power to carry a 56,000-pound fuel load on a typical mission, and all the speed it needs for in-flight jet refueling. At the same time, the proven handling characteristics of the Hercules aircraft make it steady and stable at the lower speeds and altitudes required in refueling helicopters.

There's very little downtime with a KC-130. When there are no refueling missions scheduled, it can convert to a freighter in hours, and airlift 40,000 pounds of cargo to the undeveloped air strips other planes can't get into or out of.

At least seven of the world's air forces are flying the C-130 Hercules tanker today, and more have included it in their planning. They've learned that it delivers a lot more than fuel. It delivers confidence.

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CSIR

Testing Time

THE Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), is currently engaged in an exercise of introspection and self-appraisal. After 44 years of indifferent research and poor performance, the council and the Government have finally woken up to the need for a revamp. Departments and research monitoring cells are being reorganised, projects languishing are being revived and unviable ones are being discarded.

This welcome change would not have occurred had it not been for growing criticism of the council, the most vocal of critics being none other than Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Addressing a conference of scientists, Rajiv held their poor showing responsible for the country's increasing dependence on foreign technology. "Our present day technology," Rajiv acidly remarked, "is totally based on imported know-how and we are not even making a good paper-clip."

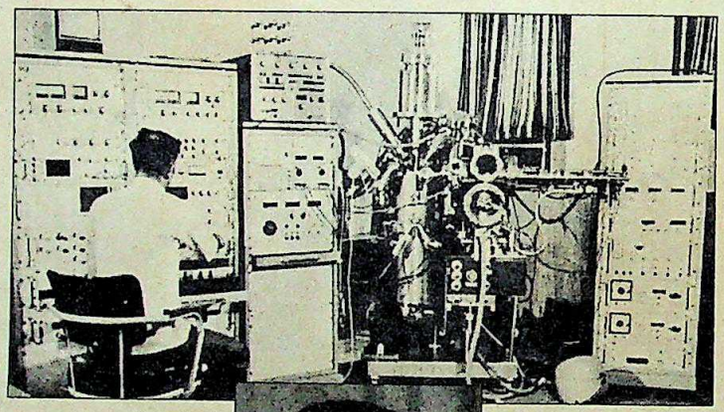
The criticism is valid. The technologies developed by CSIR have failed to find favour in both the public and private sector. The Government's liberalised technology import policy has only made matters worse. The council released 58 processes to the industry in 1983; the number had shrunk to 40 by last year. The number of projects released for production by various laboratories in this period also decreased from 56 to 24. However, a senior CSIR scientist reasons: "Companies want quick results and so they import technology rather than wait for so long." Further, premia and royalties received by licensing of CSIR know-how have fallen from Rs 125.78 lakh in 1983-84 to Rs 62.11 lakh in 1984-85.

The poor standard of research can be further gauged from the fact that in 1983-84, 13 of CSIR's 39 laboratories did not develop even a single process worth filing for patent. The Industrial Toxicology Research Centre and the National Botanical Research Institute, both in Lucknow, have failed to file even a single process for patent since 1983, though their combined expenditures go beyond Rs 500 lakh a year. In 1983-84, 68 design patents were filed for acceptance by CSIR, 26 were accepted.

The number of unfinished projects meanwhile keeps increasing. While in 1983-84 there were 393 unfinished projects their number rose to 557 in 1984-85. New projects have suffered in the bargain. CSIR cut down the number of new projects from 155 to 112 in the same period.

Largely responsible for this is the failure of scientists to keep their deadlines. Even when they do manage to develop a technology, they fail to upgrade it to the factory stage, leaving it unviable and impractical. The standard excuse is the lack of resources.

CSIR lab; and (inset) Mitra



The CSIR, over the years, has become unwieldy, lacking an effective co-ordinating body to give it cohesion or direction.

The level of mediocrity can be seen in the relatively negligible number of national honours won by CSIR scientists. While half the recipients of the prestigious Shanti Swaroop Bhatnagar Awards for research in science way back in 1962 belonged to CSIR, there was only one CSIR recipient among the 10 awardees in 1982 and just one out of 11 in 1983.

Those who do want to do something find their creativity stifled as a result of delays in getting financial support, failure to import the necessary research equipment, misuse of CSIR's autonomy by some directors and stalling of projects. A scientist working on low temperature, multi-dimensional systems at the National Physical Laboratory (NPL), Delhi, laments: "We needed a helium container for our research, which had to be imported. But it took well over a year to get it. The firm to supply the equipment is chosen after a global tender—not on the basis of quality but because its rates are the lowest. Our resources are so limited that we have to make compromises."

In 1969 NPL scientists developed general purpose cathode ray tubes. But the project was shelved till recently, despite the fact that a hefty chunk of foreign exchange could have been saved if it had been allowed to go through.

No wonder then, that CSIR has failed to attract bright scientific brains. Says J. Sen, an electrical engineering graduate: "Nobody in our batch wanted to work with CSIR and preferred to go abroad because of the better research environment." Out of Sen's 40 batchmates, 25 have already gone abroad.

More than anything, it is the size of the organisation that defeats its purpose. In its futile attempt to encompass every ambit of science, the CSIR has kept expanding over the years until it has become mammoth and unwieldy, lacking an effective co-ordinating body to give it cohesion or direction. Its 39 laboratories staffed by 18,203 scientists and 5,942 administrative personnel, has an annual expenditure of about Rs 130 crore. Justifying this, CSIR Director-General A.P. Mitra argues: "The CSIR has given the country a wide scientific base from which to build on further." But a scientist of the council said: "the CSIR tried to achieve the impossible task of doing everything together with its limited resources and failed."

The Government has only now started taking steps to reorganise CSIR, beginning with the replacement of Dr Vardarajan by Mitra. A review committee to look into the working of CSIR has been set up under the chairmanship of A.Hussain. Ironically Mitra has been left out of the committee, giving him no chance to voice his opinion on the organisation which he ostensibly heads.

—SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

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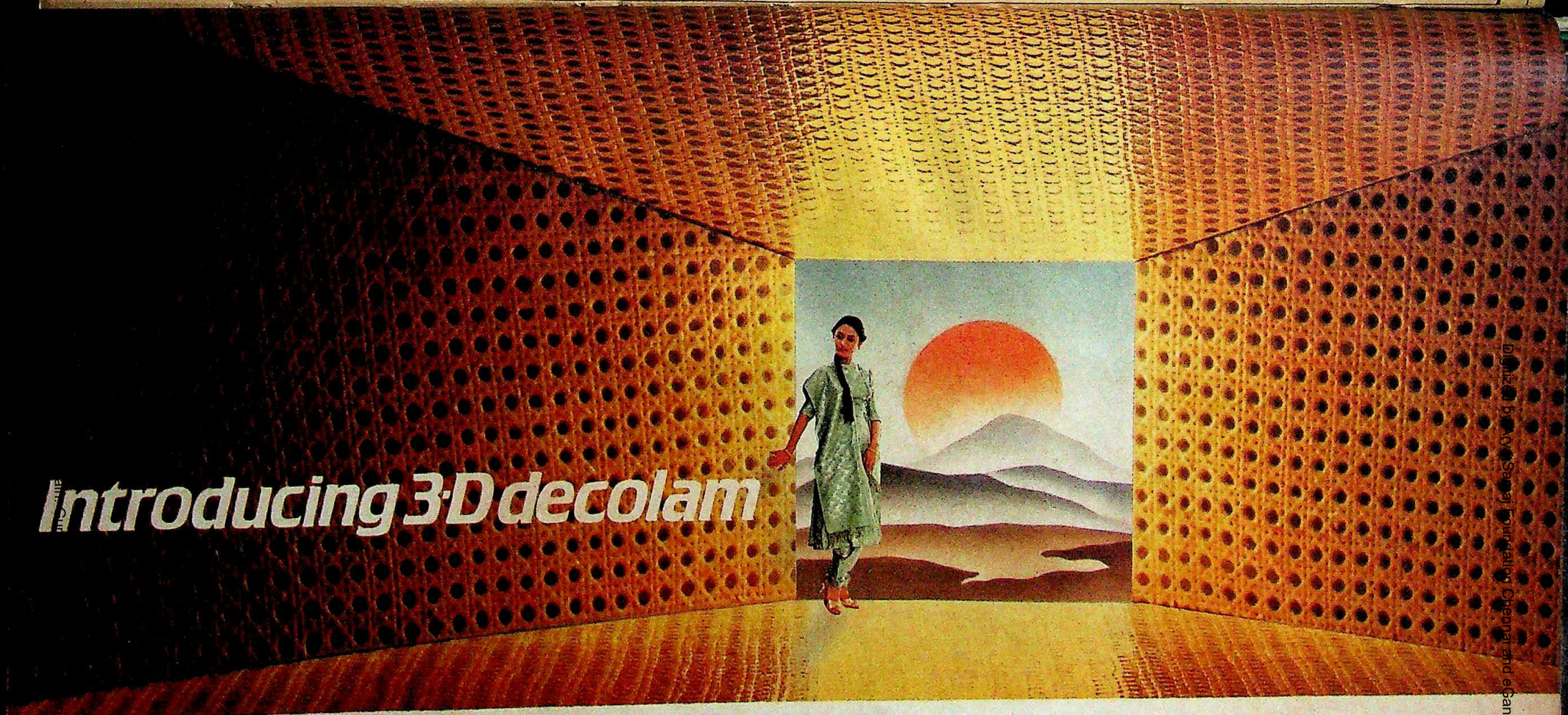

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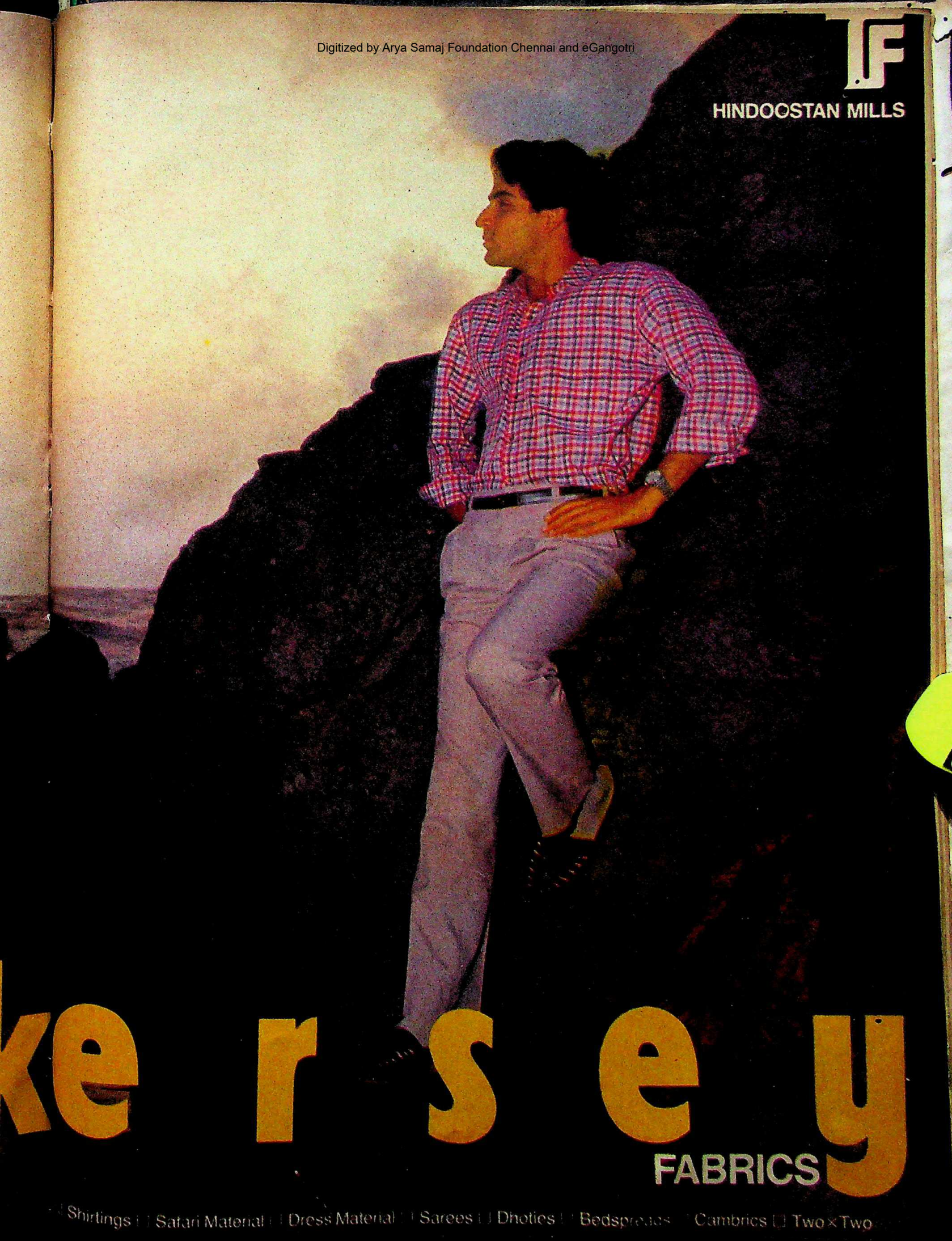

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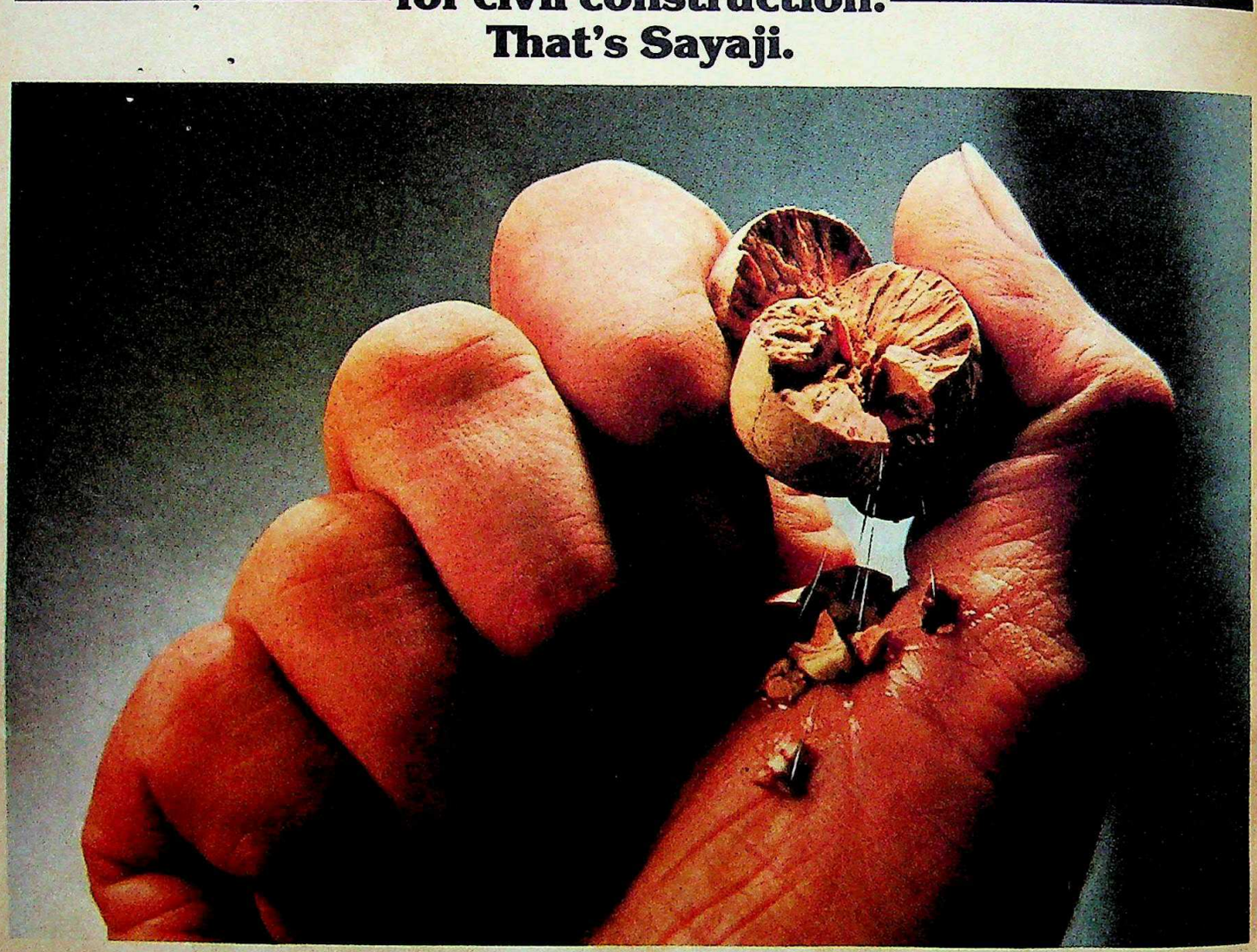

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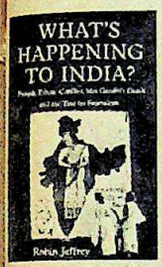
Modernisation Malaise

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO INDIA?
Punjab, Ethnic Conflict, Mrs. Gandhi's Death and the Test for Federalism
by ROBIN JEFFREY
Macmillan
Price Rs 110; Pages 213



WHAT is it about the Punjab problem that has made it the most persistent of India's political crises since independence? In Mizoram, after years of turmoil and insurgency, the rebels have finally surrendered their arms. And although a certain unquiet still hangs over Assam, the situation is no longer as explosive. But the Punjab problem continues to take its deadly toll. While political leaders struggle to stem the rising tide of violence, analysts search among the debris and bloodshed for reasons why.

There are no easy explanations but a relatively unanimous one is the theory that it was the inherent medievalism of the Sikh religion which suddenly surfaced and caused all the trouble. Even Rajiv Gandhi appears to subscribe to this view and has often remarked that modernisation is the real solution to India's communal problems. What is interesting about Robin Jeffrey's book is his theory that it was modernisation rather than medievalism which was responsible for the explosion in Punjab.

Jeffrey, who has held a research fellowship in Indian history and is senior lecturer in politics at La Trobe University, Melbourne, believes that narrow ethnic identities can often be heightened by improved communications. He argues that political factionalism and religious schisms that seemed to have awoken in everybody in 1984 had always existed in Punjab (as in the rest of India); the only difference was that they could be magnified thousandfold by the power of communications.

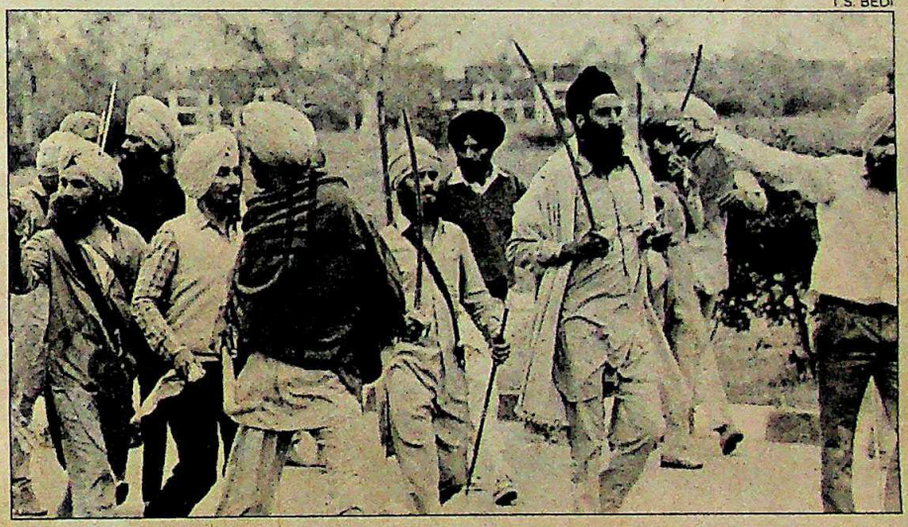
He points out that when Bhindranwale arrived on the scene, three out of five Punjabi men could read and over 95 per cent of the villages were linked by proper roads. And he made full use of this fact: all his speeches and interviews were taped and many were filmed; and the swords gave way to Sten guns.

Writes Jeffrey: "Punjab's factional struggles, time-honoured, long deadly, yet held in check by the narrow horizons of peasant life, were swept into an open sea of mass politics. The innovations accompanying the green revolution brought a keen sensitivity to outside economic forces. And with it, they brought increased travel to foreign places and regular mobility within Punjab. They brought buses, motorcycles and modern weapons. They brought schools and history books and newspapers and produced youths who had not just the ability, but the time to read them."

According to Jeffrey, what happened in Punjab is more than likely to happen in other Indian states that acquire similar standards of living and access to modern communications. The author, who skims through Sikh history, bringing in the rise of the Akalis and the creation of a separate Sikh identity, provides a valuable account of recent events in the chapter *Explosion*. Those who hold the Akalis, Bhindranwale and the Sikhs in general responsible for everything that has gone wrong in Punjab, may find Jeffrey's analysis slightly sympathetic to the Sikh view, but they would do well to read the book anyway; an important point he makes is that the right political decision at the right time could have prevented the explosion. He points out the error of allowing thousands of Sikhs to be humiliated by policemen in Haryana only because Mrs Gandhi felt the Asian Games were more important. He also blames her for not trying hard enough to solve the problem through talks.

Of the abortive talks in November 1982, he writes that electoral and international considerations influenced Mrs Gandhi's talks with the Akalis, and he also criticises her for turning every subordinate into a message boy. "Her attitude towards her negotiator, Swaran Singh, is revealing. He appears to have believed in early November that he had built a genuine agreement with the Akalis, but this was scuttled by the changes that appeared in the statement to Parliament. Journalists at the time wrote that Mrs Gandhi 'developed cold feet' and 'reduced Swaran Singh to a messenger'." Mrs Gandhi is also accused of having more 'sinister' designs in mind: the Hindu vote. Jeffrey says she calculated that regional, anti-Congress forces in states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Jammu & Kashmir could be made to look anti-national and that the "Congress(I) could portray itself as the protector of long-suffering Hindu India living on the Gangetic plain".

T.S. BEDI



Sikh militancy: amplified by mass communication

Jeffrey believes that if India is to survive as one country the answer is genuine federalism rather than centralisation of the Mrs Gandhi kind. Delhi will have to realise that 730 million people cannot be governed from the prime minister's house. In a postscript written in November 1985, the writer concludes optimistically that Rajiv Gandhi has shown himself to be different from his mother, and the evidence of this is the signing of the Punjab accord at a time when the Punjab problem should really have been more intractable than it ever was during Indira Gandhi's time.

—TAVLEEN SINGH

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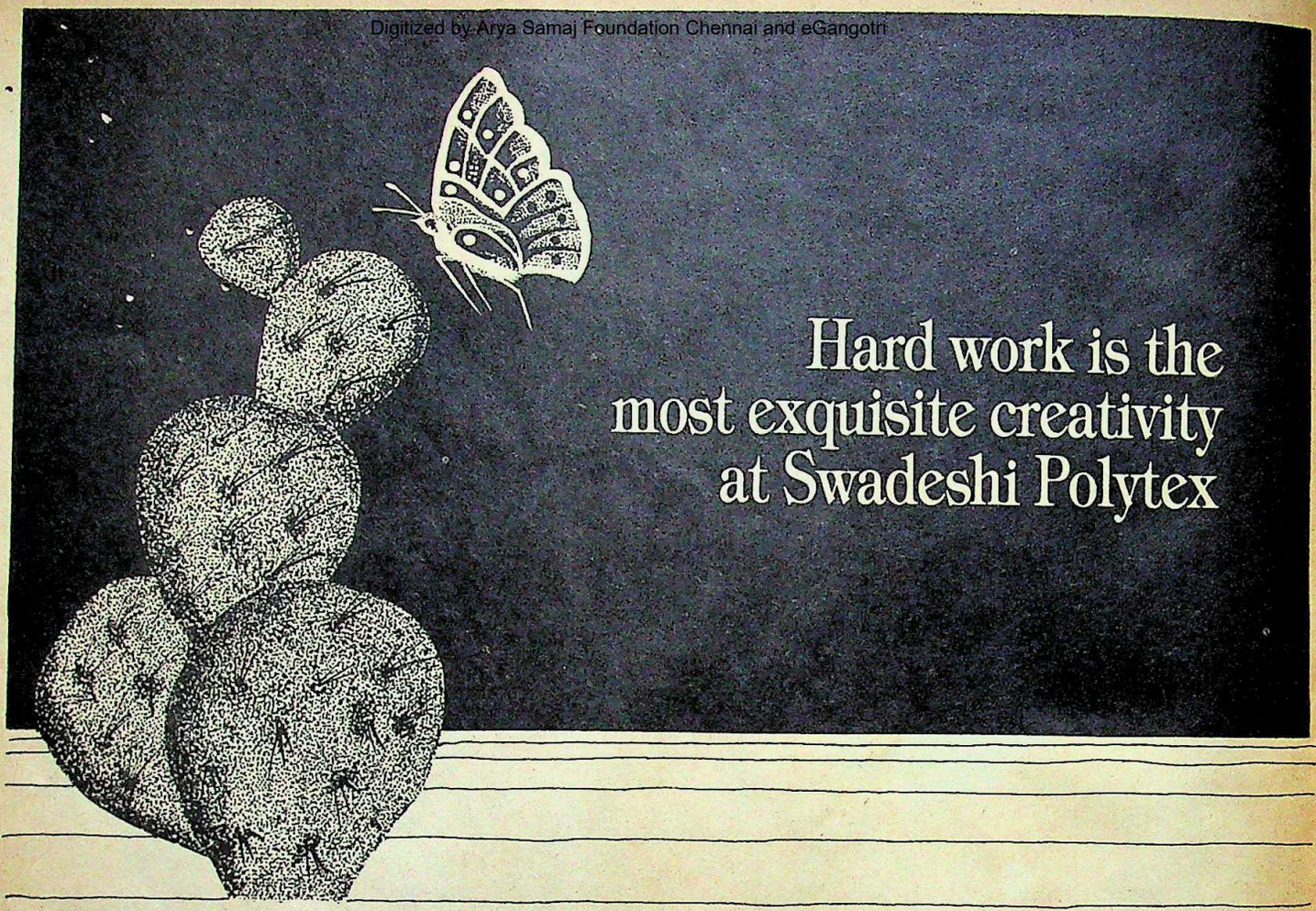

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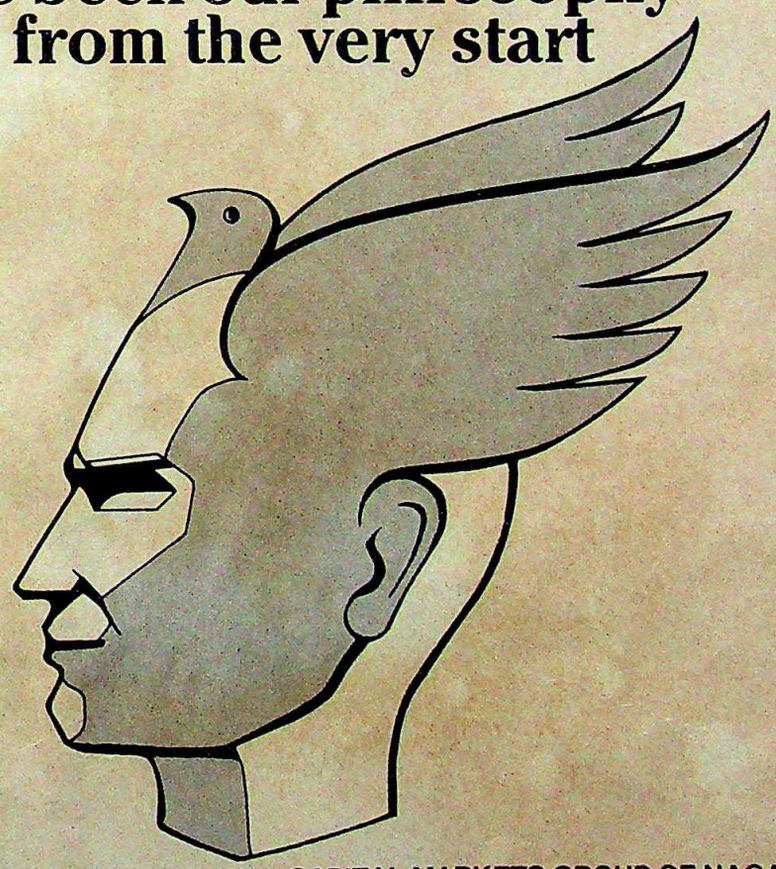

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VOCATIONAL STUDIES

A Dismal Failure

EXACTLY 20 years after the Kothari Commission on Education drew up the "blue-print" for vocational education in the country the only thing blue about it are the faces of educational planners who speak of its implementation in unprintable terms.

What is printable is shocking enough. The grandiose scheme, during this period, was supposed to lure one million, or 50 per cent of the students seeking admission to colleges, into job-oriented courses. Last year only 72,000 or 2.7 per cent of the total of two million high school students enrolled in job-oriented courses—a far cry from the ambitious target of 50 per cent. And while most of the students in these courses were learning, they were certainly not earning.

In most states hardly one out of four students who passed such courses got jobs. The rest remained either unemployed or went back to colleges thereby defeating the very purpose of vocational courses. In the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Professor Ashoka Chandra, technical educational adviser, admitted: "What we are running today is an apology for a vocational education programme."

The ministry has plenty to be sorry about. More than a decade ago, the Government had taken the decision to introduce vocational courses for students passing their secondary school examination (tenth standard). But till recently, only six states and three Union territories ran full-fledged courses and only now have the other states woken up. Currently, of the total of 14,000 high schools in the country, only 1,900 offer vocational courses with Tamil Nadu accounting for 1,000 or over half of these.

Even in states like Tamil Nadu that took it up in earnest there is hardly any uniformity with courses sprouting up haphazardly. At the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Professor Arun K. Mishra, head of the department of vocationalisation, points out: "There is an alarming variation in the course design from state to state and often in the same state." And what is worse is that, with a few exceptions, most of the courses are not linked to job prospects in the state. Most schools running these courses suffer from a lack of trained teachers and facilities for practical training. Nor has vocational education been geared to cater to the unorganised sector which employs the largest work-force.

Ironically, Karnataka is regarded by planners as a "model state" for vocational education. But its example is hardly encouraging. Although it claims that it did a district-wise survey on employment potential, when it came to deciding which courses, experts allege that the Government ignored its results and went ahead with its own list. And while some courses like building construction technology, electrical repairs and banking proved popular, others like fisheries, crop management and laboratory technicians drew poor response.

"What we are running today is an apology for a vocational education programme."

PROF ASHOKA CHANDRA
adviser, technical education

RANJAN BASU

"There is ad hocism in the management of these courses. The states have no projections of manpower needs."

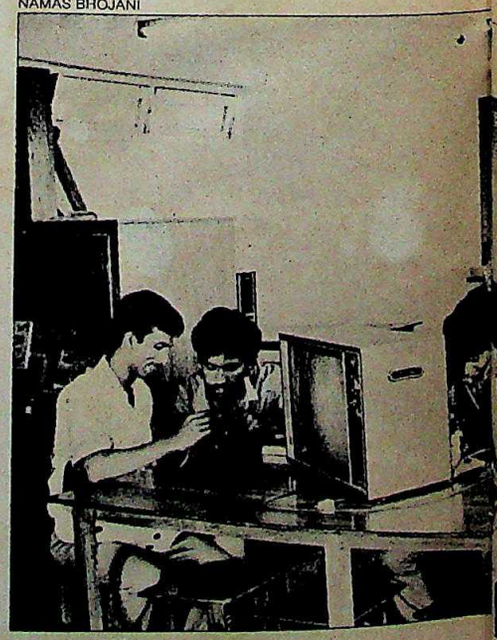
PROF ARUN K. MISHRA
head, department of vocationalisation, NCERT

And the Government did not modify its recruitment rules to help students. For instance, the Health Department till recently preferred to take in raw recruits as basic health workers and ran its own training programme ignoring students doing similar vocational courses in high schools. In fact the situation got so serious that students doing vocational courses in sericulture, recently formed an association to fight for employment reservations. Said the association's President Kunte Gowda: "It is ridiculous. People who don't know a silkworm from a paper worm are appointed demonstrators and operators in government silk farms. But vocational students who are thoroughly trained in silk farming are shown the gates."

Most of the states have similar experiences to narrate. In Tamil Nadu, which boasts of the largest number of vocational institutions in the country, the programme has met with "mixed success". Officials admit hardly 25 per cent of the students doing courses actually got jobs. And those who were unemployed found themselves stranded. Although they were technically eligible to get back into degree courses the subjects offered were different, making it difficult for them to cope. After the students protested the Government formed a high power committee that recommended "vertical mobility" into universities for those doing vocation courses. The result: 60 per cent of the students doing vocational courses now rejoin college thereby defeating the very purpose of the programme.

Maharashtra was wiser. It decided

NAMAS BHOJANI



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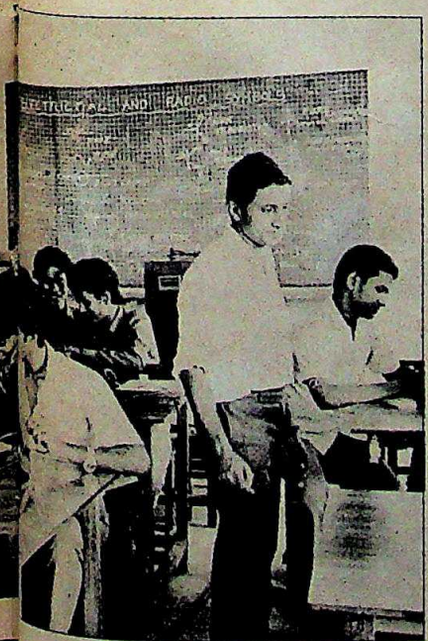
from the start that its vocational ses would not "lead students to a alley", as K.C. Gedam, the director of tional education, puts it. The courses so designed that any student doing could rejoin college easily. That t cutting down the vocational con- in such courses by half—from a al 60 per cent of the teaching time to 0 per cent. The state now admits that 2 per cent of the students doing tional education get jobs and the rest n college.

VEN students seeking self-employ- ment after vocational courses found the going difficult. In Karnataka culture students complained that ks were reluctant to hand them out s for silk farming. Syed Asadulla, cipal of a vocational college in akapura, said bitterly: "We just train n and leave them on the road. They e nowhere to go. The idea of voca- al education is fine. But it has appar- y failed in the field."

Probably one of the most important ons for vocational education's dismal ormance has been its lack of accep- ce among parents. Most parents are not convinced, and rightly so, that ational education would give their dren a bright future. In Bombay, her Deniz, director of the Agnel tech- al complex, which runs several voca- al courses, said: "Parents want their dren to be either doctors or engineers it's quite a job convincing them to put r children into vocation courses. Their tude has to change."

TV repair course: wasted effort



Adds V.C. Kulandaiswamy, vice-chancellor of Anna University: "The attitude is that if you don't get a job in the organised sector you are unemployed. We have to change that." He points out that it is really the unorganised sector that could provide employment for students enrolled in vocational education courses. While the total labour force is around 240 million in the country, the organised sector accounts for barely 20 million.

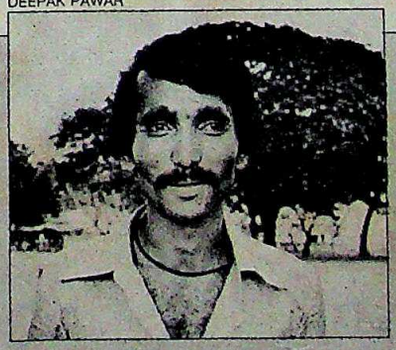
But probably the most serious problem has been the lack of effective management of these courses by the various state governments. The states have preferred to give more emphasis to Industrial Training Institutes (ITI), polytechnic courses and engineering colleges that in reality duplicate efforts towards vocational education. While graduates of the ITI's and polytechnic courses find immediate employment as apprentices in the industrial sector, no such preference is given to students enrolled in vocational courses. They don't even come under the purview of the Protective Apprentices Act.

DEEPAK PAWAR

"The idea of vocational education is fine but has apparently failed in the field."

SYED ASADULLA
vocational college principal

DEEPAK PAWAR



"People who don't know a silkworm from a paper worm are appointed in government silk farms."

KUNTE GOWDA
sericulture student

In most states, the vocational education programme is run by the Directorate of School Education which hardly has any time to keep a strict vigil over the programme. Says Professor Mishra: "There is plenty of ad hocism in the management of these courses. There is no overall policy guideline and the states neither have a data base nor projections of the manpower needs. Consequently there is no correlation between demand and supply."

And the state Government has always been tight-fisted with its funds for vocational courses. Karnataka, for instance, spends only Rs 1.63 crore on vocational education as compared to its total expenditure of Rs 429 crore on education.

Despite these handicaps many courses have been successful. In Tamil Nadu, for instance, the nursing courses are extremely popular. At Madras Avvai Home, one of the earliest institutions to start such a course, honorary secretary Mandakini Krishnamurthy said: "What is encouraging is that almost all of our students have managed to find employment." Adds S.P.Vathsala, a former student now working in a hospital: "My vocational course was what laid the foundation for my career."

But these are just a few silver linings in the otherwise gloomy picture of vocational education in the country. The Union Government is now making a determined bid to brighten up matters. In its National Policy of Education released last May it set a modest and probably achievable target: vocational courses would now cover 10 per cent of the higher secondary students by 1990 and 25 per cent by 1995. In the next four years, the Ministry of Human Resource Development plans to pump in Rs 400 crore into vocational education that would help in setting up, on an average, 10 additional institutions in each district in the country.

The ministry also plans to set up a Joint Council for Vocational Education which would act as the apex body for policy planning and coordination of vocational education at the national level. In addition, government recruitment rules are to be modified to give weightage to vocational education students. As Anil Bordea, additional secretary, says: "We know why we failed earlier and it would be ridiculous to fail again."

—RAJ CHENGAPPA with bureau reports

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IGNCA

Designer's Dream

THE Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, which was allotted 25 acres of prime land along the lush India Gate Lawns in Delhi last year, was plunged into controversy last fortnight over its International Architectural Design Competition for the centre. The ambitious competition, with big prize money, attracted architects from the world over. It received 926 applications, 620 from 36 overseas nations. Finally 194 submitted detailed designs for assessment. Following a meticulous screening process, five winners were announced by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who, Oscar-ceremony-style, opened sealed envelopes containing the names of the winners.

The coveted first prize of Rs 10 lakhs went to Ralph Lerner, director of graduate studies at Princeton University, New Jersey, USA who will also be awarded the Rs 60 crore contract for the design and supervision of the centre. The second prize of Rs 5 lakh went to Gautam Bhatia of India *(see box)*, and the third, of Rs 3 lakh, was shared equally between Francoise-Helene Jourda of Lyons, France, Alexandros Tombazis of Athens, and David Jeremy of London.

The fact that four of the five prize winners are foreigners invited the immediate wrath of their Indian counterparts. Fumed one: "We're not designing a skyscraper stretching into the clouds where the westerners would have an edge; we're designing a building depicting Indian culture." Most architects said in interviews that there was no need to spend precious foreign exchange when designs as good or even better could be procured in India. But Kapila Vatsyayan, secretary in the Department of Art and Culture, who is also the operational head at the centre, brushes off this criticism saying: "Take the logic one step further. They are trying to say that Indian architects should not take part in any international competition abroad."

The other points on which the competition is generating a lot of heat in the capital's advancing winter are:

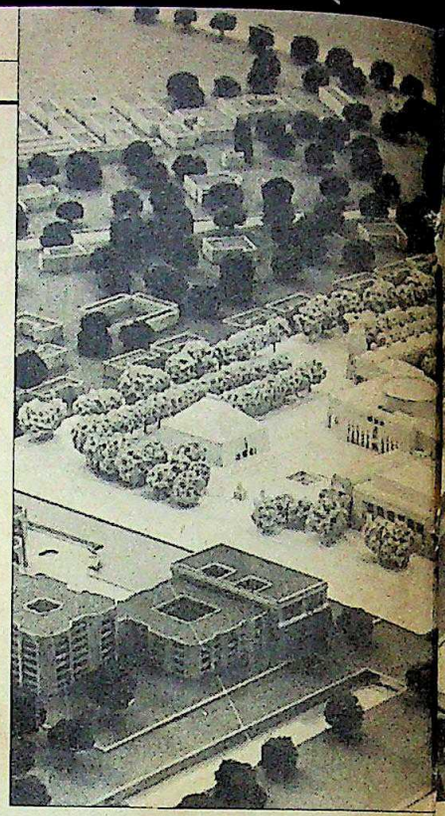
► that the jury did not include some of the best Indian architects: Charles Correa who was initially involved in the project was inexplicably dropped;

► that the competition did not draw the better known names in Indian and international architecture;

► that the jury's decision was influenced greatly by the superior materials used in the display models of foreign entries;

► that the competition was restricted only to the affluent. Being a one-stage competition it involved an expenditure of a minimum of Rs 40,000 by each contestant to prepare models and design sheets according to the criteria laid down in the competition rule book (which itself was priced at an exorbitant Rs 500). If, as the jury report indicates, there were four clear stages of screening, it would have saved a lot of money if display models and expensive elaborate layouts were called for only at the later stages.

"The debate is too late, they should have spoken up when we announced the competition last year," says Vatsyayan. As regards dropping Charles Correa from the jury, the irrepressible Vatsyayan adds: "If I want to be a minister and I am not made one, it does not mean that I have been dropped." Correa, she asserted, was in the discussion group for the project, but when the prime minister selected the names for the jury, he picked Achyut Kanvinde and Balkrishna Doshi as the Indian architects.



Kapila Vatsyayan and Pupul Jayaka were the other Indian members bu Jayakar was later replaced by Habi Rehman, a reserve member. Those fron abroad included James Sterling from th United Kingdom, Fumihiko Maki fro Japan, and Olufemi Majekodunmi fro Nigeria, who was the nominee of th International Union of Architects.

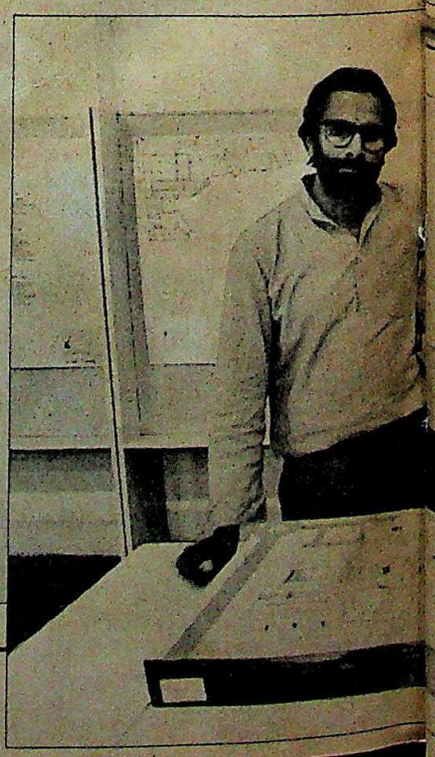
On the national front, some of th better-known names who sent in entrie were Raj Rewal, who designed the Asia

GAUTAM BHATIA

Original Entry

GAUTAM Bhatia, incorrigibly irreverent at 34, is better known for his articles on architecture than for architecture itself. He tripped into architecture because he failed in medicine. "I keep blaming the buildings that housed the medical laboratories in the university (in Washington) for my failure in medicine," he says. "I used to keep staring at them all day." He completed his Masters in architecture from the University of Pennsylvania, but soon tired of what he calls "catalogue-shopping" architecture in the West. He came back to India to dabble in mud. As project architect for a rural mud housing scheme under the Naujhil Integrated Rural Development Programme in Mathura district, Bhatia has no major buil ing to his name so far and has had all th time for critiques on "Punjabi Gothi and "Bania Baroque" architecture.

In awarding him the second priz



Bhatia with his prize winning model

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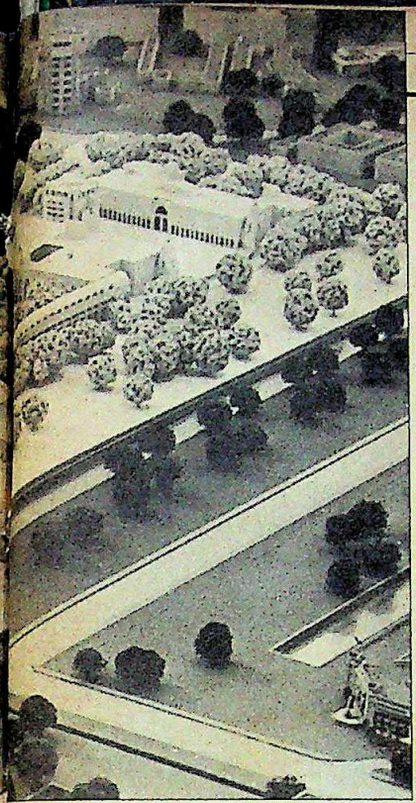


Photographs by PRASHANT PANJIAR

Ralph Lerner's model: careful selection

mes Village in Delhi, Jeet Malhotra, o worked with Le Corbusier and is now f architect of the New Delhi Municipal poration, Sumit and Suchitra Ghosh o won the prestigious contract for the Bahadur Shastri National Academy of ministration recently, and Roopak N. thari of Kothari and Associates.

On the international scene, the en- nts included Henning Larsen from nmark, who won the Aga Khan award the secretariat building in Saudi Arabia, Frank Woods, partner in Chamberlin, Powell, Bon and Woods of the UK, who designed the Barbican complex in London, William Porter of the US, who is the head of the Joint Harvard-MIT programme for architectural studies, Minoru Takiyama from Japan, Sumet Jumsai from Thailand, and several well-known names from other countries like Sweden and Australia. Says Ranjit Sabikhi, professional adviser for the competition: "Even if some big names at home did not take part, we are thrilled with the response as a whole."

The basis on which Ralph Lerner's model was chosen is spelt out in detail in the jury report. According to them, what stood out in his design was his absorption of the vision that Edwin Lutyens had in mind when he designed New Delhi. In his dossier accompanying his model, Lerner says Lutyens' Delhi had "an unusual and somewhat paradoxical pairing" of a tradition of treating Delhi as an extensive garden with blocks treated as individual parterres and the tradition of monumentality and axiality presenting a clear hierarchical organisation of various buildings.

"The architectural point of departure for our project is the juncture of these two traditions," says Lerner. The model draws its styles from various forms of traditional and historical architecture in India, including those of the Mundeshwari Temple at Ramgarh, Brihadisvara Temple at Tanjore, Keshava Temple at Somnathpur, Lingaraja Temple at Bhubaneswar, and the Fatehpur Sikri, Mandu and Gopuram forms. "The architecture," he says, "reiterates the role of the centre whose purpose is to encompass all arts across boundaries of time, region and social grouping."

The centre will be divided into five major courts clearly demarcating the different activities for which the centre is being created. The Kala Nidhi would have a reference library with a national data bank and informatics system on art and culture, the Kala Kosha would have the infrastructure for research studies aimed at creating an encyclopaedia on the arts, the Kala Darshana would house the National Theatre and a number of venues for projecting visual arts, the Janapada Sampada would document and project folk and tribal arts, and the Sutradhara would be the administrative and policy-making wing of the centre.

Each of these, according to the Lerner model, would be ranged along the axis parallel to Rajpath and, though monumental in scale, will be scattered across the sprawling lawns.

Lerner will soon be awarded the contract for the architectural works at the centre, according to the competition rules which even specify that if for some reason the contract is not signed within a year of the announcement of the results, the first prize winner would be compensated with a sum equivalent to the value of the first prize.

But the question being raised today is whether Lerner or Bhatia, who have not really built any major buildings so far, would be able to carry out a project on this scale. Scuttling these doubts, Malay Chatterjee, associate professional adviser for the competition, points out that some of the best Indian architects began with competitions that they won in their mid20s. "That is what competitions are meant for," says Sabikhi. "To unearth unknown talent."

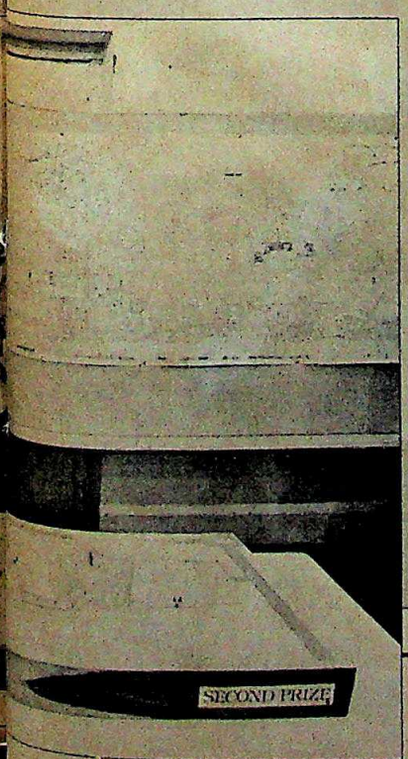
However, the competition rules provide an escape route if the going gets too hot: if the first prize winner is unable, for reasons of distance or inexperience, to satisfy the jury of his ability to carry out the work, the jury may require him to collaborate with another architect of their approval. And should the architect fail to abide by the provisions of the contract, the promoter reserves the right to engage the second prize winner in consultation with the jury.

—TANIA MIDHA

jury appreciated his "original and rmal approach". In his presentation, tia invited the jury to imagine that path is a river and that the centre s the form of "a journey along the river" using symbols like the street, the ghats lining the riverfront that is Rajpath. His buildings are viewed as a kind of stage set awaiting a cultural scenario. His project merges partially sheltered indoor spaces with semi-outdoor areas which then flow into completely outdoor places with steps leading down to the "river-side". His project was rushed—he began only in August—and in his hurry his display model could only be in cardboard as against the fancy materials used by the others.

But it was his vivid imagination that cornered the prize. And today, this imagination is running wild thinking of what to do with his windfall prize money. No sound investments in architecture, he says emphatically. "Maybe I'll fund my way through another attempt at medicine, maybe I'll use it to fund my planned audio-visual spoof on Delhi, maybe I'll just rush down to the first Maruti showroom."

—TANIA MIDHA



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SNAPSHOT

RAMESH KABRA

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CABLE TELEVISION

The New Frontier

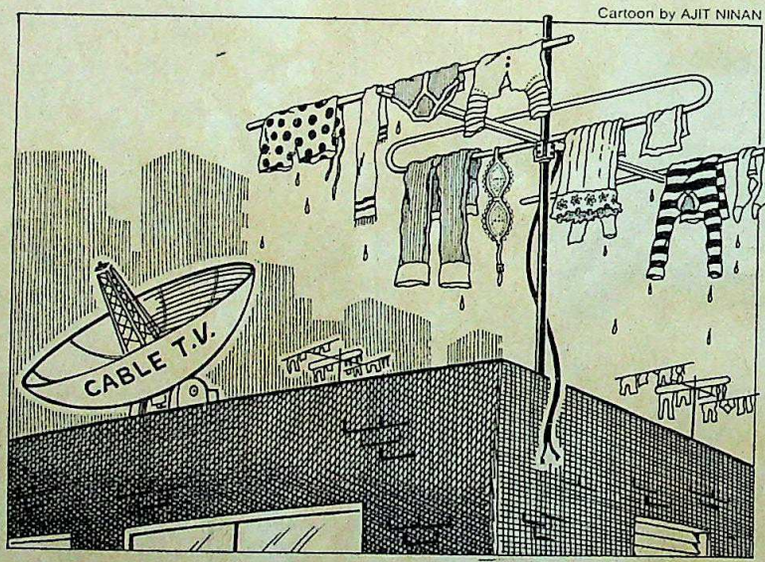
ATOP a multitude of high-rise buildings in Bombay, the clusters of TV antennae are no longer visible. In their place is a single master antenna, a sign of the spread of another kind of television: cable TV. With all the ritzy residential areas in south Bombay already wired up for cable TV, the craze is now spreading north and into the suburbs. In new buildings in the suburbs, builders have installed concealed cable TV networks with master antennae, sometimes linking up entire residential complexes with a single system. "This is a new trend," says builder, Vijay Raheja. "The cables are concealed, it looks better, and the flat buyers find it an attractive proposition." Moreover, in the unending quest for entertainment on TV, yet another technological marvel has emerged: the satellite dish antenna.

In the five years since cable TV—which is actually a misnomer for closed circuit television networks—first started, it has spread its tentacles to numerous buildings in exclusive residential areas of Bombay. For three to four hours in the evening, subscribers are provided with escapist entertainment, ranging from Hindi and Hollywood films, Pakistani TV serials, American and British sitcoms and soap operas. Pirated videos of Hindi films are shown surreptitiously, as being illegal they cannot be shown so freely, and these are the most popular.

Says Kamlesh Bhatia, who used to work for a cable TV company but now owns his own Trance Vision Company. "In the suburbs 50 per cent of the people cannot understand imported English-language programmes. In the absence of Hindi films, comedies are the most popular, followed by thrillers." Adds Omprakash Behl, former vice-president of the Colaba and Cuffe Parade Residents' Association: "Now that Hindi films have stopped at Cuffe Parade, people are grumbling about the other programmes on cable TV. Not everyone can understand Urdu in Pakistani TV serials and parents are worried about the sex and violence in English films. Some even wanted cable TV disconnected because of its effect on children."

But the thirst for entertainment continues and there's always a technological solution at hand. So now it's the satellite dish antenna, the webbed, saucer-shaped contraption seen so far only on Doordarshan Kendras, AIR stations and diplomatic and military installations. Companies in Delhi and Bombay have begun manufacturing the dish antenna for residential buildings, and among the two public sector concerns, ECIL and Keltron, who make this special antenna, the latter is selling it to the public. Says Siddharta Srivastava, whose Cable Video Corporation is one of the two big cable TV companies in Bombay: "I am concentrating on dish antennae now. The demand for these in India is outstripping supply ten to one."

Cartoon by AJIT NINAN



Srivastava is already exploiting the potential for dish antennae in remote parts of Gujarat. He has installed a dish antenna linked to a cable TV network in Pardi and in the Ambuja industrial township, and is working on another order from a second industrial township in the state. In Bombay, where the local Doordarshan telecast is dominated by Marathi and Gujarati programmes, the advantages of investing Rs 30,000 in a dish antenna are obvious: viewers can skip the Bombay Doordarshan telecast and tune in directly to the INSAT-1B satellite for Delhi Doordarshan.

But this holds out a special threat for Doordarshan. In 1990, the Eurosat Communications Satellite is to be launched by a West European consortium to beam down programmes to west Asian and African countries and viewers across western India will be able to receive Eurosat programmes with dish antennae. Japan plans to put up three Direct Broadcasting Satellites in 1991 beaming free English language software. This transmission will be aimed at India, and will be received clearly with a dish antenna. Already dish antennae can receive programmes from a Soviet satellite. There are also reports that the US armed forces programme showing X-rated films meant for the Diego Garcia naval base can be received by dish antennae in Kerala. So Doordarshan might find itself being wiped off the screens of many Indian idiot boxes.

Even though the Government undertaking Keltron, is selling dish antennae to the public, the Union Government cannot ban their use. "It can only levy a fee on the antennae. For instance, if you have a radio you can listen to the BBC and the Government cannot stop you from doing so," says lawyer Ashok Desai. Doordarshan could meet the challenge from cable TV companies in Bombay largely because of the regulation prohibiting private companies from laying cables on government land. As a result, cable TV networks have remained closed circuit TV networks, with their reach restricted to individual buildings or apartment blocks with common boundary walls. But at least two cable companies are planning to introduce a computerised video text service to business offices at Nariman Point, breaking up their operations into five clusters to avoid trespassing on public land.

Already, an American multinational bank has introduced a computerised financial information service to its clients, with the cables being provided by the Mahanagar Telephone Nigam. But the question—as was asked in Parliament —is: how does the Information and Broadcasting Ministry plan to meet the challenge from foreign satellite programmes?

—M. RAHMAN

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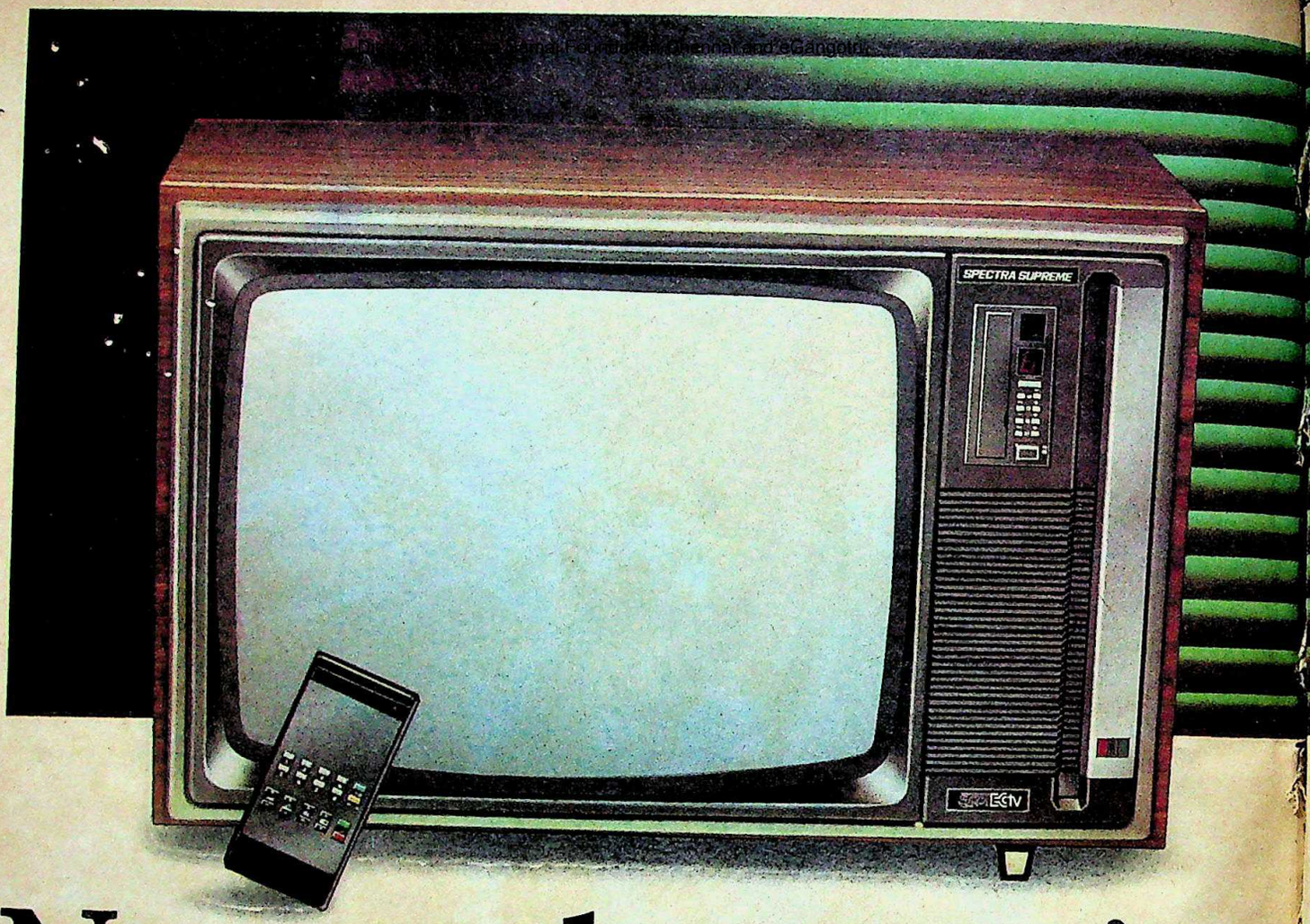

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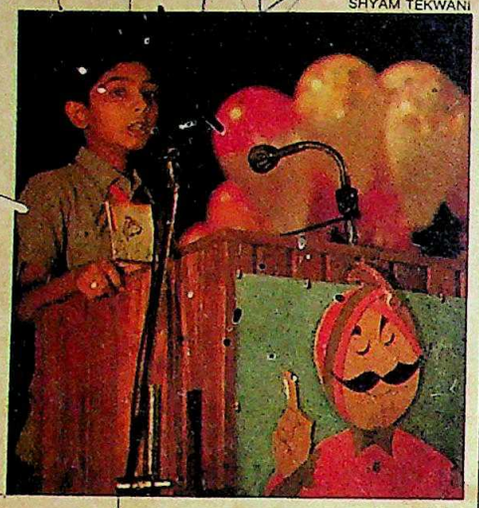
SHYAM TEKWANI



◆ On his own, he couldn't even make it to Madras. But last fortnight, 12-year-old **P. Radhakrishnan** of Madurai not only talked his way to Madras, but all the way to the United States. And won the gift of the gab—a free trip to the US—in a 'Talk Your Way to America Contest' organised by Air-India in Tamil Nadu. The sprightly, eighth-grade lad chattered for 10 minutes without break on 'Travel is Education' and parried the interjections without batting an eyelid. It was his fluent English and ready repartee that impressed the judges. Asked what he'd do if he landed in New York and found his baggage missing, the brat replied: "Impossible! That can't happen on Air-India." Thus providing the bottom-line for their next ad.

Radhakrishnan: talk show

◆ **Shefali Mehta**, 11, and **Arpita Sood**, 10, are two pert little things who go to Delhi's Springdale School (grades six and five), are avid followers of *Buniyaad* and Enid Blyton, and talk nineteen to the dozen. Last fortnight, the two girls were singled out among the 4,500 students of their school to welcome Mikhail S. Gorbachev and Raisa Gorbacheva. "I'm learning Russian at school and my teachers said I'm bold and talkative; so they selected me," said Mehta, who earned notoriety at the age of six when she jumped on to the stage at a function to shake hands with then president N. Sanjeeva Reddy. Sood, however, knows no Russian. "But my teachers wanted someone pretty and full of life." So they went all dolled up in *lehenga* and *chunni* with Rajiv Gandhi—"who teased us all the way"—garlanded the Soviet leader and First Lady, were kissed by Gorbachev, left lipstick marks on the chubby Soviet cheek and were rewarded with a box of Russian chocolates. "But this wasn't my happiest day," Mehta said. "My happiest day will come when I am great and I am garlanded."

RAGHU

Mehta and Sood welcome Gorbachev and Raisa

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Sood: aquatic justice

◆ It was not one dance but many; not one dancer but four of them. Last fortnight in Secunderabad, North met South like never before when four greats of classical dance joined hands—and feet—and left a trail of Golden Steps in an unprecedented fusion of dance forms. There was **Sanjukta Panigrahi** of Odissi as Rukmini, **Saswati Sen** of Kathak as Satyabhama, **Vani Hassan** of Bharat Natyam as Krishna and **Bala** of Kuchipudi as Narada. The ballet, *Krishnaparijatam*, was set to Carnatic music and, while keeping each style distinct, achieved a rare synthesis of *mudra* and movement. The dancers and their gurus—Kelucharan Mahapatra, Birju Maharaj, Kalyanasundaram and Vempati Chinnasatyam—stayed together for a week to produce what the die-hards called a "khichdi" and what Panigrahi described as "rice, sambar, curries and rasam served on a plantain leaf".

S.V. ANJAN BABU

Golden Steps: dance fusion

◆ Who exactly is to blame for the Indian fiasco at the Seoul Asiad? The answer to that is yet to be found, but a pointer to it came last fortnight from **Anita Sood**, seven times national freestyle swimming champ who was rejected by the Indian selectors for the tenth Asiad. Reason: they wanted fresh talent. Well, last fortnight Sood made them hang their heads in shame when she left such seasoned swimmers as Pallavi Shetty of Maharashtra and Bula Chowdhary of West Bengal gasping for breath at the 42nd Senior National Aquatics Championships held in Ahmedabad. Sood surfaced with five gold medals to reassert her status as the top-notch freestyle woman swimmer of the country. Said the smiling mermaid after the show: "I only had a point to prove and I have proved it." Justice, they say, is sweet. But aquatic justice is sweeter still.

—Compiled by MOHAMMED ASLAM

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